

HOSTILE NARRATIVE BRIEF

WAR IN UKRAINE

Political Context: Romania



June 2023



About The Beacon Project

The International Republican Institute strengthens citizen voices and helps make their leaders more accountable and responsive. To put it simply, IRI encourages democracy in places where it is absent, helps democracy become more effective where it is in danger and shares best practices where democracy is flourishing.

Vladimir Putin is actively trying to sway public opinion throughout Europe using hostile propaganda, disinformation, and political subversion as a way to destabilize its neighbors. Therefore, in 2015, IRI launched the Beacon Project to counteract this misinformation.

The Beacon Project does not prevent disinformation from occurring—a laudable but impossible goal. Nor does it confront every instance of disinformation—though we work with partners who do just that. IRI’s focus is to dismantle the underlying conditions that allow disinformation to spread. Strengthening democracy is the best approach for nations to respond not just to today’s threat, but to better endure in the face of future threats in whatever form they take.

Publication Details

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Hostile Narrative Brief: War in Ukraine • Political Context: Romania

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Introduction

After the fall of communism, Romania entered a never-ending circle of ex-communist party members influencing the country's direction. Romania never had a lustration law, which would have meant the official and legal exclusion of ex-communist party members from political life. The failure to do this has significant implications for Romania to this day.. The first party after the communist revolution, the National Salvation Front, had as a co-president Ion Iliescu, the right hand of the former dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu. Being educated in Moscow, Ion Iliescu and his network manipulated the future of today Romania, his two terms in office as Romania's president represented a democratic backsliding in our young democracy.

In 2023, Romania faced new problems with old communist echoes. The main parties, PNL (National Liberal Party) and PSD (Social-Democrats Party) are both the successors of the National Salvation Front (FSN, first party after 1989). In our short democratic history they are both well-known for a lack of political ideology, and hugely influenced from the shadows by the Romanian Secret Services (SRI). The ruling coalition in Romania until the 2024 general elections is made up of these two parties and the Hungarian minority party, UDMR (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania).

In this scenario, the rise of nationalist extremist parties like AUR – The Alliance for the Union of Romanians - is a fresh breath of hope for people that lost hope in organic change. Unaware of their extremist tendencies, anti-West and human rights positions, the electorate of AUR is made up of Romanian from rural, urban, young and old all alike. Significant support is also brought by the Romanian diaspora, one of the biggest in Europe, almost five million Romanian worldwide.

General political situation in the country

In this context, 2024 is going to be a historic year for Romania, when all four elections – local, national parliamentary, European parliamentary and presidential will be held. General voter apathy is the biggest threat against democracy, with only **31.84 percent** of the population voting in the last parliamentary elections. This generalized apathy is built on a decade in which clientelism and incompetence flourished in Romanian politics and state institutions. The low level of trust is the result of the continuous state capture of key political positions. Politicians with no experience in the field such as Viorica Dăncilă (former prime minister), Nicolae Ciucă (current prime minister, former general with no prior visibility or experience in Romanian politics), Lucian Bode (Minister of Internal Affairs, accused of plagiarism related to his doctoral thesis following several journalistic investigations), Liviu Dragnea (former leader of the largest party in Romania, the Social Democratic Party. Former President of the Chamber of Deputies sentenced to three and a half years in prison) are now what Romanians despise most.

There was a quick progressive hope for the Romanian electorate. USR, or Uniunea Salvați România (Union for the Salvation of Romania). It was founded in 2016 as a center-right, pro-European, and reformist party. USR emerged as a response to public dissatisfaction with corruption and inefficiency in Romanian politics, and in the last parliamentary elections in 2020, it was part of the ruling coalition with PNL (National Liberal Party) and UDMR (Alliance of Hungarians in Romania). The coalition was brief, with USR ending up in the opposition. Now, **the 70 percent supermajority** obtained by the grand coalition of PNL, PSD and UMR, the second in the country's post-communist history – has brought stability, but at many costs for Romania's democracy. Among the backslides of the current coalition is a **controversial bill** that would give impunity and increased powers to the Romanian Intelligence Service, and the corruption and clientelism allegations surrounding a new infrastructure project, **Anghel Saligny**.



War in Ukraine in the Political Discourse

Romania's policy to Russia's invasion of Ukraine can be described as **excessively cautious**. Having 613.8 km of shared border with Ukraine resulting in millions of Ukrainian refugees transiting and hundreds of thousands settling, Romanian political discourse has been **unusually quiet** in supporting Ukraine. Vasile Dincu, Romania's former Defense Minister **resigned after stating** that Ukraine's only chance for peace and ending the war is talks with Russia. Only after several days did Romania's President Klaus Iohannis and Romania's Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă make public declarations distancing themselves from his remarks.

His statements are clearly contrary to the Government's official position towards Ukraine, but it seems they reflect a portion of the Romanian politicians that want the conflict to end as soon as possible, thus minimizing negative effects on the relationship between Romania and Russia.

Closing in to the 2024 elections, misinformation is no longer a tactic specific to the AUR party. Lately, the ruling parties have not refrained from making controversial statements, taking advantage of the scandal such as the Bystroe canal dispute and the issue of the rights of the Romanian minority in Ukraine. This trend of politically exploiting misinformation normalizes the ambivalent discourse on Ukraine and legitimizes opinions that question Romania's support for the neighboring country, a country that is fighting for our freedom.



