

## MEPs voice concern over Romanian EU Council presidency

Written by Martin Banks on 18 January 2019 in News  
News

Belgian MEP Phillipe Lamberts has launched a scathing attack on Romania's suitability to hold the council presidency.



*Photo Credit: Adobe Stock*

---

Speaking in the European parliament in Strasbourg during a plenary debate on the incoming presidency, Lamberts, a joint Greens/EFA group leader questioned Romania's credentials for the prestige post.

He told reporters he sees the presidency as an exercise in "damage limitation" and the only "blessing" that, because of the European elections, it would be shorter than normal.

Romania assumed the EU Council presidency on 1 January, the first time it has been at the helm of the EU since it joined the bloc in 2007.

But its government has repeatedly faced criticism from MEPs and others about the rule of law, a crackdown on civil society and alleged civil rights abuses in the country.

---

## RELATED CONTENT

- [Frans Timmermans urged to step down during Commission presidency campaign](#) [1]
  - [Challenging times lie ahead as Romania kicks off EU Presidency](#) [2]
  - [Romania braces for no-deal Brexit as it prepares EU presidency](#) [3]
  - [Romania must take bold action to tackle the legacy of corruption before assuming EU Council presidency](#) [4]
  - [Sven Gielgold says that the rule of law and freedom of the press are 'massively threatened' in Romania](#) [5]
- 

As recently as last week, European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker warned the Romanian government not to press ahead with a planned law that would grant amnesty for corruption offences, saying this would undermine the rule of law.

According to an ISSPOL poll last month, 91 per cent of Romanians oppose an amnesty and pardon for corruption offences.

In a news conference, Lamberts said it was “better that it [the Romanian presidency] was shorter than normal (due to the European Parliament elections in May).

Lamberts, a Flemish deputy, said, “If Romania really has to have the presidency under this government you have to hope that they won’t do too much damage. But I do not think they will do much good.”

He said, “The only blessing is that the presidency is happening now and will be shorter than normal and not at a time when a lot has to be accomplished.”

“If Romania really has to have the presidency under this government you have to hope that they won’t do too much damage. But I do not think they will do much good” **Phillipe Lamberts MEP**

His comments were partly echoed by Greens/EFA co leader German MEP Ska Keller, who pointing to the “diplomatic skills” required of an EU presidency, said the six month term was normally a chance for a country “to put itself in the limelight.”

She told the debate, that included Romanian Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă, “However, when you look at the this Romanian government it gives you reason for concern.”

“Romanian citizens are asking for good governance but their voices are not being heard.”

She said there was a question of “credibility”, adding, “I hope to be positively surprised by this presidency but the clock is ticking.”

The Greens MEPs’ comments come after the commission, in its corruption monitoring report last year,

said that recent developments in Romania had reversed the course of progress, especially on judicial independence.

Romanian president Klaus Iohannis recently admitted that the country has an image problem.

"We are following the events in the UK closely and putting aside the rumours and speculations, Romania will take Brexit developments step-by-step, based on what has been negotiated and it's already on the table" **Cristian-Silviu Buşoi MEP**

The presidency comes at a key time for the EU, with the UK due to exit the bloc in March and debates about the next long-term budget. Juncker said recently that some 200 legislative files are still awaiting decisions by the council and parliament.

In the debate this week, Dăncilă, a former MEP, said competitiveness, digitization and the protection and safety of citizens will be the focus of the presidency.

During its term, the Romanian presidency will aim for better political and economic cohesion between member states and will commit to work towards reducing development gaps between regions, supporting economic growth and digitization, especially for European industry, she told members.

Coherent management of migration flows, strengthening the EU's external borders and better protection of citizens in virtual space will also be work priorities.

Setting up and even extending the mandate of the European Prosecutor's Office to include terrorist offenses and better cooperation between countries of origin and transit countries on migration issues will also be on the agenda.

Dăncilă underlined the Romanian government's commitment to move forward on EU enlargement matters, with particular attention paid to the Western Balkans and a focus on common European values.

The centrepiece of the presidency will be a summit on the EU's future in Sibiu on 9 May.

MEPs of all political groups said they wanted to work "hand in hand" with the presidency to move forward on European legislative matters in priority areas, pointing out that the Romanian government must do more to promote European values by being more politically stable and consistent.

Juncker has also urged the country's politicians to put aside their differences during the presidency.

A source for the Romanian presidency told this website, "During the debate in the parliamentary plenary that took place in Strasbourg, the Romanian Prime Minister presented the priorities of the Romanian presidency and pledged to make progress on the legislative priorities that reflect the needs of the European citizens and of the member states.

Those include the 'green' initiatives that aim for a more sustainable, cleaner economy in the EU. This approach of the presidency is in line with its main objective: to make Europe more cohesive and more united and avoid the politicisation of the debate which is not in the interest of our citizens."

The source added, "As stated on several occasions, the Romanian presidency is acting as an honest broker and aims to promote an ambitious agenda throughout the whole six-month mandate. Not a long, not a short, but an effective presidency."

Romanian EPP member Cristian-Silviu Buşoi said, "Romania has a qualified corps of experts, diplomats and technicians that are all very familiar with the challenges of European presidency.

"We are following the events in the UK closely and putting aside the rumours and speculations, Romania will take Brexit developments step-by-step, based on what has been negotiated and it's already on the table.

"Romania has also its own perspective on this six month tenure based on three pillars. First, a Europe of convergence based on bringing Romania's contribution to ensuring convergence and cohesion in Europe; second, a safer Europe aimed at strengthening internal security by boosting cooperation among member states; and third, Europe as a stronger global actor, which means strengthening the EU's defence and security capabilities."

### **About the author**

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

### **Tags**

[Brexit](#) [6]

[EU Council Presidency](#) [7]

[Justice and Rights](#) [8]

### **Categories**

[European elections](#) [9]

[Public order, justice and rights](#) [10]



### **Site Sections**

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [EU Elections 2019](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2019](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

### **Services**

[Dods PeopleDods](#)  
[MonitoringDods](#)

[ResearchDods](#)  
[EventsDods](#)  
[Training](#)

## **Media & publishing titles**

[Politics HomeThe HouseThe Parliament](#)  
[MagazineHolyrood](#)  
[Total PoliticsPublic Affairs NewsCivil Service World](#)  
[PublicTechnology Training](#)  
[JournalDods Parliamentary CompanionVacher's Quarterly The European Union and Public Affairs Directory](#)

## **Dods events**

[Westminster BriefingDigital Health & Care ScotlandMEP AwardsThe Skills SummitScottish Public Service AwardsPublic Sector Procurement SummitPublic Sector ICT SummitCyber Security SummitCyber Security 2017Training Journal Awards](#)

## **Partnership events**

[The Health and Care Innovation ExpoCivil Service LiveCivil Service](#)

[AwardsChief](#)  
[Nursing Officer for](#)  
[England's](#)  
[SummitWomen into](#)  
[LeadershipThe](#)  
[Youth Justice](#)  
[ConventionSocitm](#)  
[Spring](#)  
[ConferenceNHSCC](#)  
[Annual Members'](#)  
[EventDods at Party](#)  
[Conference](#)

---

[Privacy Policy](#)[Terms & Conditions](#)[Advertising](#)[Sponsorship](#) [Subscriptions](#)

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/meps-voice-concern-over-romanian-eu-council-presidency>

#### **Links**

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/frans-timmermans-urged-step-down-during-commission-presidency-campaign>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/challenging-times-lie-ahead-romania-kicks-eu-presidency>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/romania-braces-no-deal-brex-it-prepares-eu-presidency>
- [4] [https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/partner\\_article/hrwf-international/romania-must-take-bold-action-tackle-legacy-corruption](https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/partner_article/hrwf-international/romania-must-take-bold-action-tackle-legacy-corruption)
- [5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/sven-gielgold-says-rule-law-and-freedom-processes-are-massively-threatened-romania>
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/brexit>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/eu-council-presidency>
- [8] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/justice-and-rights>
- [9] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/european-elections>
- [10] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/public-order-justice-and-rights>