

**AT A GLANCE:** ROMANIAN PRESIDENCY PROGRAMME ON ENERGY AND CLIMATE – THE EU REGRETS OUTCOME OF THE VOTE IN THE UK PARLIAMENT ON THE WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS CALL FOR DISCLOSURE OF NATIONAL ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLANS – EU MEMBER STATES SIGN OFF ON NEW CO2 TARGETS FOR CARS AND DEFINE POSITIONS ON CO2 LIMITS FOR TRUCKS – EU INSTITUTIONS AGREE ON ELECTRICITY MARKET REFORMS IN TRILOGUE NEGOTIATIONS

## Edition Content

### COUNCIL PRESIDENCY

Romanian Presidency programme on energy and climate **P.2**

### BREXIT

The EU regrets outcome of the vote in the UK Parliament on the Withdrawal Agreement **P.3**

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Environmental NGOs call for disclosure of national energy and climate plans **P.4**

### CO2 EMISSIONS FROM TRANSPORT

EU Member States sign off on new CO2 targets for cars and vans and define positions on CO2 limits for trucks **P.5**

### ELECTRICITY MARKET DESIGN

EU institutions agree on electricity market reforms in trilogue negotiations **P.6**

## GLOSSARY

**MEP:** Member of the European Parliament, a co-legislator within the EU that is made up of representatives from political parties throughout Member States.

**COUNCIL OF THE EU:** Co-legislator, made up of representatives from Member State Governments. Has a six-month rotating presidency, currently held by Romania until the end of June 2019.

**EUROPEAN COUNCIL:** The European Council is made up of the leaders of the EU Member States. It defines the EU's overall political direction and priorities but does not pass laws.

**REGULATION:** EU binding legislative act which must be applied in its entirety across the EU by all EU Member States.

**TRIO PRESIDENCY PROGRAMME:** Member States holding three successive presidencies of the Council of the European Union form a trio Presidency and work together over an 18-month period, on the basis of a common programme.

**WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT:** The Brexit Withdrawal Agreement was a proposed agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union on how Brexit would be implemented.

**TRILOGUES:** Informal negotiations between the European Parliament, Commission and Council of the EU to reach an agreement on a specific legislative proposal. Agreement then needs to be formally adopted by the Parliament and Council of the EU.

## Edition Content

### COUNCIL PRESIDENCY

Romanian Presidency programme on energy and climate **P.2**

### BREXIT

The EU regrets outcome of the vote in the UK Parliament on the Withdrawal Agreement **P.3**

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Environmental NGOs call for disclosure of national energy and climate plans **P.4**

### CO2 EMISSIONS FROM TRANSPORT

EU Member States sign off on new CO2 targets for cars and vans and define positions on CO2 limits for trucks **P.5**

### ELECTRICITY MARKET DESIGN

EU institutions agree on electricity market reforms in trilogue negotiations **P.6**

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### COUNCIL PRESIDENCY

## Romanian Presidency programme on energy and climate



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The Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, which took office on 1 January 2019, published its **Presidency Programme**, as well as the **Trio Presidency Programme** (Romania, Finland, Croatia) and an **indicative calendar of meetings**.

The main theme of this Presidency is the need for cohesive EU policies among Member States, regions and citizens, with the aim to promote economic, social and territorial convergence. This should be done by enhancing competitiveness and closing development gaps, social progress, promoting connectivity and digitization, stimulating entrepreneurship and strengthening industrial policy.

On energy, the Romanian Presidency mainly aims at implementing the Energy Union initiatives. At the legislative level work will focus on formalizing the political agreements on the market design files, based on the progress achieved by the Austrian Presidency. The Romanian Presidency will carry out work on the recent legislative proposals, and will particularly pay attention to the Brexit adaptation on Energy Efficiency.

On the non-legislative dimension, the Presidency will propose a debate on the Future of the Energy System in the Energy Union designed to ensure the energy transition and the achievement of energy and climate change objectives, with a focus on energy infrastructure developments, energy storage solutions and innovative technologies. The objective is to adopt Council Conclusions on this topic at the June 2019 Energy Council. Additionally, the Presidency will take forward the policy debates on the Strategic Long-Term Vision for a Climate Neutral Economy.

