

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL LIFE OCTOBER 1, 2022 – MARCH 31, 2023\*

### October 2

- The Alliance for Romanians' Unification party (AUR) organizes an anti-Government protest in Bucharest, resulting in clashes between supporters of George Simion, the party's president, and Diana Șoșoacă, member of Parliament (MP) and former member of AUR. The protest was triggered by the surging inflation and the energy crisis. Around 4,000 people gathered in Victoria Square, in front of the Government headquarters. After the intervention of the gendarmerie, George Simion and his protesters left for the Social-Democratic Party (PSD) headquarters.

### October 3

- Ligia Deca, former presidential adviser, affiliated to the National Liberal Party (PNL), is appointed by Presidential decree as the new Minister of Education, following the resignation of Sorin Cîmpeanu.
- Former liberal leader Ludovic Orban, currently president of the Force of the Right Party (FD), calls for the dismissal of Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă, on the grounds that he plagiarized his doctoral thesis. The accusation of plagiarism was documented by journalist Emilia Șercan, but the case was buried in bureaucracy.

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**October 4**

- The Minister of Justice, Cătălin Predoiu (PNL), urges for the reintroduction of the Whistleblower Law in Parliament, with amendments based on recommendations from the European Commission (EC). The proposed changes aim to enable anonymous reporting of complaints related to corruption or legal violations. He argues that this bill is significant because the funds in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) are conditioned by the amendments made to this law.
- The draft law on the status of judges and prosecutors is adopted by the plenum of the Chamber of Deputies, with 198 votes in favor, eighty votes against, and four abstentions. The Senate is the decisional Chamber.
- Finance Minister, Adrian Căciu, announces, following the meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council in Luxembourg, that Romania will receive almost €1.4 billion for energy independence projects as the sixth beneficiary country in the EU through REPowerEU. The funds will be provided by auctioning the greenhouse gas emission allowances of the Innovation Fund (75%) and by the advance of the auctioning of national Emission Trading Scheme allowances for the period 2027-2030 (25%).

**October 5**

- The Government approves the establishment within the General Secretariat of the Government (GSG) of a structure with a role in monitoring and controlling the execution of the judgments pronounced by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) involving Romania.
- PM Nicolae Ciucă signs with the European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa Ferreira, a new Partnership Agreement, under which Romania will benefit from €31 billion in funding between 2021 and 2027. Actual investments in the territory cover eight regional programs and nine national programs.
- The Government approves the decision on the establishment and operation of the Investment and Development Bank that will target large infrastructure and strategic projects. Diversification of financing

instruments is necessary against the background of increasing funding needed at the national level.

- The Save Romania Union (USR) opposition party submits a complaint to the Constitutional Court of Romania (CCR) on the law approving General Emergency Ordinance 115/26.08.2022 through which the allowances of mayors and presidents of County Councils are increased by RON 2,000. The complaint was also signed by the members of the Force of the Right Party (FD).
- PM Ciucă gives a negative opinion to the legislative proposal launched by USR to limit to two (eight years) the number of mandates for university Rectors, invoking the principle of the autonomy of universities.

#### **October 7**

- USR MPs and volunteers transcribe Liberal Interior Minister Lucian Bode's doctoral thesis in order to make it public and subject it to anti-plagiarism checks. Emilia Șercan disagreed with the initiative, citing her reluctance to be associated with a political initiative. The Interior Minister denied that his doctoral thesis is secret, as it is available at the Babeș-Bolyai University (UBB) Library in Cluj and at the National Library. He announces that he will sue those who deny the quality and transparency of his PhD. The President of the Committee for Culture of the Chamber of Deputies, Iulian Bulai (USR), invited to the Parliament the director of the Romanian National Library, Adrian Cioroianu, to identify legal-administrative solutions for accessing doctoral theses under the aegis of the institution, but Cioroianu refused the invitation.

#### **October 10**

- Suceava Senator George (Gheorghiuță) Mîndruță, former USR member, joins PSD.

#### **October 11**

- The Chamber of Deputies, as the decisional Chamber, with 250 votes in favor and one against, adopts two legislative initiatives raised by USR. These prohibit individuals who have been irrevocably

convicted to prison from running and being elected to positions such as MP, Mayor, President of County Council, County Councilor, or Local Councilor, unless they have been rehabilitated, granted post-conviction amnesty, or had the crime decriminalized. President Klaus Iohannis promulgates the law on November 4.

- In the context of the joint NATO effort to strengthen the Eastern flank, France sends additional troops, armored vehicles, and Leclerc tanks to Romania, in order to deter possible Russian aggression.

#### **October 13**

- USR calls on PM Ciucă to dismiss Vasile Dîncu as Minister of National Defense in the context of his declarations on the war in Ukraine, according to which the only solution to the war in Ukraine is the negotiation with Russia. The Standing Bureau of the Chamber of Deputies invites Dîncu to the plenary to give explanations.
- The Plenary of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopts a favorable report on Romania's compliance with its obligations, recognizing the progress made in areas such as administration, justice, and the fight against corruption. It also condemns the lack of progress in what regards the press freedom or the inclusion of Roma citizens and underlines the high number of unenforced cases to ECHR.

#### **October 15**

- The Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Bogdan Aurescu says Romania will contribute \$1.4 million to NATO funds to strengthen the resilience of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Jordan in the face of the danger posed by Russia.

#### **October 17**

- The Chamber of Deputies is debating the simple motion against the Minister of Internal Affairs, Lucian Bode, entitled: "Safety and trust or rout and theft? Minister Bode must be held accountable for the disaster he created," tabled by 55 USR MPs and non-affiliated members of the Force of Right Party. Bode is accused of poor

administration and corruption, while the allegations of plagiarism in his PhD thesis are reiterated.

- The plenary of the Senate adopts, by eighty-six votes in favor, thirty-seven against and three abstentions, the draft law concerning the organization of the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM): its members shall be elected from among the judges and prosecutors appointed by the President of Romania with a seniority of at least seven years in office, if they have not been subjected to a disciplinary sanction in the last three years, except in the case of a sanction removal.
- Liviu Dragnea, the former PSD President, is being prosecuted by the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) in the Tel Drum case, opened in 2017, for creating an organized criminal group, abuse of office and forgery in documents. The damage amounts to LEI 31 million in the period 2001-2017.

#### **October 18**

- USR notifies the National Council for Attestation of University titles, Diplomas and Certificates (CNATDCU) regarding the suspicion of plagiarism in the doctoral thesis of Minister Lucian Bode.
- The plenary session of the European Parliament (EP) adopts, by 547 votes in favor, forty-nine against and forty-three abstentions (Dutch MEPs), a non-legislative resolution urging Member States to allow Romania and Bulgaria to join the Schengen Area.

