

CHRONOLOGY OF THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL LIFE OCTOBER 01 – MARCH 31, 2024

October 02

- The Prime Minister, Marcel Ciolacu announces the start of aid payments for pensioners with incomes below 3,000 lei. This announcement comes after the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection printed the pension coupons with aid for pensioners with a monthly income below 3,000 lei. These allowances are 500 lei for those with an income of up to 1,500 lei per month, 400 lei for those with an income between 1,501 and 2,000 lei per month, and 300 lei for those with an income between 2,001 and 3,000 lei per month.

October 03

- The Romanian President, Klaus Iohannis promulgates a new law on the prevention, detection and sanctioning of irregularities in obtaining and using European funds and related national public funds. The law stipulates that the regional development agencies are conferred the status of managing authority and are obliged to refer cases to the Public Prosecutor's Office. These authorities may also refer cases of suspected fraud to the Anti-Fraud Department (DLAF) and the criminal prosecution authorities.
- MP Ben-Oni Ardelean announces his departure from the National Liberal Party (PNL) parliamentary group and his intention to act as an unaffiliated Member of Parliament. At the end of September, he launched his political platform entitled "Movement of Hope".
- Members of the parliamentary budget-finance committees meet with representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who are in Romania for the annual review of the Romanian economy. The IMF members estimate that Romania will end 2023 with a

budget deficit of 6% of GDP, and that in 2024 it will fall to 5% of GDP. On the other hand, the IMF representatives do not recommend that the government intervene to control prices and inflation.

October 04

- According to an Avangarde opinion poll on the European Parliament (EP) elections, 31% of respondents would vote for the Social-Democratic Party (PSD), 21% would vote for the National Liberal Party (PNL), and the Alliance for the Union of the Romanians (AUR) would rank third with 19%. The survey was conducted on behalf of the PSD, between September 20-28, 2023, on a sample of 994 respondents using the CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) method, with a confidence level of 95% and a maximum error of $\pm 3\%$.

October 05

- The Government approves an emergency ordinance regulating gambling. This ordinance grants the right to organize and operate the gambling activities only to companies registered in Romania or to persons registered in Romania, or to legal entities that are constituted in a Member State of the European Union (EU) that have a permanent establishment in Romania. The revenue collected from gambling activities by the National Gambling Office is to be distributed as follows: 70% to the state budget, 30% to finance gambling addiction prevention programs.
- At the Annual Convocation of military priests in the Romanian Army, the Minister of National Defense (MApN), Angel Tîlvăr declares that a collaboration between the Army and the Church is a partnership that enriches society and contributes to cohesion.
- The Government allocates an additional 90 million lei from the Budgetary Reserve Fund to the budget of the Ministry of Investment with the purpose of remunerating teaching and auxiliary teaching staff for their teaching career premium and non-teaching staff for their professional career premium.
- The Government approves an emergency ordinance strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Finance to exercise financial control

over expenditures that exceed 20% above the average cost of products, services, equipment, or operational costs of public institutions. The Ministry of Finance will submit reports on this issue to the Government on an annual basis.

October 08

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announces that 115 Romanian citizens are repatriated from Israel on a flight operated by a private company, in the context of the deteriorating security situation between Israel and the Gaza Strip.
- The General Mayor of Bucharest, Nicușor Dan, announces that he intends to run as an independent candidate in the 2024 elections.

October 10

- President Iohannis receives Ukrainian President Volodimir Zelenski on the occasion of his official visit to Romania. Zelenski cancels the speech scheduled for the Parliament plenary session. Senator Diana Șoșoacă arrives in the corridors of the Parliament with a map of Greater Romania and requests that the Ukrainian President return the territories of Bessarabia, claiming that Ukraine is pursuing a policy of ethnic cleansing against the Romanian population on its territory.

October 11

- The report on the drones that crashed in the Danube Delta is submitted to the Prosecutor General's Office. The Defense Minister states that the drones were hit in defense systems and did not target Romanian territory.

October 12

- PM Ciolacu says the rate of inflation fell to 8.8% in September. In August 2024, the annual inflation rate stood at 9.4%, according to data published by the National Institute of Statistics (INS).
- The Government launches a four-year fully funded program the objective of which is to provide 410,000 pre-school, primary and secondary school pupils with an annual education voucher of 500 lei,

to be used for the purchase of supplies. This program is aimed at children from low-income families.