Main Political Actors

Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat, PSD)

Slogan – Supporting Romania

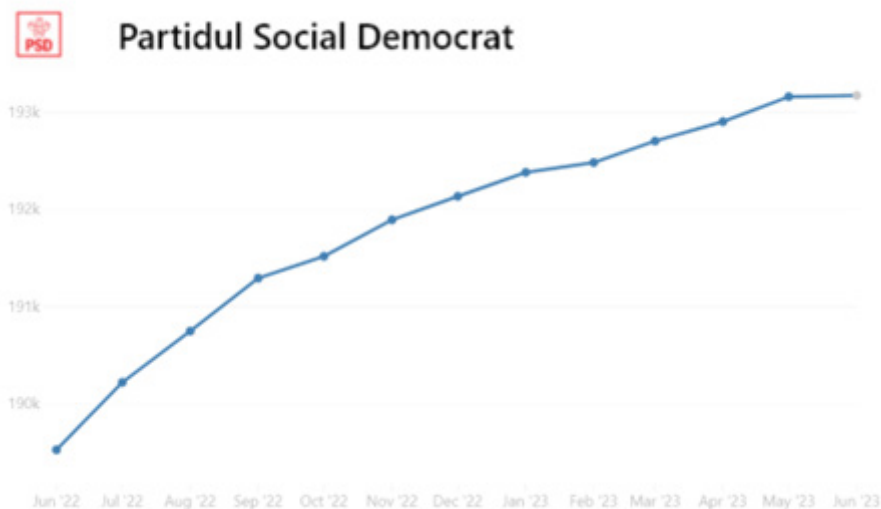
Social Democratic Party, commonly referred to as PSD, is the biggest political party in Romania. Its history dates back to the 1990s when it was built as the successor of the National Salvation Front, the political coalition that initially had temporary power after the fall of communism, that later transformed itself into a political party. PSD was constantly a top political force in Romania after the fall of communism, even as it has undergone various transformations, coalitions and rebrandings. Theoretically, it is a center-left party, promoting social democratic policies and the interests of the poorer areas. However, nationalist policies and economic unsustainable policies have been often associated with the party.

Over the years, the PSD has undergone various transformations and rebrandings, but it has maintained its position as a significant political force in Romania. It has traditionally been identified as a center-left party, advocating for social democratic policies and representing the interests of the working class.

PSD emerged as the largest party in the 2016 parliamentary elections, forming a government coalition with the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats, a party that has since disappeared. In January 2017, the government introduced an emergency ordinance (OUG 13) that aimed to decriminalize certain corruption offenses and reduce penalties for others. This move sparked widespread public protests across Romania with more than 600,000 demonstrators in Bucharest. Under mounting pressure, the government eventually repealed the controversial ordinance, highlighting the importance of anti-corruption efforts in public discourse.

Currently, PSD is a pro-European party, led by **Marcel Ciolacu**, that took the party after huge credibility losses caused by anti-corruption protests and the imprisonment of the former leader, Liviu Dragnea. He is a classical nationalist and populist leader, focusing on a center-left socialist political agenda.

Followers PSD Party:



Most interacted content - General:



And before the vote for Romania's admission to Schengen, PSD urged Romanians to BUY ROMANIA! Even more so now, after the rejection of our country's candidacy, the...
[See more](#)



13.5K 3.6K 947



Social Democratic Pa... ✓

May 5, 2022 at 4:58 PM

PSD's position is very clear: no special pensions for MPs! We made the decision to abolish the special pensions of MPs a long time ago and we have not changed our...
[See more](#)

11.2K 4.8K 584

Most Interacted Content – Ukraine:



Social Democratic Party ✓

Mar 3, 2022 at 1:31 PM

● ● ● Romania donates blood for Ukraine!
● ● ⚠ To become a blood donor you must meet the following conditions: - age between 18-60 years - weight over 50 Kg - regular pulse, 60-100 beats/minute - systolic blood...
[See more](#)



10.0K 2.2K 540



Social Democratic Party ✓

Feb 19, 2023 at 12:21 PM

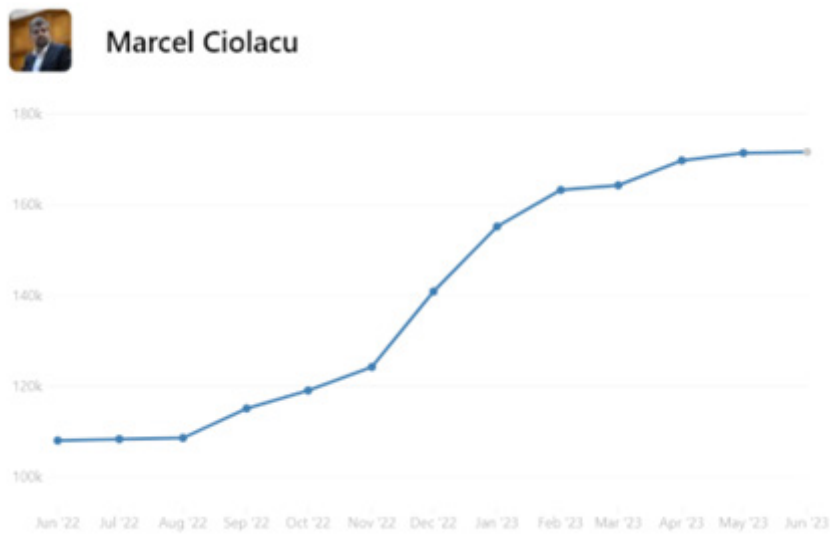
"In the context of Ukraine's request regarding the inclusion of the Chilia and Bistroe arms in the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and the presentation of a dredging plan for the Bistroe channel, we have requested the...
[See more](#)



11.1K 4.9K 835



Followers PSD Leader



Most Interacted Content – General:

Marcel Ciolacu Jan 18, 2022 at 1:47 PM

The bills of the Romanians will FALL immediately - as a result of the PSD proposals, agreed yesterday in the coalition. PSD's package of measures brings the price of electricity to the level before the wild...
See more

54.0K 13.0K 3.6K

Marcel Ciolacu Nov 28, 2022 at 7:47 PM

A gift of the soul. God bless Romania and the Romanians!