#### **October 19**

- PM Ciucă announces the signing of a memorandum between the Romanian company ROMGAZ and the Azerbaijani company SOCAR for a joint investment in a liquefied natural gas facility on the Black Sea.
- The Chamber of Deputies rejects the simple motion against the Minister of Internal Affairs, Lucian Bode, with eighty-eight votes in favor and 162 against.

**October 20**

- Former President Traian Băsescu's lawyer submits a request to the Bucharest Court of Appeal stating that he will not challenge the Court Decisions of September 2019, which confirm the National Council for Studying the Securitate Archives (CNSAS) conclusion that he collaborated with the Securitate.

**October 24**

- Vasile Dîncu (PSD) resigns from the office of Minister of National Defense, invoking "the impossibility to collaborate" with President Iohannis. The interim of this Ministry is taken over by PM Ciucă.

**October 27**

- 103 members of USR Prahova, including MP Mihai Polițeanu, resign from the party, accusing that the county leadership is subordinated to PNL Prahova, which took decisions without consultation and intervened in the illegitimate internal elections.
- PM Ciucă says that the first tranche of €2.6 billion from the NRRP was paid by the EC, and it represents the confirmation of the achievement of the objectives assumed by Romania. The amount covers reforms that contribute to the digital transition, sustainable mobility, decarbonization, audit and control, education, and health, but also preliminary measures in reforming the pension system, taxation and includes measures to support businesses and ensure the good governance of the country.
- Former PM Victor Ponta and former PSD MP Sebastian Ghiță are acquitted in the 2016 DNA case ("Tony Blair") in which they were charged for money laundering and for using party leadership influence to obtain benefits. The classification was made in the absence of evidence to prove the allegations.

**October 28**

- The United States Agency for Trade and Development grants Romania a non-reimbursable financing of \$14 million for the development of the first nuclear power plant with mini-reactors. The grant will be used for the preliminary engineering and design

study to advance the project of developing the first Advanced Small Modular Reactors in Romania.

#### **November 1**

- USR Deputy Cristian Seidler is demanding for Lucian Bode's resignation as Minister of Internal Affairs, after the Ethics Commission belonging to UBB published the results of the evaluation of his PhD thesis, in which citation errors and a 3% share of plagiarized fragments were identified.

#### **November 2**

- The Government approves the memorandum on "Measures on strengthening the partnership with development regions for the implementation of regional programs 2021-2027," signed between the Ministry of Investments and European Projects (MIEP) and Regional Development Agencies that will allow the MIEP to coordinate at national level the management of European funds.

#### **November 3**

- The Section for Judges of SCM approves the requests for retirement of sixty magistrates, in the context of the reopening of discussions regarding the elimination of special pensions.

#### **November 4**

- Romania has signed the purchase agreement for thirty-two F-16 aircrafts from Norway. The total cost is €88 million, and the first aircraft will arrive in Romania in 2023.

#### **November 7**

- The Senate approves in plenary by 109 votes in favor and one abstention the amendment of the Regulation on the procedure for waiver of parliamentary immunity, in agreement with the recommendations made by the Venice Commission, so that the report of the legal Committee includes both arguments in favor of and against the request.

- PSD Bucharest Sector 1 organization demands the resignation of Mayor Clotilde Armand (USR), who is in a situation of incompatibility and criminal suspicions, following the notification of the National Integrity Agency (ANI). This scandal concerns the disposition given by her through which she appointed herself project manager on a project financed with European funds, thus collecting additional revenues in February-August 2022.

#### **November 8**

- In the context of the energy crisis, the Chamber of Deputies, as the decision-making chamber, adopts a draft law approving Emergency Ordinance 108/2022 on the decarbonization of the energy sector, which regulates the closure and conservation of energy groups based on lignite and coal, closure of lignite quarries and coal mines as well as support measures for closure and conservation of lignite and coal-based electricity generation capacities.

#### **November 9**

- CCR rejects the referrals made by USR, AUR and the Ombudsman regarding the three laws on justice, adopted by the Parliament, namely: the Law on the status of judges and prosecutors, the Law on judicial organization and the Law on the SCM. USR and AUR ask President Iohannis not to promulgate the laws as they violate the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM).
- At the Sharm El-Sheik Conference in Egypt, EximBank addresses two letters of intent to the Minister of Energy, Virgil Popescu, for two loans worth \$50 million for the construction of units 3 and 4 of the Cernavodă Plant. Additionally, an extra \$3 billion loan is allocated for the project's construction. The project is expected to conclude in 2030.
- The Minister of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities, Gabriela Firea, together with the President of the Chamber of Deputies and of PSD, Marcel Ciolacu, and other members of the Parliament are submitting a bill stipulating that thirty percent of the candidates on the lists of local elections and boards of state enterprises should be women.



### November 11

- The Government is adopting Emergency Ordinance 153/2022 regarding the centralized energy procurement mechanism between January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2025, which will ensure the compensation of energy prices. The categories that will benefit from compensation include churches, single-parent families, and water companies that provide public utilities. One day earlier, the ruling coalition agreed on the electricity price for household consumers to be set between 0.68 lei/kWh and 1.3 lei/kWh. These measures are to be applied for at least one year from January 1, 2023.

### November 15

- President Iohannis promulgates the Laws of Justice, namely the Law on the status of judges and prosecutors, the Law on judicial organization and the Law on SCM. Renewing Romania's European Project (REPER) Party accuses Iohannis of not waiting for the Venice Commission's opinion and argues that the head of the state ignores the concerns raised by this organization and that by this decision he favors some political parties.
- The European Commissioner for Internal Affairs, Ylva Johansson, says Romania is ready to join the Schengen Area, alongside Bulgaria and Croatia. Two days ago, President Iohannis announced that Emmanuel Macron assured him of France's support.
- The Chamber of Deputies, as the decisional Chamber, approves by 157 votes in favor and ninety-one against the reduction of fuel prices by LEI 0,5 until December 31, 2022.

### November 16

- The National Council's College for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) publicly condemns – by five votes in favor, three votes against and one abstention – the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's declarations, made in Tuşnad on July 23, 2022. His statements have been considered as promoting hate speech, as he declared that non-Europeans mixing with Europeans would create a mixed race transforming countries into "people conglomerates".

- The Government supplements the budgetary support directly offered to the Republic of Moldova with LEI 1,695 million, amounting to €50 million, in the context of the Annual Plan of International Cooperation for Development and Assistance 2022.
- The EC issues a positive report through the College of Commissioners regarding Romania's accession to the Schengen Area. The Commission requested the European Council to make the necessary decisions as fast as possible, in order to allow Schengen accession for Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia.
- USR deputy Cătălin Drulă accuses the National Institute of Statistics of offering inaccurate data regarding economic growth, stating that the growth was of 1,5%, not 5,3%, the latter being the percentual value publicly presented.
- President Iohannis promulgates the normative act amending Law 227/2015 on the Fiscal Code. Thus, from January 1, 2024, the contribution to the second pillar of pensions will no longer be taxed, and only earnings will be taxed.