- The Government decides to supplement the budgets of several ministries and institutions for 2023, emphasizing priorities in areas such as justice, telecommunications, culture, transport and security. Consequently, the Ministry of Justice has allocated an additional budget of 81.5 million lei, while the Special Telecommunication Service (STS) has received an increase of 1 million lei, the Ministry of Culture has been granted an additional 60 million lei, and the Ministry of Transportation receives an increase of 483 million lei, of which 50 million lei have been redistributed to Metrorex (Bucharest Metro).
- President Iohannis convenes the Supreme Council of National Defense (CSAT). Among the topics discussed are drug abuse issues and other narcotic substances, the evolution of the security situation in the Black Sea, and the Romanian Army's equipment plan for 2024-2033.

October 16

- The Chamber of Deputies, the decision-making chamber, adopts with 174 votes in favor, 81 against and 17 abstentions the draft law on special pensions, in accordance with the Romanian Constitutional Court (CCR) decision from August 2, 2023. According to the law, the net amount of the pension cannot exceed 100% of the net income of the last month of employment prior to retirement. In addition, the legislation introduces new tax thresholds. In accordance with the CCR decision, the amendments introduced by the new law on special pensions do not affect service pensions in payment, in accordance with the principle of non-retroactivity.

October 19

- President Iohannis promulgates the law on special pensions of magistrates. Judges and prosecutors with 25 years' seniority are permitted to retire at the age of 60 and are entitled to receive 80% of the average of the last 48 months' salary. The amount of the pension cannot exceed 100% of the last net salary. The law follows a CCR ruling from August 2023, which identified several unconstitutional provisions.

October 20

- In accordance with Government Decision No 1003 of October 20, 2023, the archival fund belonging to the Security State Department, managed by the MApN, will be transferred to the National Council for the Studying of the Securitate Archive (CNSAS), which oversee the declassification of files.
- The Government approves budget supplements for various ministries and institutions, including the Ministry of Interior (960 million lei), Ministry of Education (184 million lei), Ministry of Health (200 million lei), Ministry of Transportation (381,5 million lei), Ministry of European Projects (500,000 lei), the Romanian Intelligence Service - SRI (6,25 million Lei), Chamber of Deputies (26 million lei) in order to cover salary expenses, investment projects, and other institutional needs. Significant allocations were directed to hospitals, pre-university education, and diplomatic missions.
- The Save Romania Union (USR) completes the internal candidate nomination process for the EP elections, with 12,336 members taking part in the online vote held between 9 and 16 September. The list of USR candidates, officially launched at the Council Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE Europe), is opened by Elena Lasconi, Dan Barna, Vlad Voiculescu and Vlad Botoș, followed by 16 other candidates.

October 22

- The National College of the People's Movement Party (PMP) votes unanimously in favor of creating an alliance with USR and Force of the Right (FD).

October 25

- PM Ciolacu attends the National Tripartite Council with representatives of employers and trade unions, where the new minimum wage rates in construction, agriculture and food industry are established. The new minimum wage in construction is 4,582 lei, and the new minimum wage in agriculture and the food industry is 3,436 lei.

October 26

- 56 NGOs and academics sign an open letter in support of the draft law on the amendment and completion of the Law on the election of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies and for the organization and functioning of the Permanent Electoral Authority (AEP). This bill introduces gender quotas on the lists of candidates for parliamentary elections in Romania, which currently occupies the second to the last place in the EU in terms of women in positions of political power.
- President Iohannis signs the decree promulgating the law on fiscal-budgetary measures to ensure Romania's financial sustainability and reduce budget waste. On September 29, USR, FD, and two PNL MPs referred to the CCR the package of laws on which the Government had taken responsibility in Parliament. On October 18, the CCR rejected the unconstitutionality complaint. The tax package stipulates that micro-enterprises must pay a tax of 1% of turnover if their revenues are up to €60,000 a year, and 3% if revenues exceed this amount; large businesses with profits over €50 million must pay a turnover tax of at least 1% of turnover; banks will pay an additional tax of 2% of turnover in 2024 and 2025, and 1% in 2026; the IT tax exemption is maintained for income below 10,000 lei; employees in agriculture, construction and the food industry are not exempted from paying the Contribution of Health and Social Insurance (CASS).