31.0K 5.4K 662



Most Interacted Content – Ukraine:



National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal, PNL)

Slogan - Through Ourselves!

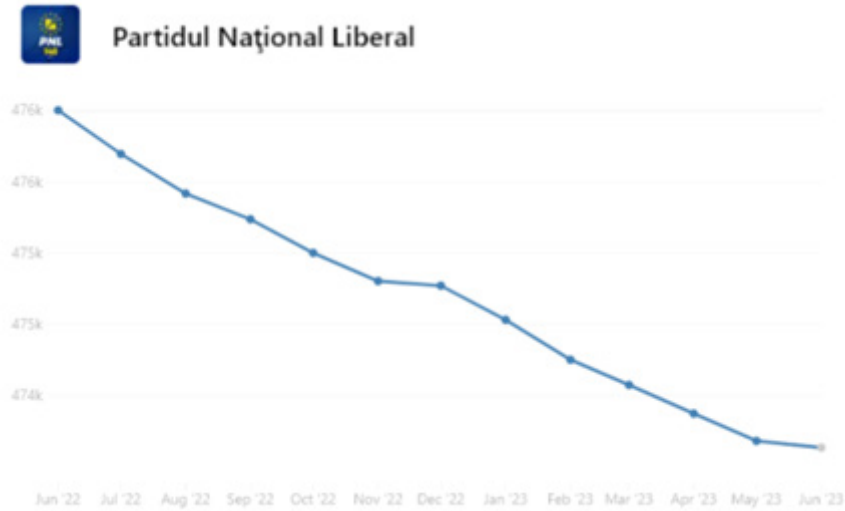
The National Liberal Party, commonly known as PNL is the second biggest party in Romania. It presents itself as center-right liberal party and advocates for democratic reforms, market-oriented economic policies, and European integration. In practice, PNL participated in coalition governments and played a role in shaping Romania's transition. The corruption allegations equal those of PSD, in the short democratic history of Romania the two parties have formed the second Government coalition for the sake of power. PNL is also associated with successors from the National Salvation Front from the 1989's. In 2014, the PNL also merged with a breakaway party from the National Salvation Front, called the **Partidul Democrat Liberal, PDL**.

The most recent scandal took place in 2021, when former party leader **Ludovic Orban** resigned from the party and formed his own political formation Forta Dreptei.

The current president of the party is Prime Minister Nicolae Ciuca. He has a reputation as an executor of the orders of important figures in the PNL, being a former general with no previous political experience or visibility in the Romanian public. According to the government's website, he has participated in various operations and missions at home and abroad, being commander of the **Romanian battalion in Afghanistan and Iraq (2004)**.



Followers:



Most Interacted Content – General:

The National Free Pa... ✓

Oct 5, 2022 at 12:34 PM

PNL protects Romanians regardless of the heating source! The government led by liberal Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă has capped the price of wood for fire at 400 le...
See more

5.8K 3.2K 265

The National Free Pa... ✓

Oct 21, 2022 at 8:18 PM

Regarding the resolution of the Dutch parliament yesterday, it is necessary to clarify a number of aspects: 1. We should not worry about the resolution of the Dutch...
See more


4.9K 2.1K 942



Most Interacted Content – Ukraine:

The National Free Pa...
 Apr 26, 2022 at 9:34 PM


Prime Minister Nicolae Ionel Ciucă, President of the National Liberal Party: I was honored to meet today, in Kiev, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenski. I assured him...
 See more



10.0K 1.9K 245

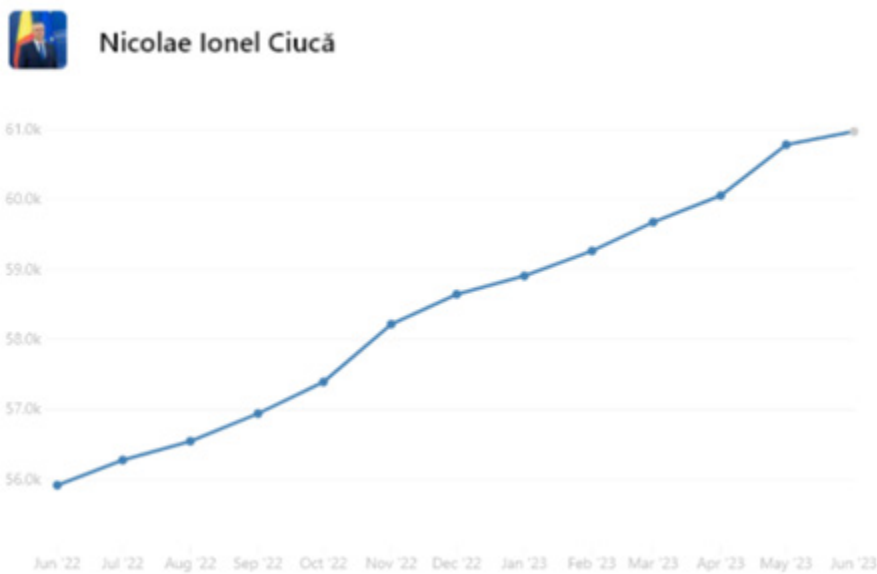
The National Free Party...
 Mar 30, 2022 at 2:30 PM