#### **November 17**

- The Government approves two draft emergency ordinances regarding the revision of the state budget and the state social security budget for 2022, in order to fulfill commitments in European projects and to ensure wage rights and social benefits. The revenues of the consolidated general budget are thus increased by LEI 521 million, and the expenditures of the consolidated general budget are increased by LEI 522 million. PM Ciucă declared on November 2 that the Government has allocated the largest amount of the budget for investments (about €18 billion).

#### **November 18**

- The EC is asking the Romanian Government to implement the reform by which the public pension system complies with the 9.4% of GDP threshold, otherwise Romania will not receive all the money offered by the NRRP. The EC adds that military pensions are considered special pensions, which would require the reduction of special pensions expenses and that no new categories of this

kind would be created by the end of December. These reforms aim to maintain stable long-term (2022-2070) total gross pension expenditure and are in line with the World Bank recommendations aiming at gradually increasing the retirement age (sixty-five years), experience requirements (minimum thirty years) and pensions calculated as 65% of the average gross income instead of the current 80%. However, these changes will not apply to military pensions in the context of the war in Ukraine.

- The Venice Commission urgently criticizes the hasty adoption of the Laws of Justice by President Iohannis, without consultation. It recommends longer appointments periods for the Directorate for Investigating Organised Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT) and DNA prosecutors without the option of renewal, and that the judicial police do not report their activity to the Interior Minister. Among the positive aspects is noted the fact that there is no political interference in the work of DNA, and the Attorney General cannot overturn the decisions of the DNA or DIICOT.
- Deputy Lilian Carp (Action and Solidarity Party), President of the Defense Committee of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, announces joining USR, in the context of the enlargement of the USR in the neighboring country for citizens with dual citizenship.

#### **November 19**

- The USR President Cătălin Drulă's Program regarding the 2024 elections has been released. "The New USR" aims to lead an authentic right-wing pole to give the next PM, to create a future based on equity, rule of law and honesty, to expand and fight against privileges, to stop the waste of public money, to modernize the state and transform it into a developed European country.

#### **November 21**

- In the context of the war in Ukraine, President Iohannis signs the decrees denouncing the Intergovernmental Agreement on the establishment of the International Investment Bank and its Statute (since July 10, 1970) and the Convention on multilateral settlements in transferable rubles, as well as the organization of the International

Bank for Economic Cooperation (since October 22, 1963). The International Investment Bank and the International Bank for Economic Cooperation were created by the Kremlin in order to finance the states from the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon).

- The plenary of the Chamber of Deputies approves, by 243 votes in favor and ten against, the DNA request for computer perquisition in the case of PSD MP Daniel Tudorache, former mayor of Bucharest Sector 1, prosecuted for illegal purchases during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- PSD President Marcel Ciolacu announces that from January 1, 2023, all pensions will increase by 12.5%, the pension point becoming LEI 1,784, and retirees with pensions less than LEI 1,700 will continue to receive social vouchers of LEI 250 throughout 2023. AUR supports raising pensions by a fixed amount and reducing special pensions.
- Cseke Attila, Minister for Development, Public Works, and Administration (MDPWA), signs fifty-eight contracts financed by Component 10 of the Local Fund of NRRP (C10 of NRRP), aiming to carry out the documentation regarding territory planning and urban planning, with a value of LEI 33,120,373.
- Amid the current energy crisis and the need to use Romania's full energy potential to ensure the functioning and stability of the energy system, President Iohannis requests OMV management to urgently start offshore operations within the Neptun deep perimeter owned by Romgaz and OMV Petrom.

#### **November 22**

- The EC lifts the CVM for Romania as it has met the recommendations and objectives. However, Romania will now be monitored like all member states in the cycle of the report on the rule of law, with a focus on the functioning of the Judicial Inspection, human resource allocation in the judicial system, and implementation of judicial decisions by the public administration.
- The Government approves the contracting of reimbursable financial assistance from the European Investment Bank amounting to €229

million for investments, to be used in the health sector, within the portfolio of the MDPWA.

#### **November 24**

- After the meeting of the Council for Social Dialogue, the Tripartite National Council decides to increase the minimum wage to LEI 3,000, and in the construction field to LEI 4,000 of which LEI 200 will be exempt from tax and insurance contributions.
- The Chamber of Deputies, as a decisional Chamber, adopts by 177 votes in favor, seventy-five against and eleven abstentions the draft approval of Emergency Ordinance 119/2022 on energy, accepting all the conditions of the governing coalition. Thus, a maximum electricity price of LEI 1.3/kWh is set for all consumers regardless of the consumption level.

#### **November 25**

- After a year in Government, PM Ciucă reports that the current coalition provided Romania with the security, stability, and predictability it needed. He underlines the lifting of the CVM, the measures taken under the Support Package for Romania, the modernization of the administration. USR party conducted a door-to-door survey (25-28 November, 4,086 citizens), which revealed that 92% of the respondents felt they were living worse than the previous year, 67% thought wages and pensions were too low, 66% reported an increase in prices and bank installments, and 95% believed that the PSD-PNL-UDMR Government is not concerned about the welfare of the population.

#### **November 29**

- Former PSD Senator Nicolae Bădălău is dismissed from his position of Vice-President of the Court of Auditors by the joint Standing Bureaus of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Bădălău was detained by the DNA for twenty-four hours on November 27 and was arrested for 30 days for bribery (€170,000) and influence peddling in connection with a contract worth over LEI 7 million, as ruled by the Bucharest Court of Appeal a day ago.

- The MDPWA Cseke Attila signs 139 new contracts from NRRP, worth LEI 540 million for energy efficiency and seismic safety works for residential blocks and public buildings, but also for documentation, territory and urban planning.
- The USR and the FD Party contested at CCR the PNL-initiated draft law reducing the right of NGOs to appeal to justice regarding construction projects that violate the law. The project in question requires that the act challenged in Court should represent the object of activity and the purpose of the organization, a minimum of two years of activity for the organization, and also for the NGO to deposit a security of 1% of the investment value. A day ago, the *Declic* Organization asked in a public letter to President Iohannis to send for review to Parliament the law that provides the establishment of the thirty-day deadline for NGOs to attack in Court building permits and urbanism documentation that violate the law.
- According to a draft emergency ordinance published by the Ministry of Finance, the salaries of the state employees, financed from public funds, are increased by 10% starting January 1, 2023. The budget impact amounts to LEI 3-3.5 billion.
- Cezar Stancu is suspended from PSD and resigns from the position of Vice-President of the National Authority for Citizenship, following his referral to court in a case handled by the DNA for bribery.

#### **November 30**

- As decisional chamber, the Senate adopts a draft law on the Administrative Code, for the establishment of administrative consortia within the NRRP. This law contributes to territorial reform by associating neighboring administrative-territorial units in the form of administrative consortia, to which a budget will be allocated for the transfer of expertise. It aims to carry out the administrative tasks given by law and by administrative-territorial units with insufficient capacities.

