

Deputy PM Kelemen: PNRR, a highly balanced plan, might be officially submitted to EC on Monday

Romania's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) is a "highly balanced" one that will cover all important segments, from transport to health, from education to environment, from local public administration units to research and digital transformation, according to Deputy Prime Minister Kelemen Hunor, who says that Romania might officially submit the plan to the European Commission next week on Monday.

"First of all, from the very beginning, we in the coalition said that we will come to Parliament before ratification, so it's not that Brussels has insisted or anyone has insisted; that has been our talk since January, but we wanted to have something to come before Parliament with. Tomorrow [Wednesday] there will be a debate, as requested by the Social Democratic Party (PSD), from 13:00hrs, the prime minister will unveil the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), after which there is room for debate and then a vote will follow not on PNRR, but on the ratification of the treaty. We have to ratify it tomorrow; that is an important thing, before it appears in the Official Journal by June 1. If all the EU member states ratify by May 31, then we can already take out the loan on July 1, which is important, because there are already countries waiting for funding under similar plans," Kelemen told TVR 1 public broadcaster on Tuesday when asked about the latest development in the drawing up of the PNRR.

He voiced hope that, following the discussions, everyone is clear that the PNRR is "a good project."

"It is a plan that must be endorsed by everyone, which needs some reforms as well, because we are talking about two components: grants and loans. For each member state there is an expectation, there are criteria for each state, what reforms must be done, because it is still taxpayers' money and you have to make some reforms that can support the economy in the medium and long term if you invest in certain sectors. And there are some expectations about the green component and digital transformation. There have been many, many discussions since January that will last until tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and until Monday, when Romania officially submits it, because so far this plan has not been officially submitted, it was not a very urgent matter, because we established from the beginning that we will submit it in May," said Kelemen.

The deputy prime minister underscored that, from the point of view of the ruling coalition, the PNRR is a "highly balanced plan that will cover all important segments, from transport to health, from education to environment, from local public administration units to research and digital transformation."

"All components are highly balanced. I even proposed in an extremely careful way, for example, everything that is at the Ministry of Development or in the province of the Ministry of Development, I said let us go for something when it is not decided politically, each local public administration unit, county seats, cities, towns, have at their disposal a certain amount and can choose from various projects they want to finance, for example urban mobility. For transport, they identify exactly the motorways, the railway segment where investment will be poured into throughout 2026. (...) We have insisted and fought a lot for infrastructure and they have accepted and there will be a lot of money for the road and railway infrastructure; but here, too, we have to see one thing: you have to go with mature projects, with already made projects, because otherwise there is no way you can sign the contracts until next year and carry through these projects by 2026," he underscored.

Kelemen added that as far as agriculture is concerned, there was only one unresolved issue, the one related to irrigation.

"So we have to secure funding for irrigation from the national budget or possibly from another programme, that was the only thing, let's say, where barriers could not be overcome," Kelemen said.

He mentioned that there will also be components on the environment side, including funding for small towns of under 2,000 inhabitants.

He added that, in his opinion, the first batch of money under the PNRR, and reimbursements, would be made in 2022.

"It depends a lot on us. If we submit it on May 31, let's say that in two months the project is evaluated, the project is approved, which means in July discussions start to sign the contracts that have to be signed by the end of the year or by early next year. Of course, immediately after that happens, the money comes in, if the projects are ok (...). I do not want to say that this year money will come under the PNRR, nor do I rule out getting funds by the end of the year for certain projects that are ready, that are mature enough (...) but I would rather say early 2022," said Kelemen.