



Department for
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Sir William Cash MP
House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee
House of Commons
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Dear Bill

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Romanian Presidency Priorities

Romania assumed the Presidency of the Council of the European Union on 1st January and have announced the following four priorities for their Presidency;

- Converging Europe: growth, cohesion, competitiveness, connectivity
- A safer Europe
- Europe, a stronger global actor
- Europe of Common Values

I am writing to summarise the Presidency's plans in the policy areas within BEIS's remit.

Cohesion Policy

Following the progress made by the Austrian Presidency on the Cohesion Policy Legislative Package for 2021-2027, the Romanian Presidency will look to continue the process in order to pass through the core of the package (Common Provisions Regulation, European Social Fund and European Territorial Cooperation) during their term. This will allow national and regional authorities to start planning and programming at the earliest possible stage. One 'thematic block' (Block 2 - Enabling Conditions and Performance Framework) which has been discussed in detail by the previous Presidency will not be reopened for drafting and will head to COREPER soon after the Romanian Presidency commences. Finally, ESF+ should see swift progress, having been discussed briefly during the Austrian Presidency.

Single Market

On Online Platforms, the Romanian Presidency is continuing the work of the Austrian Presidency and will drive forward the legislative process on the Regulation on promoting fairness and transparency for business users of online intermediation services. The Austrian Presidency started the trilogue process after securing a General Approach in Council. The Romanian Presidency will continue this process

with a view of agreeing the Regulation before the European elections. Trilogues are also expected to continue in January on the proposed Compliance and Enforcement Regulation and on the Copyright Directive, and to start on the proposed Directive on the Use of Digital Tools and Processes in Company Law.

On consumer policy, the Romanian Presidency will seek final adoption of the two draft Directives that make up the EU's package on contractual rules for the sale of consumer goods and the supply of digital content. There is an ambition to complete these files ahead of the European Parliament elections. On the EU's New Deal for Consumers, the Presidency is likely to aim to complete the 'Omnibus' Directive (improving enforcement of consumer law) by May. There will also be continued discussions on the other part of the package, namely a proposal on collective redress for consumers.

After swift progress at working groups, the Austrian Presidency achieved a Partial General Approach for the proposed Single Market Programme, leaving only the budget of the programme and third-country terms to be negotiated later at a political level. The Romanian Presidency will therefore aim to finalise the outstanding details of the programme.

Energy

Negotiations will begin during the Romanian Presidency on amendments to the Energy Community Treaty relating to reciprocal rights and obligations. The Romanian Presidency is planning to invite Energy Community Ministers to an informal Energy Council and hopes to endorse amendments to the Energy Community Treaty there.

The proposal for a Decision adjusting the absolute values of the EU's 2030 energy efficiency target under the Energy Efficiency Directive to account for the withdrawal of the UK from the EU is expected to make quick progress during the Romanian Presidency. The European Parliament is due to adopt its position on the file on 14 January. The proposed change is minor, technical and uncontroversial and the Council is likely to move to reach agreement on its own position shortly thereafter.

The Romanian Presidency will finalise adoption of the Electricity Directive and Regulation following provisional agreements in trilogues shortly before Christmas. It will also continue work on the Commission's proposed amendments to the Gas Directive, which would apply EU internal energy market law to interconnectors with Third Parties. Discussions have been ongoing throughout the Bulgarian and Austrian Presidencies, and I expect progress to be made under the Romanian Presidency.

Employment and Social Rights

The Romanian Presidency will take forward the final stages of trilogue negotiations on the Work-Life Balance Directive. Significant progress has been made under the Austrian Presidency and I expect agreement on the overall shape of the package early in the new year.

Progress on the Working Conditions Directive under the Austrian Presidency has been limited due to extended consideration of amendments by the European Parliament. I expect the Romanians to accelerate trilogue negotiations on this file in the new year.

Trilogue negotiations on the European Labour Authority (ELA) will begin under the Romanian Presidency, with the Commission keen to get the proposal agreed to as soon as possible. Conversations on social security coordination and transport being within the scope of the ELA are likely to continue but most of the Member States and European Parliament are in agreement on these matters.

The Romanian Presidency has indicated it will continue to pursue discussions on whistleblowing as a priority, due to the continued interest of the European Parliament who are keen to start trilogues. However, the Council Legal Service has delivered its Opinion which indicates that the legal bases used for the directive cannot be combined and that in its current form the Directive would need to be passed as four separate pieces of legislation. The Presidency is likely to seek direction on next steps from COREPER. Discussions will also continue under the Romanian Presidency on the proposed Summer Time Directive.

Science and Innovation

The Council reached a Partial General Approach under the Austrian Presidency on the Horizon Europe Regulation on 30 November. The Romanian Presidency have set out an ambitious timeline on this file. They plan to start trilogues in January, which will run in parallel to ongoing discussions on the remaining parts of the Horizon Europe proposals. The Presidency are aiming for a Partial General Approach on the Horizon Europe Specific Programme (Decision) in February (the exact content of which is still to be determined). The European Parliament elections in May could limit progress from April in the likely event that the Horizon Europe Proposal negotiations are still ongoing.

I am writing in similar terms to Rachel Reeves MP, Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and Lord Boswell, Chair of the House of Lords European Union Committee.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Greg Clark', with a stylized flourish below it.

THE RT HON GREG CLARK MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