October 27

- The Government approves a series of measures designed to reduce budget expenditure for 2023 in order to comply with the budget deficit target. One of the measures includes a ban on local public authorities financing public funding for the organization of community events such as festivals, concerts, competitions, and themed celebrations.
- The Government approves an Emergency Ordinance (GEO) which enables administrative-territorial units to request up to 1 billion lei in loans from the State Treasury in order to ensure the co-financing of projects financed by non-reimbursable external funds from the EU.

October 31

- The motion against Marcel Boloș, Minister of Finance, tabled by USR and FD on October 24, entitled “Marcel Boloș, a minister that raises taxes with a smile”, is rejected by the Chamber of Deputies (85 votes in favor, 160 against, one abstention).

November 03

- President Iohannis returns back the Law on the establishment of simplification measures at the level of central public administration to Parliament for re-examination. This law required public institutions and specialized bodies of the central administration to publish ex officio information on taxes, tariffs or fees. The President's request aims to include local authorities and legal persons in the provisions of the law to make public administration more transparent. The aforementioned law was sent to the President for promulgation on October 21.

November 05

- The USR National Bureau announces that it has taken note of the withdrawal of Elena Lasconi from the list of candidates for the parliamentary elections. This follows an interview in which she stated that she voted “yes” in the referendum on the traditional family in 2018. The party considers this to be at odds with its vision of upholding the liberal principles and values for which it fights both in Romania and Europe.

November 08

- MEP Claudiu Năsui announces that he is taking legal action against the Presidential Administration for its refusal to provide public information on the travels of the Romanian presidents between 2010 and 2023. This action is taken in the context of a bill tabled by USR to ensure the transparency of the President's foreign travel expenses amid heated debate over the President's travel expenses. However, this bill was rejected by the Senate and not debated by the Chamber of Deputies.

- The Minister of Development, Public Works and Administration (MDLPA), Adrian Veșteea, signs 54 new contracts through the Anghel Saligny funding program, worth over 895 million lei. These contracts concern the modernization of road infrastructure, the extension of drinking water systems, domestic water networks, the construction of bridges and pavements.

November 09

- The Government approves the draft law on the public pension system, which increases the pension point by 13.8%, from 1,785 lei to 2,032 lei as of January 1, 2024. By 2035, the retirement age for men and women is to be equalized at 65, and people with more than 25 years' contributions will receive additional points, +0.5 points per year for 26-30 years, +0.75 points per year for 31-35 years, and one point per year from 36 years.
- The Government approves a bill to tax large companies at a minimum rate of 15% of their profits for multinational and national groups or companies with a consolidated turnover of at least €751 million.

November 10

- President Iohannis submits a complaint to the CCR regarding the constitutionality of the legislative act amending the law on the organization and the functioning of the judicial police. This law introduces a series of legislative interventions with the aim of defining the sources of origin of the police officers of the judicial police who will become part of criminal investigation bodies, the conditions for appointment to the judicial police, and the conditions for withdrawal of the notice of appointment to the judicial police. The President asserts that the law is unconstitutional in that it incorporates elements of a 2020 emergency ordinance, thereby contravening the principle of legality.

November 13

- The National Health Insurance House (CNAS) requests 4.2 billion lei from the Government, but receives only 1.7 billion from the

Government Reserve Fund. The amount of money received will be used to provide salaries for health employees, with the remainder will be distributed to all the areas of healthcare covered by the CNAS.

- The notoriety of political leaders is the first indicator for assessing a political leader's ability to stand for election. According to the INSCOP survey, Klaus Iohannis is the most popular political leader in Romania (99.2%), followed by Gabriela Firea (94%), Diana Șoșoacă (93.5%), Mircea Geoană (93.3%), Marcel Ciolacu (92.5%). The survey was conducted on behalf of News.ro, using telephone interviews with a sample of 1,100 respondents aged 18 and over, between October 23 and November 2, 2023. The margin of error at 95% confidence level is ± 3 .
- November 14
- PM Ciolacu announces during a Coalition meeting that he wants to postpone the "Hot Meal" program in schools, in order to save money for the state budget. The program would have provided a hot meal to 1 million children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The Chamber of Deputies, as the decision-making body, adopts a bill that increases the income of the staff employed at the CNAS, with 203 votes in favour, one against and 55 abstentions. The bill ensures that the CNAS staff salaries are brought into line with the maximum level in the government's working apparatus. The assimilation of functions and salaries will be carried out by the President of CNAS, in accordance with established criteria such as education and professional rank.