The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, will address the Romanian Parliament Florin Cițu, the president of the National Liberal Party: "Important discussion with the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Denys Shymhal: Presiden...
 See more






3.1K 1.6K 153

Followers – Party Leader:








Main Challenges

Most Interacted Content – General:

 Nicolae Ionel Ciucă  
 Nov 22, 2022 at 5:56 PM

The European Commission announced today that the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism can be lifted for Romania. It is an extremely...
[See more](#)



   4.4K  1.9K  275

 Nicolae Ionel Ciucă  
 Apr 6, 2022 at 5:40 PM

I decided to submit my candidacy motion for the position of president of the National Liberal Party. I take this responsibility after a discussion with my colleagues, based on my...
[See more](#)



   3.4K  2.9K  267




Most Interacted Content – Ukraine:

 Nicolae Ionel Ciucă  
 Feb 27, 2022 at 1:38 PM


As a sign of solidarity with the army and the wounded Ukrainian citizens, I appeal to all Romanians who can donate blood. It is important to remember that by donating blood...
[See more](#)








   3.2K  265  520

 Nicolae Ionel Ciucă  
 Apr 26, 2022 at 9:22 PM

I was honored to meet the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, in Kyiv today. I assured him of Romania's full support in efforts to stop Russia's illegal and...
[See more](#)



   4.4K  898  598





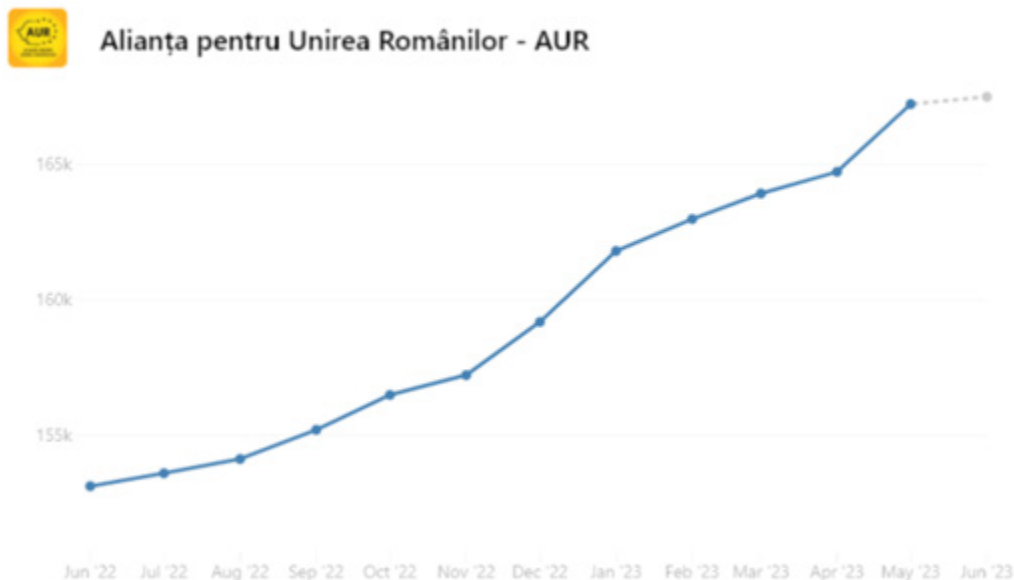
The Alliance for the Union of Romanians (Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor, AUR)

The Alliance for the Union of Romanians is a right-wing populist and nationalist political party currently active in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. It was founded on September 19, 2019. It was made with the intention of participating in the 2020 local and legislative elections in Romania.

The Alliance for the Unity of Romanians (AUR) was the surprise party of the 2020 parliamentary elections, an unknown party in the mainstream, with a far-right, ultra-nationalist and anti-European orientation, that had over five percent allowing it to enter the parliament. For the 2024 elections, they are expected to get almost 20 percent of the total votes. Their political program states that they will counter, through all legal and institutional instruments, agreements and directives that may affect the interests of Romania, that national interest must be the central axis of Romania's foreign policy. They also promote the establishment of a Sovereign Wealth Fund, a national program under which natural resources will be handled only by the state.


George Simion is the leader of AUR, a unionist politician with a nationalist rhetoric. He is banned in the Republic of Moldova for advocating the union between the Republic of Moldova and Romania. Before entering AUR he was an activist in various social moves with a radical tendency.

Followers:



Alliance for the Union of Ro... Apr 20, 2022 at 8:29 PM

George Simion shows us the insides of the system! Today he was at STB (Bucharest public transport). Watch and judge!