#### **December 2**

- AUR President George Simion claims at the Party's Extraordinary Congress, in Alba Iulia, that Romania should no longer finance the

Government of the Republic of Moldova, considering that there is no need to and that too many funds have been allocated for the Ukrainian refugees, considering it as financing the Romanian separatism.

#### **December 5**

- The Parliament's Committees on Budgets - Finance jointly dismiss Niculae Bădălău, former PSD Senator, as adviser to the Court of Auditors and as Vice-President of the Audit Authority (308 votes in favor and one abstention), after his detention by DNA, on the November 28, 2022, for bribery and influence peddling.
- The EC presents – three days before the Justice and Home Affairs Council due to discuss Romania's accession to the Schengen Area –, the plan to combat illegal migration along the Western Balkans route in order to alleviate the concerns expressed by Austria. This plan identifies five pillars of operational measures aimed at strengthening the following: border management, asylum procedure, combating smuggling, cooperation on readmission and returns, and political alignment on visas.
- AUR MP George Simion forcibly enters the Ministry of Energy headquarters to question Minister Virgil Popescu about the so-called "tax on the sun," introduced by the emergency ordinance approved by the Government on November 29. The tax affects consumers who have invested in photovoltaic panels and was introduced to complete the legal framework for promoting the use of renewable energy. USR criticized the text the day before, arguing that it discourages consumers.

#### **December 6**

- The MDPWA Cseke Atilla signs thirty-six financing contracts through C10 of NRRP, worth LEI 820,996,245 for the renewal of the public transport fleet, the purchase of clean vehicles and charging stations to encourage green transport.
- Austria does not support Romania's accession to the Schengen Area due to illegal immigration.

**December 7**

- The Bucharest Tribunal informs the Standing Bureau of the Chamber of Deputies that the unaffiliated MP Daniel Gheorghe Rusu (elected on AUR lists) was sentenced to the penalty of the criminal fine amounting to LEI 40,000 for compromising the interests of justice. He was sent to court by the Prosecutor General's Office in the early of 2022 because during the electoral campaign for the local elections in 2020, while being investigated for illegally bringing 120 Moldovan citizens to vote for him, he publicly presented the minutes before the report was concluded.

**December 8**

- The draft budget for Romania in 2023 is adopted with a 2.8% increase, which is lower than anticipated. The budget allocates 2.5% of GDP for the National Defense Ministry, while the Ministry of Agriculture receives a 7% increase of LEI 25 million. The Ministry of Internal Affairs obtains a budget growth of 12.17%, and the Ministry of Research receives a 69.7% increase, with the aim of dedicating 1% of the GDP by 2025. For the Ministry of Education 2.1% of the budget is allocated.
- The Council of Justice and Home Affairs rejects Romania's accession to the Schengen area. Of the 27 EU member states, Austria and the Netherlands vote against, the Netherlands specifying that it votes only against Bulgaria's accession. Following this rejection, PM Ciucă announces that he will resume the accession process.
- After initially submitted by the Parliament on November 19, 2022, President Iohannis sends back to legislative the law regarding the establishment of Romanian community centers abroad as it contained unclear phrases, such as "third state," and did not clearly mention the duties and salaries of the directors of these community centers.
- The Bucharest Tribunal acknowledged the action of the Civic Association for Dignity in Europe (ADEC) against the mayor of Sfântu Gheorghe, Antal Arpad, forcing him to respect the official language of the state and to inscribe according to the law the bilingual street names plates in the city: the upper position should



be the official language of the state (Romanian), not at the same level as the Hungarian language.

#### **December 9**

- The Permanent Electoral Authority (AEP) announces that in December grants allocated to political parties summarized LEI 24,787,794, with PSD receiving LEI 9,543,798, PNL – LEI 8,090,738, USR – LEI 4,361,545, AUR – LEI 1,931,589, People’s Movement Party (PMP) – LEI 499,339 and Pro Romania - LEI 360,782.

#### **December 13**

- The Chamber of Deputies, as the decisional Chamber, adopts by 191 votes in favor, three against, and sixty abstentions the draft law on the protection of whistle-blowers for public interest, after President Iohannis sent the law back to Parliament. This law translates into national law the European Directive 2019/1937 on the protection of people reporting breaches of Union law and applies to reporting breaches of law within public authorities and institutions. Through this law, anonymous reporting discourages the investigation of complaints because these reports will only be examined if they contain thorough information about violations of the law. This has sparked reactions from several Romanian NGOs, including *Active Watch*, *Funky Citizens*, and *Expert Forum*.

#### **December 15**

- Romania submits the Memorandum of Accession to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

#### **December 16**

- The law on the protection of whistle-blowers is promulgated by President Iohannis.

#### **December 17**

- EC President Ursula von der Leyen meets with President Iohannis at the Cotroceni Palace and expresses full support for Romania’s accession to the Schengen Area. They discuss finding a solution as

quickly as possible. Additionally, an agreement is signed between the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Hungary, and Romania regarding a strategic partnership in the field of green energy development and transport. This agreement involves building a 1,195 km cable under the Black Sea.

- President Iohannis promulgates the law on the state budget; the law on the state social security budget for 2023 that forecast an economic growth of 2.8% and an average annual inflation of 9.6%; the law on empowering the Government to issue ordinances in areas which are not subject to organic laws, between the parliamentary recess; the law on social dialogue, which aims to strengthen the role of trade unions, to redefine the institution of representatives of employees and to establish a clear procedure regarding triggering, solving and monitoring collective labor conflicts and strikes. The normative act envisages as forms of social dialogue the following: negotiation, consultation, or information exchange between representatives of the Government, of the employers and of the employees on issues of common interest in economic and social policy. To form a Trade Union, one needs at least ten employees from the same unit or at least twenty employees from different units in the same sector.
- The USR is filing a draft law to remove special pensions from workers in the domain of Security involved in political police and thus violating human rights, and for which there exists a court order.

#### **December 20**

- In an official visit in Bucharest, EP President Roberta Metsola states that Romania and Bulgaria must be accepted in the Schengen Area.

#### **December 21**

- The Senate adopts, as decisional Chamber, by eight-one votes in favor, twenty-nine against and three abstentions, the draft law on the establishment of the National Cyber Security System, a general framework for cooperation of authorities in order to ensure cyber security in the field of defense, public order, national security, justice and emergency situations.

### December 22

- The control carried out by the AEP for the upholding of the legal provisions regarding the incomes and expenses registered during the last year by the 189 political parties listed in the Electoral Register results in fines amounting to LEI 3,555,000 and confiscations amounting to LEI 414,418.
- According to an INSCOP survey issued in December on respondents' voting intentions between February 2021-December 2022, roughly 1,100 people who have an intention to vote, both before and after the refusal of Romania entering Schengen, PSD dropped from 34.9% to 31.5% compared to November, PNL from 20.8% to 20.2%, USR from 11.2 to 10.9%, while AUR is the only party that has grown from 16.1% to 18.1%.