Furthermore, the Presidency will continue to carry out the work on the external energy relations. In the current global context, which presents both a number of opportunities and challenges for the nuclear sector, the Romanian Presidency will aim to adopt Council Conclusions on enhancing nuclear safety.

(Source: Council of the EU)

## Edition Content

### COUNCIL PRESIDENCY

Romanian Presidency programme on energy and climate **P.2**

### BREXIT

The EU regrets outcome of the vote in the UK Parliament on the Withdrawal Agreement **P.3**

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Environmental NGOs call for disclosure of national energy and climate plans **P.4**

### CO2 EMISSIONS FROM TRANSPORT

EU Member States sign off on new CO2 targets for cars and vans and define positions on CO2 limits for trucks **P.5**

### ELECTRICITY MARKET DESIGN

EU institutions agree on electricity market reforms in trilogue negotiations **P.6**

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## BREXIT

# The EU regrets outcome of the vote in the UK Parliament on the Withdrawal Agreement



©ratlos

EU decision-makers are closely following the Brexit-related developments in the UK, after the UK Government was defeated by 432 votes to 202 – a margin of 230 votes (a record defeat) on the vote of the Withdrawal Agreement. The European Commission's President Jean-Claude Juncker **regretted** in a statement the outcome of the vote, requesting clarity on what the UK now wants, warning that the risk of no-deal has increased and stressing that the EU will continue with its contingency work for a no deal. Michel Barnier, who led the negotiations from the EU side, repeated that the EU27 were open to changing their position if the UK would change its red lines.

In the meantime, the EU will continue with its own process of ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement. The first formal step was taken by Ministers this month and the deal has now been formally sent to the European Parliament for ratification. The European Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee (AFCO) will draft a report, with a working group formed by representatives from all the EU political groups steering it through the EP. The consent vote is likely to take place during the 11-14 March 2019 plenary. Final adoption would likely take place at the General Affairs Council 19 March 2019.

In terms of next steps, there are different options that could materialise in the next months: a renegotiation of the Deal, the extension of Article 50, a No-Deal Brexit, or a second referendum. While preparations for a "No-Deal" are continuing in both sides, an extension of the negotiating period (so-called extension of Art. 50) seems now the most likely scenario. Upon request of the UK, the Council will have to agree unanimously on giving more time for the UK to leave with an agreement. An extension to 1 July 2019, when the new EP has its constituent sitting, is not expected to be too problematic – longer than that would risk having to hold European Parliament elections in the UK.

(Source: [Interel](#))

## Edition Content

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### COUNCIL PRESIDENCY

Romanian Presidency programme on energy and climate **P.2**

---

### BREXIT

The EU regrets outcome of the vote in the UK Parliament on the Withdrawal Agreement **P.3**

---

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Environmental NGOs call for disclosure of national energy and climate plans **P.4**

---

### CO2 EMISSIONS FROM TRANSPORT

EU Member States sign off on new CO2 targets for cars and vans and define positions on CO2 limits for trucks **P.5**

---

### ELECTRICITY MARKET DESIGN

EU institutions agree on electricity market reforms in trilogue negotiations **P.6**

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### CLIMATE CHANGE

## Environmental NGOs call for disclosure of national energy and climate plans



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Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe has called on the European Commission to disclose the draft national energy and climate plans (NECP) for 2021-2030, in which governments set out how they plan to meet EU climate targets for 2030.

"All draft plans need to be publicly available without delay to ensure transparency and public participation before they are finalized by the end of 2019," said Wendel Trio, director of CAN. The European Commission should ensure, he added, that all plans "allow for a timely and comprehensive assessment" to contribute to the clean energy transition and other long-term goals. Cyprus, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic and Spain still have to submit their draft plans, which were due by 31 December 2018. Sweden was the first to publish its NECP, in August 2018.

With 21 plans received so far, the European Commission will make country-specific recommendations by the end of June 2019, giving Member States time to finalize their plans - which should outline ways to encourage investments in low-carbon technologies - by the 31 December 2019 deadline. Although the Regulation on the **Governance of the Energy Union** does not set out strict timings or requirements for public consultations, countries should allow opportunities for public participation in the NECP process, and issue progress reports and assessments of costs and the impact of national policy choices.