3.39M POST VIEWS 3.91M TOTAL VIEWS

66.1K 14.0K 14.9K

Alliance for the Union of Ro... Jan 29, 2022 at 2:15 PM

The attempt to impose a global dictatorship is nearing its end. Check out this footage shot now in Canada. Huge protest initiated by truck drivers against mandatory vaccination. We will be at the University today at 17:00, to suppor... See more



Canada: Freedom Convoy 2022


356.9K POST VIEWS 432.8K TOTAL VIEWS

31.1K 1.4K 8.6K

Most Interacted Content – Ukraine:

Alliance for the Union of ... Apr 12, 2023 at 4:14 PM

AUR MAKES THREE URGENT CALLS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA! 1) Prohibit the import of cereals, milk and other agricultural products on the territory of Romania from Ukraine! They can transit, but they must not have priority over Romanian farmers and transporters. 2) Give up on the lowest drug price. This regulation deprives Romanians of essential medicines that are no longer brought to Romania. 3) The Government to exercise its right of preemption regarding ENEL. See less



46.9K POST VIEWS 53.6K TOTAL VIEWS

4.7K 644 980

Alliance for the Union of ... May 8, 2022 at 12:41 PM

Bulgaria will not send weapons to Ukraine, the Parliament in Sofia decided. Instead, in the Romanian Parliament, only AUR believes that our country should not intervene in a war that does not belong... See more



3.9K 525 659



Party Leader – Followers:



Most Interacted Content – General:

George Simion Jan 10, 2022 at 7:46 PM

They want to arrest us even though they should be arrested
 At the homes of Iohannis, the Romanians' message for those who want to ban GOLD:

1.70m POST VIEWS 2.30M TOTAL VIEWS

100.3K 14.6K 26.1K

George Simion Jul 9, 2022 at 10:51 AM

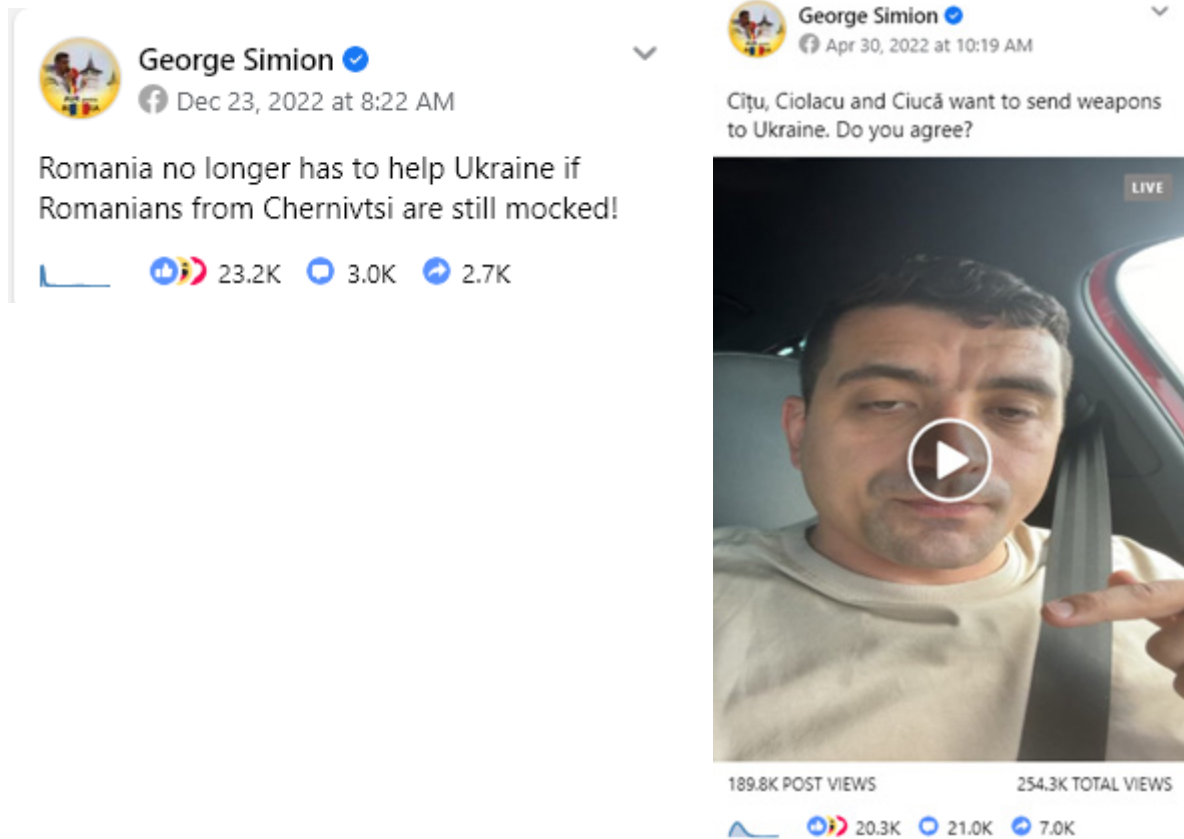
Current Report: STATE OF THE NATION
 I swore on the Bible to fight for Romania.
 Current report:

1.02M POST VIEWS 2.30M TOTAL VIEWS

111.0K 16.3K 67.9K



Most Interacted Content – Ukraine:



USR.