### December 23

- President Iohannis promulgates the law amending the Emergency Ordinance 57/2019 on the Administrative Code regarding the creation of an association mechanism between administrative-territorial units in order to build administrative consortia. The aim is to stimulate the associative phenomenon and the transfer of expertise and unitary practices.
- President Iohannis signs the decree on the promulgation of the Law amending and supplementing the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 28/1999, related to the obligation to use fiscal electronic cash registers, by which the tip is set at maximum 15% of the consumption value and is highlighted on the tax receipt by economic operators.

### December 28

- The Executive approves the Urban Policy project of Romania, which has among its top priority objectives the creation of climate-smart cities. The reform is assumed within the NRRP and proposes a vision of resilient, inclusive, and durable urban development for Romania during 2022-2035.
- The Government decides that starting with January 1 the fuel subsidy of LEI 0.50/liter will no longer be granted. At the same

meeting, a draft EO is adopted that implements EU Regulation 2022/1854 aiming to overtax energy companies with a tax of 60% of profits in 2022 and 2023. Money will be redirected to the Ministry of Finance for investments in renewable energy.

### **December 29**

- The MDPWA Cseke Attila signs twenty-five new financing contracts under the National Investment Program “Anghel Saligny,” worth LEI 234,368,692 for twenty administrative-territorial units, aimed at modernizing road infrastructure and paving, building bridges, expanding and modernizing wastewater treatment plants, as well as setting up or expanding water supply and sewerage networks.
- The AEP transmits to the GSG the draft amendment of the Law on financing the activity of political parties and electoral campaigns, Law no. 334/2006. The project aims to increase transparency and integrity regarding the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns, such as the publication in Part one of the Official Journal of the total amount of income from levies obtained in the previous fiscal year. The project proposes specific actions for the implementation of measures from the General Anti-corruption Strategy and the National Strategy on the rights of people with disabilities.

### **January 3**

- After the publication of the population census results, The Magyar Alliance from Transylvania accuses a “silent genocide against Hungarians.” They claim that the Hungarian community has lost a fifth of the population since the last review (from 1,227,623 in 2011 to 1,002,151 in 2022) due to the poor economic situation of Hungarians compared to the national average, and to the crisis of values. UDMR President, Kelemen Hunor, says “there is no cause for celebration, but also no cause for panic,” as almost 2.5 million citizens have not declared their ethnicity, so the number of Hungarians could actually be higher.

#### January 4

- During the Government meeting, PM Ciucă states that Romania managed to absorb €11,3 billion from European funds in 2022, the highest level achieved since accession, with a rate of over 70%.

#### January 6

- USR MPs, Cosette Chichirău and Remus Negoii, submit, for the second time, a request addressed to the MFA Aureescu and the Director of the Romanian Cultural Institute (ICR), Liviu Jicman, for information on the headquarters and rents related to the branches of ICR. The request follows the scandal over the £6,500 monthly rent paid for the London apartment of ICR head, Catinca Maria Nistor.
- MDPWA Cseke Attila signs 156 new contracts financed by C10 of NRRP, aimed at providing infrastructure for green transport at local level and monitoring systems of public space, worth LEI 201,698,245.

#### January 7

- The National Board of Directors of AUR decides to exclude Dumitru Viorel Focşa from the party, after the public scandal and the internal investigation conducted by the AUR Honor Jury, that showed he physically assaulted his wife during a domestic conflict. The party is asking him to give up his parliamentary term.

#### January 9

- MDPWA Cseke Attila signs 242 new contracts financed by component C10 of NRRP, worth LEI 400,471,379, aiming to provide infrastructure for green transport, by purchasing charging points for electric vehicles, developing smart local management systems, and building or expanding video surveillance networks.
- ANI notifies the Prosecutor General's Office in the case of the President of the AEP, Constantin Mituleţu Buică, on the grounds that he illegally hired his sister-in-law as an adviser at the office of the Vice-President of the AEP. In this context, USR submits a request to the Standing Bureau of the Chamber of Deputies for the convening of the joint legal commissions and the dismissal of the

official. As a result, Buică submitted his resignation from office to the two Chambers of Parliament.

### January 11

- The Government approves the action plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for the long-term renovation of the residential and non-residential building fleet by 2030, with a view to saving energy, reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and increasing the share of energy from renewable sources.
- The budget of the Ministry of Energy is fed with LEI 335 million to ensure the compensation of energy prices, noting that this money comes from the collection of tax on revenues obtained from the sale of onshore and offshore gas.
- The Ethics Commission of the UBB of Cluj-Napoca found that the doctoral thesis of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Lucian Bode, is plagiarized. As a result, the Commission requested him corrections and the withdrawal of the book published based on it and will notify CNATDCU for further legal steps. Bode rejects the decision and states he will go to court to settle the case he considers inaccurate, describing the UBB decision as a dangerous precedent for the academic world and for the governing principles of the rule of law. On November 11, USR accused Minister Ligia Deca of blocking Lucian Bode's PhD thesis from being verified, due to her and State Secretary Gigel Paraschiv's presence at CNATDCU.

### January 16

- MDPWA Cseke Attila signs eight new financing contracts under the National Investment Program "Anghel Saligny," which targets local roads, the water supply and sewerage networks, totaling a value of LEI 72,546,213. He also signed thirty new financing contracts under component C10 of NRRP, worth LEI 39,7 million for the development of infrastructure for green transport, including the provision of recharging points for electric vehicles.

### January 18

- The Court of the EU declares Romania victorious in the action regarding the annulment of the decision of the EC through which financial corrections of over €18,717 million had been applied. This sum aimed at payments made in 2017-2019 under the National Rural Development Program 2007-2013. The decision appealed by Romania was thus annulled.

### January 26

- Energy Minister Virgil Popescu states that he has ordered the emergency remediation of the transport conditions for the personnel from the Oltenia Energy complex. The new management is expected to present a clear investment plan on the safe exploitation of the targets and the provision of the necessary work protection equipment for employees. The decision is based on an accident at work that resulted in three deaths and thirteen injuries, in the mine from Jilț Sud, due to the use of inadequate means for transporting workers to work and poor road conditions.

### January 30

- Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and of Renew Group, Nicu Ștefănuță, announces on his Facebook page that he is resigning from USR as the party no longer has a clear direction.

### February 1

- The Minister of Education, Ligia Deca, withdraws the duties of the State Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Florin Lixandru, by ministerial order, that he deplores as a measure for an offense of opinion during a public debate.
- The USR and the FD Party are filing a simple motion against the Interior Minister, Lucian Bode, entitled "Romania deserves more than thieves in public office," stating that Romania needs a negotiator to be respected by the European partners regarding the Schengen Area, bringing into discussion the recent scandal on plagiarism in his PhD thesis.