In parallel, the EU is developing a long-term strategy for greenhouse gas reduction to meet its obligations under the Paris Climate Agreement, which will require Member States to submit plans by 1 January 2020. The European Council will provide guidance on this in the first semester of 2019, while the European Parliament's Environment Committee is expected to schedule a debate and motion for a resolution during the European Parliament's March 2019 plenary session.

(Source: [ENDS Europe](#))

## Edition Content

---

### COUNCIL PRESIDENCY

Romanian Presidency programme on energy and climate **P.2**

---

### BREXIT

The EU regrets outcome of the vote in the UK Parliament on the Withdrawal Agreement **P.3**

---

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Environmental NGOs call for disclosure of national energy and climate plans **P.4**

---

### CO2 EMISSIONS FROM TRANSPORT

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### ELECTRICITY MARKET DESIGN

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### CO2 EMISSIONS FROM TRANSPORT

## EU Member States sign off on new CO2 targets for cars and vans and define positions on CO2 limits for trucks



©INSAGO

Ambassadors of EU Member States approved new CO2 emissions standards for cars and vans from 2021, after negotiators reached a deal on the new targets in December 2018. Gratiela Gavrilescu, Romania's Deputy Prime Minister and Environment Minister, said that the agreement "gives the go-ahead to de-carbonize and modernize Europe's road transport."

Under the new rules, car manufacturers have to cut CO2 emissions from new cars by 15% by 2025, and 37.5% cut by 2030. Vans will have to cut emissions in 2030 by 31%. A review clause was introduced to, as of 2023, revise the 2030 target and to introduce targets for 2035 and 2040 onwards.

The new policy also establishes an incentive scheme for car-makers to roll out more electric cars through benchmarks for zero- and low-emission vehicles in 2025 and 2030, 15% and 35% respectively, and measures to promote these vehicles in countries where such vehicle sales have been low in number. The negotiators also foresaw provisions to develop a methodology on life-cycle emissions reporting procedures from 2023. In terms of next steps: the file needs to be officially approved by the Parliament's Environment Committee, the Parliament's Plenary and the EU ministers before the Regulation applies from 1 January 2020.

In parallel to the CO2 emissions standards for cars, EU Member States are also negotiating new CO2 standards for heavy-duty vehicles with MEPs and the European Commission in trilogue negotiations. Positions between Council and Parliament differ as the European Parliament calls for more stringent emission targets (+5%) compared to the Commission proposal whereas the Council sticks to the European Commission proposals to have a binding 2030 target of 30% average emissions reduction for new trucks compared to 2019 and a mid-decade interim target of 15% with a review in 2022.

The Council's Presidency believes that "progress can be made rather relatively quickly", as negotiators are likely to mirror the recently agreed CO2 emissions legislation for cars. Under such a scenario, the heavy-duty file could be closed before the EP elections of May 2019.

(Source: [Político Pro + Interel](#))

## Edition Content

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### **COUNCIL PRESIDENCY**

Romanian Presidency programme on energy and climate **P.2**

---

### **BREXIT**

The EU regrets outcome of the vote in the UK Parliament on the Withdrawal Agreement **P.3**

---

### **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Environmental NGOs call for disclosure of national energy and climate plans **P.4**

---

### **CO2 EMISSIONS FROM TRANSPORT**

EU Member States sign off on new CO2 targets for cars and vans and define positions on CO2 limits for trucks **P.5**

---

### **ELECTRICITY MARKET DESIGN**

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#### ELECTRICITY MARKET DESIGN

## EU institutions agree on electricity market reforms in trilogue negotiations



©Patrick Jennings

Representatives from the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU reached an agreement on the Electricity Market Design rules. Throughout the negotiations, deciding on regulated prices was one of the main issues on which EU institutions struggled to find a compromise.

In a nutshell, the Council initially proposed to allow countries to keep regulated prices indefinitely. In the course of the negotiations, Member States agreed to keep regulated prices for 10 years instead, aiming at finding a compromise with the European Parliament. However, at some point in the discussions, the Council reverted to its original position, allegedly because France retracted their position on this issue probably due to violent public protests that affected the country at the end of the year 2018.

In the end, there will not be a mandatory scheme on regulated/flexible pricing included in the agreement, and it will be up to Member States to decide individually. Instead of the scheme, there will be a review clause in 2025 to see how to move forward from then onwards on the matter.

**(Source: [Político Pro](#) + [Interel](#))**

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