The Union Save Romania Party (Uniunea Salvați România, USR)

Slogan - A Romania without thievery

USR is a political party in Romania that was founded in February 2016. It emerged in the wake of the national tragedy at the Colectiv nightclub where a fire killed 64 young people. A subsequent investigation showed that the building had illegally obtained a license to operate. This put a spotlight on widespread corruption in public administration. USR after peaking with 15 percent representation in the parliament. It continues to advocate anti-corruption measures and political reforms, stressing the need for greater transparency and accountability in government. However, the new party has attracted much criticism after leaving the governing coalition with the National Liberal Party, the first chance for a new and perceived independent party to govern. Internal conflicts have led many prominent figures in the party to resign, led by former technocrat Prime Minister Dacian Cioloș, former president of the European Group for Renew.

USR is currently led by Cătălin Drulă, a former transport minister. A software engineer by profession, he studied in Canada, at the University of Toronto, USR being the first and only political party he was part of. He is not very popular with the other party leaders, also because of his limited exposure.



Followers:



Most Interacted Content - Ukraine:

USR. USR ✓
Apr 4, 2022 at 9:49 PM

George Simion refused to listen to and boycotted the speech of the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky. Our colleague, Bogdan Rodeanu put it right.



330.3K POST VIEWS 472.5K TOTAL VIEWS

👍 13.5K 🗨️ 3.6K 🔄 2.4K

USR. USR ✓
Feb 27, 2022 at 11:31 AM

Cătălin Drula: Putin's puppet is showing its face today. Ukraine is fighting heroically against a villainous dictator. The civilized world stands in solidarity against Putin. Romanians are mobilizing to help Ukrainian families torn...
[See more](#)



👍 5.4K 🗨️ 1.2K 🔄 1.0K



Top Content – General:

USR • USR • Mar 29, 2023 at 10:27 AM

USR was the only party that voted against special pensions, yesterday, at the mock debate in the Senate...

USR was the only party that voted against special pensions, yesterday, at the mock debate in the Senate committees. PSD and PNL didn't even have the courage to raise their hand to vote for the special pensions, on sigh...

See more

736.8K POST VIEWS 979.6K TOTAL VIEWS

22.3K 6.2K 13.3K

USR • USR • Mar 26, 2022 at 8:00 AM

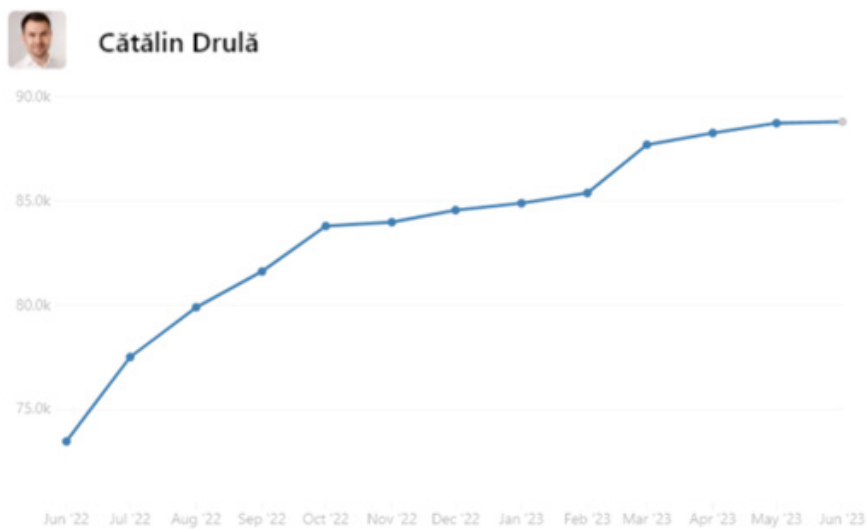
Mayors of USR are taking action against those who throw garbage illegally in the cities. In Câmpulung Muscel, the mayor Elena Lasconi announced the increase in fines after she actually caught, this week, several people...

See more


3.54M POST VIEWS 3.67m TOTAL VIEWS

29.4K 3.5K 3.5K

Followers:




Top Content - General:





 **Cătălin Drula** ✓
 Mar 23, 2023 at 4:09 PM

Ciucă's pension, yes. The money from PNRR, yes.

Here, in Brussels, no one understands how Marcel Ciolacu can sacrifice billions of euros for schools, hospitals and highways for the sake of Nicolae Ciucă's pension.




1.81M POST VIEWS 1.87m TOTAL VIEWS

  20.9K  3.1K  6.2K




 **Cătălin Drula** ✓
 Mar 7, 2023 at 3:34 PM

Why does Ciolacu defend special pensions

The problem of social democrat Marcel Ciolacu is that he cares more about Nicolae Ciucă's special pension of 18,000 lei per month than the small pensions of 3 million Romanians.



985.3K POST VIEWS 1.03M TOTAL VIEWS

  22.2K  3.3K  4.3K

Top Content – Ukraine:

 **Cătălin Drula** ✓
 Feb 28, 2022 at 12:48 PM

The accession of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to the European Union (EU) in an emergency procedure would represent a legitimate approach and an adequate response to Vladimir Putin. European states must have...
 See more

  4.2K  287  287

 **Cătălin Drula** ✓
 Feb 24, 2022 at 6:40 AM

Next to Ukraine. For freedom in Europe. Vladimir Putin started an illegitimate and cruel war tonight. It is a monstrous aggression against a peaceful country. Romania's attachment to democratic principles and the...
 See more

  3.7K  371  183





Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România, UDMR)


UDMR is a political party representing the interests of the Hungarian minority in Romania. It was founded at the fall of communism and has been a constant participant in parliamentary elections, being part of numerous governing coalitions, often accused of being “*opportunistic*”, joining PNL, PSD, USR, depending on the opportunity of governing.