**February 2**

- PNL declares that it does not support the tax increase, nor the 1% surcharge applied to all companies with high and very high incomes, because them this will lead to a generalized price increase and destabilization of investors. The liberals also mention that, the ruling coalition had committed to not introduce new taxes and to not increase the existing ones this year.

**February 3**

- MSPWA Cseke Attila signs forty-two new financing contracts under the National Investment Program “Anghel Saligny,” totaling LEI 460,753,430. The money aims at the rehabilitation and modernization of streets and roads of local interest, as well as the establishment, modernization or expansion of water supply and sewerage networks.
- AEP announces that in 2022 the political parties spent 72% of the total subsidies from the state budget, amounting to over LEI 256 million. The largest share was spent on press and propaganda for the PSD (58.54%), PNL (70.72%), and PMP (27.62%) parties. In terms of staff expenses, the largest share was used by the Pro Romania (44.3%) and USR (29.28%) parties.

**February 6**

- AUR supporters protest in front of the Government against the lack of reaction of the authorities after the rejection of Romania’s candidacy to the Schengen Area.
- The leader of the FD Party, Ludovic Orban, submits to the Bucharest Court of Appeal an administrative-litigation action in which he asks the Government to issue a decision for the organization of local elections in over fifty localities.

**February 7**

- The Hungarian Ambassador to Bucharest is summoned to the MFA Aurescu to communicate the Romanian state’s disapproval of the request of the President of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Parliament of Budapest, Nemeth Zsolt, to raise the flag of Szeklerland on the Romanian territory. No specific official sign can be displayed



publicly in the context in which there is no administrative-territorial unit bearing the name of the Szeklerland.

- Minister of Internal Affairs, Lucian Bode, and PM Ciucă are submitting to the Senate a draft law whereby the limits of punishment for acts of violence are increased by a third in the case of actions taking place in the public space or if they are directed at a minor. Lucian Bode adds that the changes are also proposed in relation to Article 371 of the Criminal Code on the disturbance of public order and tranquility. USR spokesman, Ionuț Moșteanu, asks PM Ciucă and Interior Minister Lucian Bode to withdraw the “totalitarian” law, by which the punishment limits for violent acts are increased by one third, as they “intend to use it against protests.” In reply, Lucian Bode states that the proposals to tighten some punishments in the Criminal Code do not concern honest citizens or those who protest, but those who commit violence or destruction in the public space.

#### **February 8**

- The Chamber of Deputies rejects by ninety votes in favor, 189 against and one abstention the simple motion tabled against the Minister of Internal Affairs, Lucian Bode.

#### **February 13**

- The Senate tacitly adopts the draft initiated by the PNL MP Florin Claudiu-Roman on granting rights to the victims of the Bucharest Mineriads from June 13-15, 1990. It provides benefits to the descendants of people killed, injured, arrested, or detained as a result of participating in the violent movements.
- PNL MPs propose a legislative initiative aimed at eliminating the over-taxation of part-time work contracts.

#### **February 15**

- As a result of the series of earthquakes that took place in the Oltenia area, shortly after one with a magnitude of 5.7 degrees on the Richter scale, PM Ciucă forms an inter-institutional working group to prevent and prepare reactions in emergency situations, under his direct coordination.

- Justice Minister Cătălin Predoiu is called to the Senate by USR to explain the recent statements regarding the acquittal of Dan Hosu, a former police officer, sentenced in 2020 in first instance to a three- year prison sentence on suspension by the Bucharest Court, under four charges, including influence peddling, as a result of which his company was the beneficiary of large sums of money. USR accuses that the Minister announced the acquittal during a TV show although the case was not closed. He stated that the mistake was made because he had not verified the information he received from unofficial sources. USR asks the Justice Minister to resign.

#### **February 16**

- ANI notifies the Prosecutor's Office regarding accusations against Nicușor Dan, the General Mayor of Bucharest. ANI has accused him of committing crimes of abuse of office and using his position to favor certain people, as well as incompatibility and conflict of interest. ANI alleges that Dan held other four management positions while serving as mayor, and that he used his position to request an addition of LEI 3,000,000 to the budget of the Administration of Lakes, Parks and Leisure Bucharest (ALPAB) during the period of August 7 – September 7, 2021, both as General Manager and General Mayor.
- The Minister of Environment, Waters and Forests, Tanczos Barna, wants to prevent all works on the Bâstroe canal that could endanger the biodiversity and ecosystem of the Danube Delta, as neither the Romanian nor the Ukrainian legislation allows it. On the Ukrainian side, there are dredging works of the Bâstroe Canal that could affect the Danube Delta.

#### **February 17**

- USR representatives submit a legislative initiative to amend the law on the protection of whistleblowers. The initiative puts the text of the law in line with the European Directive (EU) 2019/1937 which provides for the protection of persons reporting breaches of European Union law for the purpose of defending the public interest, and with the provisions of the NRRP, requiring parties to

adopt it in order to unlock its payment of €2.8 million, money from the NRRP.

- MSPWA Attila signs fifty-six financing contracts amounting LEI 481,030,662 through the National Investment Program “Anghel Saligny” aimed at modernizing road infrastructure, rehabilitating bridges, modernizing or expanding water supply systems, and also modernizing and expanding sewage systems.

### February 20

- PSD and PNL support legislative changes that would compel all NGOs in Romania to make public the names of the people who redirected 3.5% of their income tax. The automatic dissolution is proposed for those who do not make the lists public and the prohibition to set up NGOs for those who have had an association that has become insolvent. MEP Ramona Strugariu, the REPER party co-president, is calling on senators to withdraw this legislative proposal that limits civil society access to justice.
- The activity of the Russian Center for Culture and Science in Romania is suspended by the MFA Aurescu, as it had contributed to misinforming the Romanian public in the context of the war in Ukraine.
- The USR and the FD deputies submit the simple motion against the Labor Minister entitled “Marius Budăi – the Minister for Saving Special Pensions,” as he built a shield around the special pensions and their beneficiaries, thus endangering the funds Romania would receive for development.

### February 22

- The Government approves a project through which it will be able to set up, on behalf of the state, state-owned companies in Romania and abroad in compliance with the legislative provisions in the field of state aid, at the proposal of the relevant ministries whose specialty area is the main object of activity of the company or under whose authority the autonomous administration operates.
- The High Court of Cassation and Justice definitively and irrevocably rejects the use by the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe of the Szeklerland flag.

**February 23**

- The President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu, is visiting Romania, mentioning the support given to her country regarding the supply of electricity and gas through the Iași-Chișinău gas pipeline.
- The leader of the Târgu Mureș branch of AUR, Dragos Burghelia, and the Vice-President, Liviu Natea, call on doctors and nurses to volunteer in the medical caravan initiated by the political party, for providing medical assistance in disadvantaged areas. The costs of this caravan are covered by the subsidy from the state budget received by the party.