November 15

- The Administration of Hospitals and Medical Services in Bucharest (ASSMB) warns of a deep crisis in Romania's healthcare system, urging the Government to take immediate action to avoid collapse. Problems include underfunding and cuts to hospital funding, with a direct impact on patients and hospital activity. In a joint statement, ASSMB and the managers of 19 hospitals in Bucharest have called for the amendment of OUG 90/2023 to exempt public health units from the restrictions imposed to ensure the normal functioning of health services.

November 16

- In order to help vulnerable families pay their energy bills, Romania's Minister of Investment and European Projects, Adrian Căciu, announces that the validity of energy vouchers has been extended until March 31, 2024, extending the original deadline of December 31, 2023.
- The European Commission (EC) has launched infringement proceedings against Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Austria for non-compliance with the transposition of the EU Waste Directive. These countries have failed to properly meet mandatory targets for the recycling and the re-use of municipal waste. The deadline for transposition was July 5, 2020. The Commission has sent letters of formal notice to these countries, allowing them two months to remedy the situation.
- The Government approves the founding act of the Investment and Development Bank, following Romania's commitment under the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience (PNRR). The role of the Bank is to support strategic projects that cannot be financed from the regular banking system and will be managed by a Supervisory Board (7 members) and a Management Board (3 members).
- FD party leader, Ludovic Orban, wins the case against the Government, obliging the executive to hold local by-elections in 57 municipalities where mayoral seats have been declared vacant or where the local council has been dissolved. This decision upholds the Bucharest Court of Appeal's decision of March 16th, which had ruled in favor of Ludovic Orban.
- The government approves the allocation by the Ministry of Development of 250 million lei from the Budget Reserve Fund for works carried out under the Public and Social Interest Construction Program for road, water and sewerage infrastructure.

November 17

- The leader of AUR, George Simion, announces in a press release the transfer of MP Ana Predescu, member of the Committee for Industry and Services and from the Committee for Education in the Chamber of Deputies, from the Social Liberal Humanist Party (PUSL) to AUR.

November 18

- Claudiu Năsui, vice-president of USR, declares that Dan Barna, former leader of the party, will open the list of candidates for the 2024 EP elections after Elena Lasconi's withdrawal.

November 20

- The draft pension law is passed in the Chamber of Deputies, the decision-making body, with 199 votes in favour, 39 against and 17 abstentions. On November 14, the Senate passed the law after the government approved the bill, which will see the pensions of 4.7 million beneficiaries recalculated. According to the draft, from January 1, 2024, the pension point will be increased by 13.8%, from 1,785 lei to 2,032 lei, and the right to a pension will be obtained after at least 15 years of contributions, but without taking into account non-contributory periods such as university studies, military service, sick leave and unemployment.

November 21

- A secret joint meeting of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate takes place in the context of developments in Israel. The meeting is attended only by MPs who have been invited by the joint Permanent Bureaus, and by the staff of the two Secretariats-General providing specialist and technical assistance. The press is not allowed in the meeting room and the verbatim report is not published in the Official Journal.
- AUR President, George Simion, announces that the party is expanding by integrating two political parties into AUR, the Romanian Village Party and the National Revival Alliance. With this announcement, George Simion tries to reiterate the idea that a united alliance around AUR is necessary to create an opposition to counter the PSD-PNL alliance.
- The EC has approved the modification of Romania's PNRR with a total allocation of €28.5 billion. The amended plan also includes the REPower EU chapter, aimed at accelerating the green transition and energy efficiency. It brings an additional €1.4 billion of non-repayable funds to Romania. The focus is on the green transition, with 44.1%

of the funds allocated to climate targets, and the digital transition, with an increased allocation of up to 21.8%. The revised plan reflects adjustments due to rising prices for construction materials and disruption in supply chains, and excludes the 9.4% of GDP ceiling for the public pension system. The next step is for the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) to approve the revised PNRR and for the EU Council to issue a new implementation decision.