Initially the UDMR was not a supporter of FIDESZ in Transylvania, but in recent years, especially in the 2021 elections their loyalty has been openly declared to Viktor Orbán. The leader of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) is Kelemen Hunor since 2011. Hunor Kelemen has been a prominent figure in the UDMR and has played a significant role in shaping the party’s direction and policies during his tenure as its leader. He is an advocate of minority rights and cultural autonomy, having a pragmatic approach towards politics, focusing on the interests of the Hungarian minority.


Followers:








Top Content – General:

 **RMDSZ** ✓
 Nov 18, 2022 at 5:18 PM

HU | RO Kelemen Hunor: The Hungarian Permanent Conference (MÁERT) was a good opportunity to exchange opinions with Viktor Orbán on issues affecting the...
 See more



   5.2K  257  91


 **RMDSZ** ✓
 Nov 22, 2022 at 3:17 PM

✓ Starting January 1, 2023, we will increase the value of the pension point to 1,784 lei. 🗨️ We provide additional assistance to low-pensioners: • pensioners with less than 1,500 lei...
 See more









   1.7K  525  315


Top Content Ukraine (The same for the party leader – Kelemen Hunor):

 **RMDSZ** ✓
 Feb 24, 2022 at 9:20 AM


HU | RO ! Kelemen Hunor: We deeply condemn and consider the Russian invasion of Ukraine unacceptable. We stand in solidarity with Ukraine and all nationalities living there. The...
 See more







   808  169  97

 **RMDSZ** ✓
 Mar 8, 2022 at 10:44 AM

HU | RO Kelemen Hunor: We live in times when mothers flee war-torn areas with their children in their arms. 🧑‍👦 The 8th of March this year is primarily about them, the mothers whose everyday lives are...
 See more



   951  60  13



Followers:



Top Content – General:

Kelemen Hunor ✓
 Apr 14, 2022 at 1:16 PM

Welcome to Cluj, Péter!



4.9K 241 68

Kelemen Hunor ✓
 May 20, 2022 at 1:23 PM

I met Katalin Novák, the President of the Republic of Hungary in Cluj

HU Katalin Novák took office on May 10, and one of her first trips was to Cluj. This morning we had the opportunity to thoroughly discuss the issues affecting all of us. 🇷🇴 Katalin Novák also took ove...
[See more](#)



70.3K POST VIEWS 75.5K TOTAL VIEWS
 3.4K 198 117



Main Challenges

General Overview

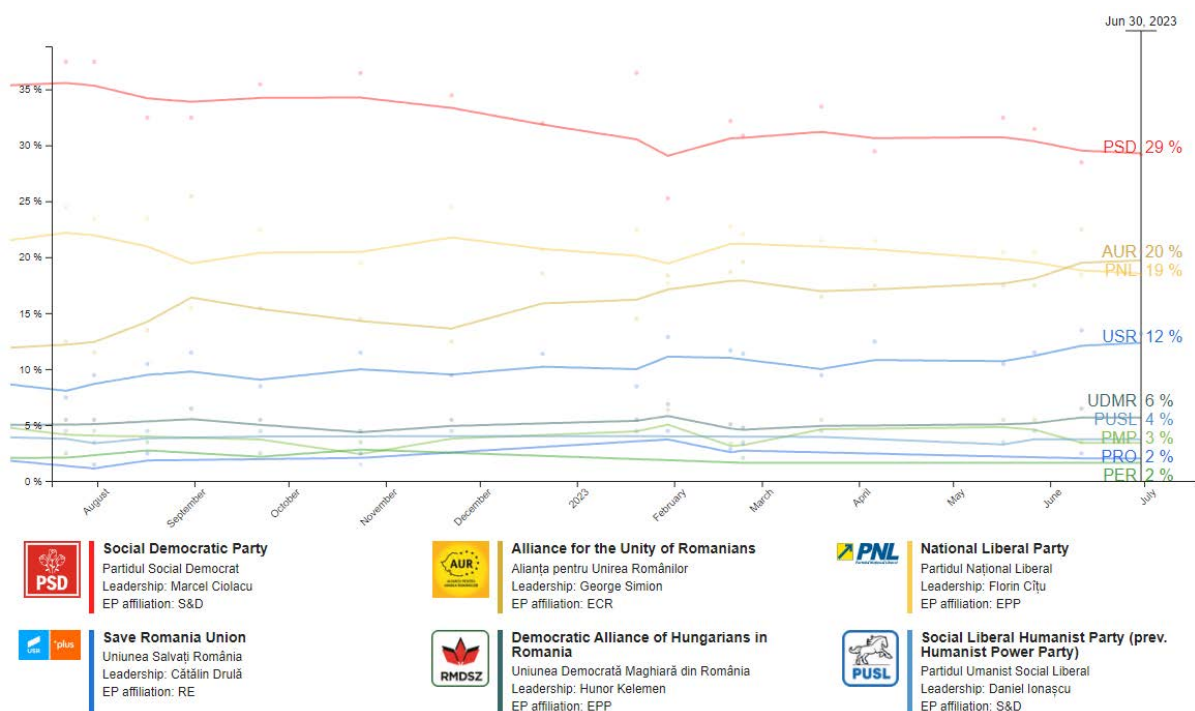
Romanians' trust in politicians and politics is at a **record low**. Despite the fact that the economic stability of Romanians has increased exponentially, satisfaction with leaders is declining. In 2010, GDP per person, adjusted for prices, was 53 percent of the EU average; by 2021 it was 74 percent. It seems that Romania is growing, despite its challenges in political leadership, and has a **significant influx of economic migrants**.