**February 27**

- The Ministry of Education publishes the draft Laws of Education – “Educated Romania” (Law of Pre-University Education and Law of Higher Education). USR criticizes the project, stating that it is politicized, too technical, without analysis of costs and not reformist enough.

**February 28**

- The latest INSCOP survey, conducted at the request of PNL, shows the vote intention in the parliamentary elections in February. PSD occupies the first place (31.7%), followed by PNL (22.3%), AUR (18.2%) and USR (11.2%). The survey was conducted on February 5-19, 2023, on a sample of 3,000 people.
- CCR rejects USR’s notification on the bill to increase the allowances of Mayors and Presidents of County Councils, voted on September 27, 2022. This complaint was made because of the lack of indication of the source of funding for salary increases, and the adoption of the law before the expiry of the deadline for the submission of amendments. In this context, the project remains in force and mayors would receive more than up to LEI 2,200.
- MDPWA Cseke Atilla signs 162 new financing contracts submitted through component C10 of NRRP. The contracts are concluded between the local public authorities from 146 administrative-territorial units and the Ministry of Development, with a total value of LEI 556,499,633. These contracts aim at the moderate

rehabilitation of public buildings, the construction of Nearly Zero Emission Buildings Plus housing for young people and service housing for health and education specialists.

- The plenary of the Chamber of Deputies, as a decisional Chamber, adopts a draft law establishing the National Agency for the Development of Infrastructure in Health (ANDIS), as a specialized body of the central public administration and a public institution with legal personality, subordinated to the Ministry of Health, fully funded from the state budget. The role of ANDIS is to develop health infrastructure by preparing, implementing, and finalizing investment projects of considerable importance in health infrastructure.

### March 1

- PM Ciucă presents the robot named ION, the first government adviser based solely on artificial intelligence. The purpose is to improve governmental activity by quickly capturing the opinions and needs of Romanians, using the information available in the public space, but also giving them the opportunity to communicate these opinions directly. Research, Innovation and Digitalization Minister Sebastian Burduja mentions that the ION project is a world premiere.
- The Bucharest Court of Appeal obliges the Romanian Government to organize elections for the City Hall of Sector 5 after the USR candidate, Alexandru Dimitriu, appealed to the court. Former Mayor of Sector 5, Cristian Piedone, was definitively sentenced to prison in May 2022 and thus the position ended up vacant.

### March 3

- MEP and PMP leader, Eugen Tomac, announces the launch of the national signature-raising campaign for the petition “Romania deserves to be in Schengen,” after bringing an action against the EU Council before the Court of Justice of the EU to cancel the illegal vote of December 8, 2022, which denied Romania the entrance into the Schengen Area.
- President Iohannis promulgates the law approving the Emergency Ordinance 152/2022 which provides the granting of a salary

increase of up to 50% for the staff from public institutions and authorities dealing with projects financed from European non-reimbursable or reimbursable funds, consistent with the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism. According to the normative act, this increase is applied in proportion to the actual time allocated to the activities for each project.

#### **March 6**

- PSD President Marcel Ciolacu states that Gabriela Firea is the Social-Democrat candidate for Bucharest City Hall in the 2024 elections.

#### **March 7**

- The Chamber of Deputies rejects, by eight-six votes in favor, 177 against and two abstentions, the simple motion against the Minister of Labor, entitled “Marius Budăi, the Minister for the Rescue of Special Pensions.” The simple motion was submitted by fifty-six deputies belonging to USR and FD.
- Opposition USR MPs, Iulian Bulai and Remus Negoii, bring a funeral wreath at the headquarters of the Romanian Cultural Institute (ICR) to mark the symbolic death of Romanian cultural diplomacy. The two deputies accuse the governing coalition formed by PSD-PNL-UDMR of appointing in the positions of management of ICR branches abroad nepotist and unprofessional persons.
- The Chamber of Deputies, as a decisional Chamber, adopts a draft law with 220 votes in favor and fifty-three abstentions on the prevention and control of terrorism, also establishing that the Director of Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) will have the prerogative to approve the execution of the counterterrorism intervention in the event of the occurrence of victims or of significant damages, when it is not possible to urgently assemble the Supreme Council of National Defense.

#### **March 8**

- USR President Cătălin Drulă calls on the management of the Financial Supervisory Authority (ASF) to explain the 40% increase in motor third-party liability (RCA) policy prices, indicating that

the invitation made in February to the Economic Policy, Reform and Privatization Commission of the Chamber of Deputies of the President of ASF, Nicu Marcu, remains unanswered.

### March 9

- USR and FD MPs challenge the appointment of Monica Gubernat as president of the CNA, respectively of Camelia Pricopie as Adviser to the Court of Auditors. The USR claims that in the plenary sitting of the Parliament on March 7, before the vote on the appointments to the CNA and the Court of Auditors, there were less than sixty-nine senators in the Chamber, and the chairman of the meeting refused to verify the quorum, therefore violating the constitutional norms.
- INSCOP publishes a poll ordered by the Green Party in order to assess the voting intentions of Romanians. In first place in preferences is PSD with 30.4%, followed by PNL with 21.6%, and in third place is AUR with 19.1%. The survey was conducted by telephone interviews between February 1-13, 2023, and the sample was representative of 1000 people. The maximum permissible data error is  $\pm 3.1$  at a 95% confidence rate.

### March 10

- The Bucharest Court of Appeal orders the release from the pre-trial detention of MP Niculae Bădălău (PSD), who will be investigated in freedom, under judicial control. He is accused of bribery and influence peddling while he was an adviser to the Court of Auditors from August to November 2022.
- AUR announces the intention to collaborate with NGOs to provide free medical services and preventive medical education activities to citizens with difficult access to facilities. The partnership aims to create a mobile caravan that will combine the promotion of the AUR political party.
- The President of the Neamț County Council and of the county branch of PSD, Ionel Arsene, is definitively sentenced by the Brașov Court of Appeal to six years and eight months in prison with execution for influence peddling. He was sent to trial by DNA

in 2018, accused that in 2013, while Deputy and President of PSD Neamț, he received €100,000 to use his influence on the ANI management in order to establish non-compliance with the legal provisions on the conflict of interests of a person with a management position in the local administration at that time.

- The Szekler National Council requests again the territorial autonomy of the Szeklerland, in a petition addressed to the Parliament, the Government, and the President of Romania. They accuse the Romanian State of not complying with European Recommendation 1201/1993 Article 11, which stipulates that in regions where the majority is formed of persons belonging to a minority, they have the right to have adequate autonomous local governments or a special status.

#### **March 13**

- PSD begins public consultations on the projects of the Education Laws, namely the law of pre-university and university education.