November 23

- The Government approves the allocation of 52.38 million lei from the Budgetary Reserve Fund to local authorities in order to finance part of the expenditure on pre-university education. At the same meeting, the Government decides to supplement the budgets of the SRI – increased by 191.62 million lei – and the Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE) – increased by 5 million lei – from the Budgetary Reserve Fund available to the Government.

November 24

- The mayor of Baia Mare, Cătălin Cherecheș, is sentenced to five years in prison for bribery. The sentence was handed down by the Cluj Court of Appeal, which rejected Cherecheș's appeal and upheld the decision of the Cluj Court. Cherecheș is banned from holding public office for five years and his assets have been seized to cover the damage. He was indicted by the DNA in 2018 for offences committed as an MP and mayor, including bribery and making false statements. Others were involved in the bribery case.
- According to the INSCOP poll whose data were collected during October 23rd and November 2, 2023, Mircea Geoană as an independent is the favorite for the presidential election (27.2%), followed by Marcel Ciolacu, PSD-PNL candidate (24.2%), George Simion – AUR (18.6%), Elena Lasconi – USR (12,1%) and Diana Șoșoacă – SOS România (10,5%). The opinion poll was conducted by INSCOP Research on behalf of News.ro, and the data was collected, using the CATI method (telephone interviews), with a sample of 1100 people.

November 25

- Victor Ponta is re-elected president of Pro Romania at the party's congress in Bucharest. MEP Corina Crețu is elected president of the party's National Council and Alin Văcaru secretary general.

November 26

- Members of the trade unions affiliated to the Federation of Trade Unions at the Ministry of Labor, as well as non-unionized workers, declare a general strike from November 27th, demanding the elimination of wage inequalities and the improvement of working conditions.
- According to an analysis by the Faculty of Economics and Business Management in Cluj-Napoca, Romania collects the least VAT in the EU, with a collection deficit of 36.7% in 2021 and an overall average of 5.3%. In addition, the National Agency for Fiscal Administration (ANAF) reveals that in 2023 the voluntary payment of VAT is 83%.

November 27

- The Minister of Development, Public Works and Administration, Adrian-Ioan Veștea, signs 34 new funding contracts under the Anghel Saligny national investment program worth a total of almost 285 million lei, for investments in road infrastructure in several municipalities in 20 counties.
- President Iohannis forwards to the Justice Minister Alina Gorghiu the requests for the prosecution of former Health Ministers Vlad Voiculescu and Ioana Mihăilă. Both are accused of abuse of office in connection with the purchase of anti-COVID vaccines. The decision comes after the DNA requested permission to open criminal proceedings. The Senate plenary is due to discuss on November 29 a similar request concerning former PM Florin Cîțu, who is also accused in the same case. The Public Prosecutor's Office of the High Court of Cassation and Justice (ICCJ) has been informed of these requests.

November 28

- President Iohannis sends a complaint to the CCR of unconstitutionality of the Law amending and supplementing Law 73/1993 on the establishment,

organization and functioning of the Legislative Council, after the Parliament sent it to him for promulgation on November 13, 2023. According to the President, the principle of bicameralism has been violated in the adoption of the law, since, according to the Romanian Constitution, in the case of draft laws that contain provisions related to the status of the staff of the Legislative Council, the first chamber to be consulted is the Senate, whereas for this legislative act the first chamber to be consulted was the Chamber of Deputies.

- The PNL, through its leader, Nicolae Ciucă, announces that Nicușor Dan will not be supported by the party if he decides to run as an independent candidate in the upcoming mayor elections for the Bucharest City-Hall.

