

President Iohannis - at European Council meeting; coordination of anti-COVID-19 measures and Multiannual Financial Framework discussed

President Klaus Iohannis has participated, on Thursday and Friday, in Brussels, in the European Council meeting, the main topics on the agenda of the meeting regarding the negotiations referring to the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework and the European Economic Recovery Plan, but also agreeing to a new climate objective for 2030.

Furthermore, the internal security of the Union was analyzed, aspects regarding the foreign relations of the EU being discussed, such as the trans-Atlantic relations, the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean and the southern vicinity. The discussions regarding the coordination of measures, at the level of the Union, in the context generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, continued, shows a release of the Presidential Administration.

In what regards the future Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and the European Economic Recovery Plan, the conclusions of the European Council were adopted, bringing additional clarification regarding the legislative proposal referring to the condition regarding protection of the budget and financial interests of the Union from the perspective of respecting the principles of rule of law. Consequently, for the purpose of ensuring the objective and efficient implementation of this condition, the European Commission will elaborate and adopt orientations, in close consultation with member-states, and will inform the European Council on them.

President Iohannis hailed the positive developments recorded in the direction of finalizing the negotiation process, showing that they are of a nature to facilitate the operationalization, as quickly as possible, of programs financed as part of the future budget of the Union for 2021-2027 and starting the implementation of the recovery plan. At the same time, he reiterated Romania's support for adopting legislation afferent to the conditions regarding the rule of law targeting the protection of the budget of the European Union.

Another important result of the meeting was the agreement of the heads of state and government in the Union with regards to the EU objective for 2030 to reduce greenhouse gases by 55 pct compared to the level of 1990. In this context, the aspects regarding the definition of an implementation framework that would facilitate the accomplishment of the new objective were discussed, including from the perspective of the constitutive principles and components of this framework.

The conclusions adopted mention, thus, that member states will participate in the common effort to ensure the fulfilling of the new target on equitable bases and in a solidary manner. Furthermore, the conclusions make reference to the fact that fulfilling the target will be done without affecting the competitiveness of the Union and by taking into consideration specific national circumstances, the different levels and potential for reduction of greenhouse gases that member-states start off with in this process, as well as the efforts done previously for this purpose. At the same time, the European Council has recognized the necessity to ensure interconnections and energy security for all member-states at accessible prices for companies and citizens, as well as to respect the rights of member-states to decide on the national energy mix and to opt for the most adequate technologies in the transition process, mentions the quoted source.

Furthermore, the European Commission was invited to evaluate the ways by which the economic sectors can contribute to reaching the target and to present proposals on the basis of detailed evaluations regarding the economic, social and environment impact at the level of the member-states.

The subject will be discussed again by the leaders of the Union for the purpose of adopting additional orientations prior to the presentation by the European Commission of the legislative package for sectorial proposals to support

the reaching of the new objective, including that regarding the sharing of efforts between member-states, the Presidential Administration mentions.

President Klaus Iohannis showed that Romania supports the new ambitious target to reduce the emissions at the level of the Union, emphasizing at the same time the necessity of a realistic approach in preparing the implementation, given that it will imply considerable efforts to transform European economies.

The head of state also emphasized the importance of an equitable sharing of efforts between member-states, depending on the specific national conditions and circumstances they have, with ensuring energy security, respecting the national energy mix and the principle of technologic neutrality. On the basis of this principle, at the request of the President of Romania, the text of the conclusions of the European Council makes reference to the possibility of using gas as a transition technology that would support the objective of the Union for 2030.

Referring to the coordination, at the level of the EU, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the leaders hailed the evolutions recorded regarding the development of efficient vaccines against SARS-CoV-2, manifesting, at the same time, concern for the persistence of a high number of infection cases. The European Council agreed, at the same time, with the consolidation of efforts to coordinate measures at the level of the Union, especially in what regards a gradual lifting of restrictions, inviting the European Commission to present a proposal regarding a joint framework for antigen testing and for the reciprocal recognition of test results.

The heads of state and government in the Union emphasized the importance of adequate preparations for vaccine distribution and vaccination campaigns, including from the perspective of the communication strategy. At the same time, the leaders deemed necessary to increase the resilience of health systems and to consolidate cooperation in this domain, including through initiative such as the Health Union.

Furthermore, the heads of state and government reiterated the necessity and availability to consolidate the cooperation, at the level of the EU, to combat terrorism and associated phenomena. By the conclusions adopted, the leaders reaffirmed the necessity of unity in counteracting terrorist activities, radicalization and violent extremism. The European Council has launched an appeal to the member-states to accelerate efforts regarding the implementation of new data bases and computer systems at the European level, as well as in the direction of consolidating police and judiciary cooperation in the domain.

Regarding the foreign agenda of the Union, the leaders approached, mainly, aspects regarding the EU - US relations, the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Southern Vicinity.

Regarding transatlantic relations, by the conclusions adopted, the European Council underlined the importance of a strong trans-Atlantic partnership focused on common interests and shared values, especially in the context of current global challenges. It was agreed to approach, in the relation with the US, some important topics such as consolidating multilateralism, strengthening the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, managing climate change, consolidating economic and commercial recovery, the promotion of security and cooperation in the technological and digital domain. The European Council expressed its availability to discuss common priorities with the new President of the United States.

In regards to the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean, European leaders reaffirmed, through the conclusions adopted, the strategic interest for developing mutually advantageous relations of cooperation with Turkey. They maintained the offer of a positive agenda, on the condition Turkey will manifest availability for an honest partnership with the European Union and member-states, as well as solving disagreements by dialogue and in agreement with international law. The positive agenda would include the economic and commercial dimension, interhuman contact, the resumption of high level dialogue, as well as the continuation of cooperation in the domain of migration.

On the other hand, in the conclusions of the European Council it is mentioned that Turkey "has engaged in unilateral actions, provocative towards the Union, the member states and some European leaders." Thus, the Council of the Union is invited to adopt additional listings on the basis of the decision of November 11, 2019 regarding restrictive measures regarding the drilling activities of Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The European Council has also underlined the importance of maintaining communication channels with Turkey open. It has invited the High Representative and the Commission to present an update evaluation of the EU-Turkey relations, as well as the options to approach, in order to be discussed at the latest during the European Council of March 2021.

Furthermore, the heads of state and government requested the organization of a Multilateral Conference regarding the Eastern Mediterranean. The European Union will track and coordinate with the United States of America in regards to Turkey and the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean.