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**#EESCplenary: "We need to reconnect people with the European project", says EESC President Luca Jahier**

**The January plenary session of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) hosted a debate with the Romanian Prime Minister Vasilica-Viorica Dăncilă on the priorities of the Romanian EU presidency for the first semester of 2019. EESC President Luca Jahier underlined how important it was, on the eve of the EU elections, to restore the trust of the European people in politics.**

The EU integration process needs to be better understood, accepted and supported by those who are in the front line, the people of Europe. "The Future of Europe will be discussed at the Sibiu Summit on a symbolic date: 9 May 2019, Europe Day. This is the last moment, before the elections, to show a united, strong Europe, that is close to all its citizens and is determined to take bold action for them", said **Mr Jahier**. "We need not only more effective EU policies but also a new positive narrative to reconnect citizens with the European project and restore their trust in politics, strengthening cohesion and countering populist tendencies," he added.

On this note, **Mr Jahier** congratulated Romania for holding a broad public consultation to set the priorities for its presidency, giving special attention to young people. He then pointed out that it was time to deliver tangible results, referring not only to the debate on the Future of Europe and the European elections in May 2019, but also to Brexit, the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and on cohesion policy, and the migration issue. "Romania will need to steer discussions, demonstrate vision and be responsible for making decisions that impact the entire 28-country bloc," he said. "The Romanian Presidency must seize this opportunity. Romanians are among the most pro-European people in the EU and show a great attachment to European values. The current government has the potential to be a mediator, consolidating the European idea and including the views of Europe’s people," he concluded.

**Ms Dăncilă** expressed her firm intention to make significant progress on the most pressing issues the Union is facing, with a view to advancing, through a joint effort on the part of all the actors involved, towards unity, cohesion, solidarity and equity. She also reaffirmed the strong commitment of her country's EU presidency to European values and to listening to the voice of the European people about the direction the Union should follow. "This is a priority of the Romanian Presidency. We will put forward solutions and take decisions that are as close as possible to the citizens and the realities of our societies. Only by constantly involving citizens will we be able to keep Europe strong and cohesive," she maintained.

"Cohesion, a common European value" is indeed the motto of the presidency and will be promoted on three fronts: political (the need for unity between the Member States, European institutions and citizens), economic and territorial (with a view to reducing development gaps between Member States and regions) and, finally, social (important in terms of preserving the four freedoms of the EU internal market).

More specifically, the Romanian EU presidency will focus on four lines of action: Europe of convergence, Europe of security, Europe as global player and Europe of common values:

* A **converging Europe**: growth, cohesion, competitiveness, connectivity – including sustainable development, convergence, employment and social rights, innovation and digitisation, connectivity and markets.
* A **more secure Europe** – including strengthening internal security through border management and Schengen and the future of the area of freedom, security and justice.
* Europe as a **stronger global actor** – including the Common Security and Defence Policy and the efficiency of EU external action, the neighbourhood policy and honouring international commitments.
* A **Europe of common values** – including solidarity, cohesion, equal opportunities and social justice, democracy, freedom and respect for human dignity, and combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, intolerance and populism.

Romania assumed the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the very first time on 1 January 2019. Starting a new practice for rotating Council presidencies, the Romanian Prime Minister addressed the EESC plenary after speaking at the plenary session of the European Parliament on 15 January 2019. The Romanian presidency will be followed by the Finnish presidency in the second part of 2019 and the Croatian one in January 2020.

**Background**

For further information on the EESC's activities during the Romanian Presidency, please consult our [website](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/publications-other-work/publications/eescs-activities-during-romanian-presidency-january-june-2019).

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*The European Economic and Social Committee is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. The Committee has 350 members from across Europe, who are appointed by the Council of the European Union. It represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the EU decision-making process.*

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