November 29

- Romania's Senate Plenary approves (with 90 votes in favor and two against) DNA's request to start criminal proceedings against former PM and current Senator Florin Cîțu on charges of abuse of office in the anti-COVID vaccines case. Cîțu claimed in plenary that he acted in accordance with Romanian law in exercising his duties as Prime Minister. The decision comes after DNA requested permission for criminal proceedings to begin, implicating former health ministers Vlad Voiculescu and Ioana Mihăilă, in connection with the purchase of anti-COVID vaccines.
- President Iohannis promulgates the new law on the public pension system. It provides for a 13.8% increase in the pension point from January 1, 2024, followed by a recalculation of pensions according to a new calculation from September 1, 2024. The law also sets a minimum of 15 years of contributions for pension entitlement and excludes certain non-contributory periods. The retirement age will be gradually equalized to 65 years for both sexes by 2035. The law also includes special provisions for certain categories of work and the obligation for Romanian pensioners in the diaspora to sign a life certificate. The law also includes special provisions for certain categories of work and the obligation for Romanian pensioners in the diaspora to sign a life certificate.

- László Borbély, head of the Government's Sustainable Development Department, says Romania's water treatment and reuse rate is very low, at just 1.5%, compared with the EU average of 11.8%. Moreover, he states that by 2027 major investments worth almost €10 billion need to be implemented, with part of the funding provided by the PNRR.

December 04

- The Senate adopts the project enabling the Government to issue simple ordinances in areas not covered by organic laws during the parliamentary recess (the conclusion of the second regular session of the year 2023, until the first regular session of 2024), with 61 votes in favor, 17 against, and 14 abstentions. The areas in which the Government can issue ordinances during this period are: finance and economy, development, public works and administration, labor and social solidarity, internal affairs, health, agriculture, transportation and infrastructure, culture, investments, and European projects.
- The EC approves aid from the European Union Solidarity Fund, amounting to € 34 million to cover the damages caused by the 2022 drought in Romania.

December 05

- The Chamber of Deputies approves the budget for 2024, which consists of commitment credits amounting to 686,982,000 lei and budget credits amounting to 638,024,000 lei.
- According to an opinion poll analyzing the trust rankings of Romanians, the top positions are occupied by Mircea Geoană, the Deputy Secretary General of NATO, Laura Codruța Kovesi, the Chief Prosecutor of the European Public Prosecutor's Office, and Emil Boc, the Mayor of Cluj. In terms of notoriety, President Klaus Iohannis, former Mayor of Bucharest Gabriela Firea, and Senator Diana Șoșoacă occupy the first three places. The same INSCOP survey shows that if parliamentary elections were held on Sunday, PSD would occupy the first place (with 30.2% of the votes), followed by PNL (20.1%) and AUR (19.5%). The survey was conducted by INSCOP Research between November 20-27, commissioned by News.ro, with a sample of 1,100 individuals.

December 06

- Former Romanian PM Florin Cîțu is officially under investigation by the National Anti-Corruption Directorate (DNA) for complicity in abuse of office in the case of COVID-19 vaccine acquisitions. He is accused of approving memorandums that led to the unjustified purchase of an additional 43,359,892 doses of vaccine, worth 825,636,678 euros. The case also involves former Health Ministers Vlad Voiculescu and Ioana Mihăilă.

December 07

- President Iohannis promulgates the law that increases the salaries of the personnel of the CNAS. The law provides that the salaries of the CNAS personnel will be aligned with the maximum level of remuneration within the government workforce, with new salary levels being set by order of the CNAS President and in compliance with the state budget. The law sets out criteria for determining salaries and enforces equally increased salaries to all positions, including those with no counterpart in the government structure.

December 08

- The Government supplements the budget of the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Equal Opportunities with the amount of 1,405 million lei from the budget reserve fund to ensure the full payment of salary rights until the end of the year. The Government allocates additional funds to the Ministry of Development amounting to 500 million lei from the budget reserve fund for financing the national investment program Anghel Saligny and for the national program of public or social interest constructions. For the Ministry of Health, the Government increased the budget by 190 million lei.
- The DNA opens criminal proceedings against the former Minister of Health, Vlad Voiculescu, for abuse of office in the case of additional purchases of COVID-19 vaccines. The charges include authorizing an unjustified purchase of additional doses of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Former Romanian Minister of Health, Ioana Mihăilă, is also under criminal investigation by the DNA for abuse of office in the case of additional purchases of COVID-19 vaccines. The allegations

relate to initiating the unjustified acquisition of 34,099,623 doses of the Pfizer vaccine.

