



## **Weekly Briefing**

**Romania External Relations briefing:  
President's speech on the future of the EU and Prime Minister's  
visits in the Middle East  
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## **President's speech on the future of the EU and Prime Minister's visits in the Middle East**

*Romania's vision related to the future of the EU was expressed by President Iohannis in the plenary of the European Parliament, in the context of the series of debates on this topic. While the general message related to EU was focused on unity and cohesion, as regards the particular involvement of Romania, the President stated that it is deeply attached to the European project. The discussions in the European Parliament were also related to the fight against corruption, as Romania is waiting for a resolution of the European Parliament on the rule of law. During this month, the Romanian Prime Minister Viorica Dancila conducted a series of visits in three countries in the Middle East, with the aim of enhancing the economic and trade dimension of bilateral relations.*

The Romanian President Klaus Iohannis had a presentation related to the future of the EU in the plenary of the European Parliament, in the context of the series of debates on this topic, to which the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the EU are invited. The event took place in a delicate context, given the recent Strasbourg talks on the justice laws promoted by the Government and the Parliament in Bucharest, criticized by both the European Commission and the Venice Commission. In fact, at the beginning of October, the plenary of the European Parliament debated the situation in Romania, focusing on the laws of justice and the brutal intervention of the gendarmerie in the protest of August 10th, where the Romanian Prime Minister Viorica Dancila was invited for exposing the situation. The plenary of the European Parliament postponed the adoption of a resolution related to Romania exactly for taking into account the position of the Romanian President, which was scheduled to have

this intervention in October. Therefore, in this context, his speech was extremely important, especially that the European Parliament has recently decided to sanction Hungary, while earlier a similar measure was taken against Poland. The president of the European Commission, Jean Claude Juncker, was also present at the event.

Related to the future of Europe, the speech of the Romanian President was focused on emphasizing the spirit of unity and cohesion as a deep characteristic of the EU, thus rejecting a Union with several speeds. He recognized that EU is in a period of economic recovery and there are several challenges that must be overcome, such as ensuring the best possible adaptation of the workforce, answering the issues of migration by paying more attention to combating terrorism and radicalization, conserving the internal market and its three fundamental freedoms, enhancing security through avoiding parallelism with NATO and strengthening the transatlantic partnership. The message was centred on the unity of the EU and the effort and wisdom each Member State have to pursue for supporting this common ideal.

Related to Romania, at the core of the speech was the fact that Romania is deeply attached to the European project and the fight against corruption, although difficult, will continue in Romania, even if there is controversy in the internal debate in Bucharest. He mentioned that Romania is a state of law and a young democracy, with citizens that are actively connected to civic values, whose voice was heard when defending the rule of law. In the region, Romania is a regional stability pole, who assumed the role of a security provider.

The president of the European Commission, Jean Claude Juncker, appreciated that Romania was the first one to have the initiative of launching an anti-corruption institution, and draw the attention to the Government and the Parliament to support the rule of law. Otherwise, this could affect the country's accession to the Schengen Area, which he hoped to be achieved before the end of his commission's mandate. Therefore, he expressed the wish to reach a consensus on the fight against corruption before taking over the presidency of

the Council; otherwise it will be difficult for the Commission to agree on the country-specific recommendations.

Among the interpellations from the part of the members of the European Parliament, Guy Verhofstadt, leader of the ALDE group in the European Parliament, said that after 30 years he is again worried about Romania, due to the reforms of the justice system endangering its independence, the changes to the Criminal Code weakening the fight against corruption, while drawing attention to the necessity of revealing the secret protocols between the former Security and justice. Manfred Weber, the leader of the European People's Party (PPE), drew the attention on respecting the European values, while affirming his support related to Romania's adhesion to the Schengen area. Ska Keller, President of the Greens group in the European Parliament, recommended that the President call on all political parties for the recommendations of the Venice Commission to be applied. In fact, these days in Romania, Iohannis convened the political parties to consultations on the legislation in the field of Justice.

