
ROMANIAN PREMIER: ROMANIA READY FOR EU PRESIDENCY AMID EU CRITICISM

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Romania's prime minister dismissed suggestions Tuesday that the country isn't prepared to take over the rotating presidency of the European Union next year, despite criticism from the bloc that the country is backsliding on democratic reforms.

"I assure you that Romania is ready... logistically and from an organizational point of view," Premier Viorica Dancila said, blasting the EU for a critical report on the country's justice system.

On Monday, President Klaus Iohannis said Romania was "totally unprepared" to take over the six-month leadership of the EU on Jan. 1.

Dancila's comment came as the European Commission called on the country to immediately suspend the implementation of new judicial laws and appointments of prosecutors and complained the nation was moving backward on democratic reforms following years of progress.

European Commission Vice President Frans Timmermans said that the EU executive set out eight recommendations for "immediate follow-up" to increase the independence of the judiciary and toughen the fight against corruption.

Timmermans also said media freedom needs to be better respected.

The timing of the criticism is awkward since Romania takes over the rotating presidency of the EU in less than two months.

Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä told Finnish news agency STT that his government raised its readiness to move forward its presidency term which is scheduled to start July 1, but didn't intend to swap with Romania.

Earlier Tuesday, The European Parliament passed a resolution recommending that Romania strike down measures "which would decriminalize corruption in office," amid concerns over a contentious judicial overhaul the bloc says undermines the anti-corruption fight. Late Tuesday, Dancila called the report "profoundly unfair," and politically motivated. She claimed Romania's president wanted "anarchy."

A little-known politician, Dancila became premier in January but has little executive power. Liviu Dragnea, the chairman of the ruling Social Democratic Party, basically runs the government but can't be prime minister because of a conviction for vote-rigging.

Iohannis called the EU report "devastating" and asked politicians of all stripes to wake up "and act

at once."

<http://www.kltv.com/2018/11/13/premier-romania-ready-eu-presidency-amid-eu-criticism/>

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