December 09

- PM Ciolacu announces that Austria has decided to allow the lifting of air borders for Romania within the Schengen area, with the aim of eliminating queues at airports for flights within the EU.

December 11

- PM Ciolacu announces a 5% salary increase for the entire public sector, excluding dignitaries. The investment budget will be 7.3% of GDP, while for Education, it will increase by 60%, reaching 4.1% of GDP. The Ministry of Economy faces a budget decrease due to the completion of investments, while the Ministries of Transport and Health receive budget increases. The decision regarding teacher salaries will be made in consultation with union leaders.

December 12

- The simple motion filed by USR and FD parliamentarians in the Chamber of Deputies against the Minister of Education, Ligia Deca, titled "Motion of merit for the grade 2 out of 10 for Minister Deca's term," is rejected, with 81 votes in favor, 189 against, and 9 abstentions. This motion follows the stagnation of the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) test results between 2018 and 2022.

December 13

- Romania's state budget for 2024 is based on an economic growth of 3.4%, inflation of 6%, and a deficit of 5% of GDP. Revenues are estimated at 586.1 billion lei, and expenditures at 672.8 billion lei. Social assistance expenditure accounts for 31.1% of the total, personnel expenditures for 21.7%, and investments for 17.8%. The number of unemployed is estimated at 215,000, and the average net monthly wage at 4,733 lei. Pensions will increase by 13.8% from January 2024, and salaries of public sector employees by 5%, except for education personnel who will receive a 20% increase in

two instalments. Civil servants earning less than 8,000 lei net/month will receive holiday vouchers and meal allowances, and the hazardous conditions bonus will be 15% of salary, but no more than 1,500 lei gross/month. The budget deficit for 2024 is estimated at 5% of GDP.

- President Iohannis promulgates a law allowing local police to impose fines for traffic violations by electric scooter riders. This measure expands the duties of local police officers, who can now fine pedestrians, cyclists, moped riders, electric scooter riders, and animal-drawn vehicle operators for traffic rule violations.
- Romică-Andrei Baciu is removed from his position as a member of the Board of Directors and President with the rank of State Secretary of the CNAS by the decision of PM Ciolacu, after he announced his resignation on December 11. On the same day, Baciu is placed under criminal investigation by anti-corruption prosecutors for abuse of office regarding the purchase of 4,260,269 doses of Pfizer vaccine on the basis of a memorandum dated April 19, 2021, approved by Florin Cîțu, who is also under investigation in the same case, being Prime Minister at that time. Romică-Andrei Baciu was appointed to CNAS in August 2023. In his place, the interim president will be the vice-president of CNAS, Cristian Celea.

December 14

- The MAPN reports a possible unauthorized entry into Romanian airspace by a Russian drone used in attacks against Ukraine. The incident, which occurred near the village of Grindu in Tulcea County, prompted the deployment of Romanian F-16 aircraft and German Eurofighter Typhoons. A crater 1.5 meters deep was formed, and the area was secured for investigation. This is the fifth drone discovered in the area since September. The Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Bucharest, Valery Kuzmin, is summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- The National Bank of Romania (BNR) declares that, during January-October 2023, Romania's total foreign debt increased by 18548 billion euros to 162.434 billion euros, from 143.886 billion euros on December 31, 2022.

- The leader of AUR, George Simion, announces that lawyer Gheorghe Piperea is the new coordinator of the party for the EP elections, and the AUR list will be headed by MEP Cristian Terheș, the leader of the Romanian National Conservative Party (PNCR). The addition of Terheș's party brings the total number of sovereigntist parties in the AUR alliance to eight.

December 15

- The Government adopts the State and Social Security budgets for 2024. On December 13, the Minister of Finance published the Emergency Ordinance for the adoption of the budget for 2024, which includes dozens of changes to the fiscal budget from 2023, as well as an increase in the contribution paid by Romanian employees to a private pension fund Pillar II, from 3.75% to 4.75%. On December 14, PM Ciolacu stated that the budget for 2024 would allocate 7% of GDP to investments, and the social security budget includes an increase in pensions in line with the inflation rate, 13.8%, starting from January 1. PM Ciolacu also foresees the possibility of recalculating pensions starting from September 1, 2024.
- The Romanian Government submits to the EC the third payment request from the PNRR, amounting to 2.7 billion euros. Of this amount, 1.85 billion euros represent grants, and the remaining 811 million euros are loans. These funds are intended to cover a series of 74 PNRR milestones for the third and fourth quarters of 2022.