The decision to continue the support of the rule of law in Romania was strongly emphasized by Klaus Iohannis when mentioning that a consensus between all the political forces in the country on the rule of law and anti-corruption, as recommended by European Chief Justice Jean Claude Juncker, does not mean lowering the standards related to justice.

There is not clear yet if the European Parliament will adopt a resolution related to Romania. In fact, the presence of the Romanian President in the plenary session was unrelated to the rule of law in Romania, although he made comments on this subject and answered the interpellations of the European Members of the Parliament (MeP). President Klaus Iohannis said that it is the right of the European Parliament to debate a resolution on Romania but stressed that it is extremely unusual for these talks to take place only one month before our country takes over the presidency of the EU Council. Antonio Tajani, the President of the European Parliament, was imprecise, stating that the role of the institution he represents is to defend the rule of law, and therefore the Parliament

is ready to have a resolution and will decide on its content. If it is to be made, the resolution will be launched in the first week of November.

The Romanian Prime Minister Viorica Dancila carried out a series of visits in three countries in the Middle East: Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, with the main aim of promoting investment and business opportunities.

Romania has a strategic partnership with Turkey since 2011 and is carrying out a permanent dialogue at bilateral and regional level, while the bilateral diplomatic relations are unfolding over the last 140 years. Security and defence, business environment, academic and cultural domains are the main areas of cooperation. Economic relations between the two countries represent one of the major pillars of the strategic partnership. Turkey is the first trading partner of Romania outside the EU, the fifth at international level and the third investor in terms of the number of companies present in the Romanian business environment. There are more than 15,000 Turkish companies operating in different areas, from the banking sector to the media, from construction to manufacturing. The economic and trade relations are the most important ones in the bilateral relationships. The trade between the two countries amounted at 6 billion USD in 2017, but, according to the Turkish president, the goal is to reach 10 billion dollars in the following period. The organization, by the end of 2018, of the 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation and the Business Forum will impart a new dynamic to economic relations. The Prime Minister Dancila also met with the president of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges in Turkey.

The other key pillar of the strategic partnership is the cooperation in the area of defence. The evolution of the of the security challenges in the Black Sea region, and joint actions to ensure security and stability in the area, as well as future prospects for action were analysed during the discussions. The Turkish party appreciated the cooperation with the Romanian authorities against terrorist organizations that engage in activities against Turkey, while the Romanian part complimented Turkey's contribution to managing the migration issue in line

with the EU-Turkey agreement and reiterated Romania's continued support for Turkey's European course. The visit materialized by signing two memoranda on education and health.

During the visit to the United Arab Emirates, the Prime Minister Viorica Dancila signed the Joint Statement on Establishing a Strategic Economic Partnership between the Government of Romania and the Government of the United Arab Emirates. The objectives of bilateral cooperation target the priority sectors for Romania, such as trade, investment, industry, agriculture, finance and banking, energy, transport and infrastructure, IT and block chain technology, education, culture, research-innovation and sport. The important role of the foreign communities originating in these countries and present in both Romania and United Arab Emirates could represent the basis for the economic, social and cultural development of the two states. The Declaration should be followed by an Action Plan for establishing the concrete steps that the two governments will undertake to implement the Strategic Economic Partnership.

In Kuwait, the meeting was focused on analysing and identifying new ways for developing the bilateral economic and trade relations by boosting the private sector, in particular by actively encouraging Kuwaiti businessmen to invest in Romania. The main sectors that could be targeted by the investors are agriculture, transportation, infrastructure, energy and health. In fact, in this area, Kuwait expressed interest in working with the Ana Aslan Institute, a Romanian centre of excellence in gerontology and geriatrics. There were signed two cooperation agreements: a Memorandum of Understanding between the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs, respectively the Memorandum of Understanding on tourism cooperation. Moreover, it was agreed to organize in 2019 the first session of the Joint Commission for Cooperation between the two countries, coordinated by the foreign ministers.

The Romanian Government stated that enhancing the economic and trade dimension of bilateral relations with the member states of the Gulf Cooperation

Council is an important specific objective, included in the Governance Program 2017-2020.