Systemic corruption remains a pervasive problem in Romania, from contracts offered to local politicians and shell companies for loyalty, to infrastructure projects experiencing massive failures.. The most recent example is the **collapse of a newly repaired bridge** that drew national ire.

This endless cycle of corruption, incompetence, and inefficiency has led to the rising popularity of the extremist AUR party, while apathy towards voting has also increased. In the 2020 parliamentary election, AUR received approximately five percent of the vote. But **in 2024 it is expected to reach 20 percent**. On the other hand, according to **GLOBSEC Trends**, 51 percent of respondents think that the US is dragging their country into a war with Russia, while the perception of the US as Romania's most important strategic partner is now at 53 percent, a 20 percent decline since 2022.

Other systemic challenges are beginning to emerge, the most recent being the **national teachers strike** that has turned the end of the school year upside down and has highlighted just how poorly teachers are paid in Romania, with a starting teacher earning around 500 euros a month, with no transport or rent in another city covered unless they get a job in their home town. Tens of thousands of teachers took to the streets in June and the protests are continuing.

At the same time, Romania's untapped energy resources and the lack of accountability around their extraction, processing, and sale suggests there is a need to develop a medium and long-term energy plan. Support for Ukraine and the integration of refugees must be debated publicly and transparently to debunk the massive wave of misinformation and toxic narratives. In the absence of good political communication, we see the rejection of this support starting to grow in Romanian society as well as in other EU countries.



Forecast

If the elections were held in May, how might it affect the country's:

- support for Ukraine in general
- position on Ukrainian refugees
- position on the sanctions against Russia
- position on Russia
- policies within the EU
- policies within NATO

If Romania had parliamentary, presidential and local elections in May 2023, the results would likely look similar to next year's. The most balanced scenario at the moment is to keep today's balance of power. Given the widespread apathy of moderate voters and the growing interest of the extreme ones, a coalition of the two main parties, PNL and PSD and probably the Hungarian party, UDMR, seems likely and already being discussed by the two main parties currently in power.

A significant setback for Romanian democracy, but a compromise already expected by Romanian society. The Union Save Romania (USR) party, seen by many as the hope of a new pro-European party seems likely to enter the Parliament, but will remain in Opposition for the next four years, without much to say compared to the hopes of previous elections.

AUR, the nationalist and often labeled far-right party is the main problem. Estimated at 20 percent, i.e. already in second place for voting intentions, the hope is that they will plateau at this percentage and be isolated from all other opposition parties. So far, the official statements of both AUR and all other parties clearly show zero coalition intent, which would be hard to do without committing political suicide.

What does this mean for Romania's internal and external relations?

It means that support for Ukraine will remain in line with NATO alignment and Romania's status as a member country. The same cautious approach is likely to remain, not too much communication from leaders, not too much enthusiasm. The strong presence of the AUR party in the Parliament will, however, legitimize constant anti-West pressure and promotion of Romania's non-intervention in the conflict, a narrative that resonates with many bubbles in Romania, both out of fear and due to widespread misinformation about the war.

For refugees, we already see that Romania has abandoned the unconditional support system, partly because its economic feasibility was questionable. Now, **financial support until the end of 2023 will gradually be conditional** on getting a job, enrolling children in school and practically integrating into Romanian life. The problem? All the responsibility for integration falls on the shoulders of the Ukrainians, as Romanian institutions constantly put obstacles in the way due to incompetence and lack of procedures to access services. These problems are expected to increase, especially in the context of the elections, where the priority of integrating Ukrainians almost disappears in the context of the electoral agenda focused on the needs of the Romanians who brought votes.



As the Globsec Report shows, even as disinformation is growing in Romania, support for NATO is also growing, as it is the alliance that keeps our borders safe from the Russian threat. The stance of Romanians towards Russia is very unlikely to change, no major party dares to hold pro-Russian views, not even the far right, even if they sometimes support anti-Ukraine positions. This means general support for sanctions against Russia and arms supplies to Ukraine. However, life for the next government will not be very easy with AUR in strong opposition. Consensus decisions in parliament will be much harder to reach, especially if the new alliance government is fragile with parties constantly fighting each other.

While the governing alliance may be unstable, the extreme opposition will always be united in its anti-European positions. This brings us to one of the most problematic parts of the AUR's entry into Parliament from the position of the second most popular party. The representation of AUR in the European Parliament and its position towards the EU in Parliament. The AUR narrative of "*we are taking our country back from foreigners*" often rejects decisions taken at the European level, taking Viktor Orban's recipe of "*we have different national interests*". It will prove problematic to maintain a consensus on national infrastructure projects such as the National Recovery Plan and especially on decisions related to the rights of sexual and ethnic minorities which AUR rejects outright. It is expected that they will use their influence in the EP to obstruct decision-making processes, hinder collaboration, and promote agendas that are contrary to the principles and values of the European Union, such as democracy, human rights, and solidarity among member states.

Their legislative impact is also important to consider. They will most likely use their presence in parliament to push for policies or legislation that align with their extremist ideologies. This can have far-reaching consequences, including the erosion of civil liberties, the undermining of democratic institutions, or discriminatory practices.





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