#### **March 14**

- The Minister of Environment, Water and Forestry, Tanczos Barna, announces that the Ukrainian side has stopped dredging, deepening, and maintenance work on the Bîstroe Canal.
- Representatives of PNL Bucharest Sector 1 are demanding the resignation of Mayor Clotilde Armand, after the decision of the Bucharest Court of Appeal to reject her request to cancel the ANI report notifying her incompatibility. In November 2022, ANI established that the mayor of sector 1, Clotilde Armand, was appointed manager in a project financed with European funds carried out by the City Hall of Sector 1, the two functions being incompatible.

#### **March 15**

- USR warns that Romania will lose at least €1.4 billion if it does not urgently complete two PNRR milestones - the whistleblower law and the decarbonization one. In addition, the party points out that at this time the application for the second payment, submitted three months late, is out of the two-month evaluation deadline,



and the EC has already sent two letters urging the MIPE and the Government to provide clarifications and supporting documents for several of the targets and milestones that are still unfinished in accordance with PNRR requirements.

### March 16

- Transgaz, OMV-Petrom and Romgaz sign a document for the development of the Tuzla-Podișor gas pipeline, with a length of over 300 km, aiming to transport gas from the Black Sea to households and economic agents in the country.
- USR MP Mihai Badea asks the Minister of Justice, Cătălin Predoiu, to withdraw Alina Albu's proposal for the position of Chief Prosecutor of DIICOT, who obtained a negative opinion from the members of the Section for Prosecutors of the Superior Council of Magistracy. He asks the Minister to resume the appointment procedure for this position.
- USR President Cătălin Drulă states that there are negotiations with the FD and the PMP to build a right-wing pole as an alternative to PSD and PNL for the 2024 elections, and that they will propose a model of government in the interest of the community.

### March 17

- The President of FD Party, Ludovic Orban, wins the lawsuit against the Government by which the executive is obliged to hold partial local elections in localities where the mayoral mandates have been declared vacant or where the local council has been dissolved.

### March 20

- The FD MPs have passed a bill banning gambling advertising of any kind. This initiative comes from the party's youth organization. According to the statements of deputy Ionel Dancă, the Parliament must intervene radically and completely ban gambling advertisements.
- Representatives of the Financial Supervision Association are called to the Parliament for a joint meeting of the Economic and Budget-Finance Committees to provide explanations for the bankruptcy of Euroins, the biggest insurance company on the Romanian market up to this

date. USR demands the resignation of the ASF management on March 17, due to its inability to act to prevent the bankruptcy of Euroins and City Insurance companies.

### **March 21**

- Diana Șoșoacă submits a draft law requesting the withdrawal of the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Cooperation between Romania and Ukraine, ratified by Law no. 129/1997. As a result, Romania would annex the territories it held during the interwar period. On her last visit to the Kremlin embassy in Bucharest, the ex-AUR senator went to celebrate the “results of the special operation” in Ukraine.
- The EC declared that the special pension bill does not respect the principle of equity and would only make very limited savings, suggesting that in the case of military pensions the income replacement rate should be 45% and the calculation basis should be related to income throughout the career. At this time, the replacement rate is 65% of the last six months. In the draft law, the replacement rate is 65% of the revenues achieved in the last twelve months, without taking into account the non-permanent increases. Romania is obliged to comply with the requirements of both the European Commission and the World Bank, because otherwise the European Commission would not consider the PNRR milestone to be met.
- The Chamber of Deputies, as a decision-making body, adopts the amendment to the whistleblower law necessary following the request of the European Commission in order to unlock the second payment request of the PNRR. The main element to be amended from the text of the law is the term “thorough” which describes the indications that a report of a case of violation of the law, corruption and fraud must contain. This term has been removed, and now the whistleblower must present “the indications regarding violations of the law.” President Iohannis promulgated the law on March 28.

### **March 22**

- The Government adopts a decision repealing the decision which provided for the postponement of the closure of energy capacities

operating on lignite and related mining operations. Thus, it is decided to preserve 660 MW of lignite-based electricity generation capacities. The repeal is made to meet the requirements approved by the EC for PNRR.

- The leader of USR deputies, Ionuț Moșteanu, states that PSD and PNL refused to start the parliamentary procedure for appointing a new leadership to the National Energy Regulatory Authority and dismissing the current leadership of the Financial Supervisory Authority.

#### **March 24**

- The Government approves a draft decision on Romania's participation in the International Student Assessment Program (PISA 2025), pointing out that it is important to participate as Romania is a member of the EU and a future member of the OECD.
- During the Government meeting, the Financial Supervisory Authority withdraws the Government decision on the motor third-party liability insurance (RCA) price cap. PM Ciucă says that there was no consensus on this draft decision and that it will be postponed until one is reached.

#### **March 25**

- MEP Eugen Tomac is re-elected as President of the PMP Party with 705 votes in favor from a total of 708 participants in the Extraordinary Congress. He announces that the National Peasant Maniu-Mihalache Party and the Ialomișenilor Party are joining the PMP. He emphasizes the need to coagulate a right-wing alternative on the Romanian political scene and criticizes the current leadership of the right represented by PNL, because they have teamed up with PSD.

#### **March 27**

- The President of the European Council, Charles Michel, carries out a formal visit to Bucharest and officially supports Romania's accelerated accession to the Schengen Area, declaring himself concerned about the rise of Euroscepticism in Romania.

**March 28**

- The plenary of the Parliament decides to appoint PSD proposal Toni Greblă as president of the AEP for an eight-year terms. The other candidates were Iulia Andreea Băbeanu, proposed by AUR, who obtained thirty-seven votes in favor and 324 against and Cristian Preda, proposed by USR, who obtained seventy-three votes in favor and 288 against. The government approves a decision on the release of Toni Greblă from the position of Prefect of Bucharest.
- The joint plenary of the Parliament approves the establishment of a special Commission to support Romania's accession process to the OECD. The Commission will examine the necessary legislative initiatives to harmonize legislation with the accession process. It will consist of twenty-one members appointed by the parliamentary groups of the two chambers.

**March 29**

- PM Ciucă announces that he will support the proposal of the Ministry of Justice regarding the establishment of the threshold of LEI 9,000 for the crime of abuse of office and that he mandates the leader of the PNL group from the Chamber of Deputies, Gabriel Andronache, to table this amendment on behalf of PNL. The Senate had previously adopted the draft law of the Government for amending the Criminal Code and setting the threshold for abuse of office at LEI 250,000. The need to adopt a threshold for abuse of office is given by the fact that the CCR has demanded that a value threshold is needed, without imposing a limit.
- The draft of the Education law is approved at the Government meeting and will be submitted for debate and adoption in Parliament, in an emergency procedure. The legislative package is a milestone in the PNRR and will benefit from a funding of €3.6 billion for implementation.

**March 30**

- USR launches a signature-gathering campaign on a dedicated website, <https://stoppensiispeciale.ro/>, to put pressure on PNL and PSD to eliminate special pensions. The Senate adopted the draft law that does not remove special pensions.