December 16

- Gabriel Oprea, former Minister of the Interior (2008-2009), is re-elected president of the National Union for Romania's Progress (UNPR) for the next four years at the party's National Congress, whose motto is "God, Country, Family, Honor".

December 18

- The USR, FD, and PMP announce that they will run together in the 2024 EP elections under the alliance called the United Right Alliance (ADU), which aims to be an alternative to PSD and PNL. It will present a joint list of candidates for the June 2024 EP elections: Dan

Barna, Vlad Voiculescu, Eugen Tomac, Vlad Botoș, Cristina Prună, Violeta Alexandru, Radu Mihail, Corina Atanasiu.

- The PNL wants the local elections to be merged with the first round of the presidential elections in September, arguing that this is the only constitutional variable for merging elections.

December 19

- The Chamber of Deputies rejects – with 81 votes in favor and 189 votes against – the simple motion tabled by the USR and FD deputies against the Minister of Education, Ligia Deca.

December 20

- During the plenary session of the Parliament, a series of protests occur during PM Ciolacu's speech. These are led by AUR and USR parliamentarians who are against the 2024 budget project.
- PM Ciolacu announces that there will be more than 80,000 new jobs in 2024 and that Romania has not entered a recession, as the budget for the next year has not been overestimated.
- The joint session of Parliament approves the draft law on the State Budget for the next year. The debate on the budget lasted for about 7 hours as 20,400 amendments were submitted, of which 962 were adopted. The budget was adopted with 299 votes in favor and 82 votes against. The bill on the social security budget is adopted with 294 votes in favor and 84 votes against.

December 21

- The Romanian Government adopts a decision on the reorganization of the General Secretariat of the Government (SGG), according to which 99 positions, of which 25 represent leadership positions, will be cut from the level of the main credit authorizer, for which SGG is the employer. This brings the maximum number of posts at this level to 670, of which 53 are leadership positions, representing 7.91%.
- The Romanian Government approves a project in a meeting to extend the 90% compensation program for the price of medicines for retired people. Starting from January 1, 2024, pensioners with an income of up to 1830 lei per month will benefit from this facility, with the threshold being raised from 1,608 lei. For this

purpose, the budget of the Ministry of Health will be increased by 40% in 2024, affirms PM Ciolacu.

- The USR refers to the CCR the project initiated by PSD and PNL leaders, Marcel Ciolacu and Nicolae Ciucă, to strengthen the capacity to combat tax evasion, adopted by the Chamber of Deputies on December 19, with 182 votes in favour, 80 votes against, and 2 abstentions.

December 27

- The plenary session of the Chamber of Deputies is convened to reject three legislative proposals concerning the cultural autonomy of the Hungarian community in Romania: a legislative proposal regarding the Autonomy State of Szeklerland, as well as another legislative proposal "FRAME LAW," all signed by three UDMR MPs. In total, there were 104 votes in favor of rejection and eight votes against. The first project involves the autonomy of Covasna, Harghita counties, and part of Mureş County. The second project entails the Statute of cultural autonomy for the Hungarian community in Romania, while the third represents the "Framework Law on the cultural autonomy of national communities."
- The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MAI), together with its counterparts from Austria and Bulgaria, reach an agreement on the extension of the Schengen area to include Romania and Bulgaria at the air and maritime borders, effective from March 2024. As far as the land borders are concerned, this aspect remains to be determined in 2024.

December 28

- PM Ciolacu states that the deficit of the consolidated general budget after the first 11 months of the current year rose to 4.64% of GDP, reaching 73.55 billion lei, compared to a deficit of 58.7 billion lei (4.19% of GDP) for the first 11 months of 2022.

December 29

- The Senate, as the decision-making legislative body, rejects the three projects concerning the autonomy of Szeklerland, initiated by three UDMR deputies, after the Chamber of Deputies rejected all three projects the day before.

January 04

- The first meeting of the Government in 2024 takes place at the Victoriei Palace, during which PM Ciolacu announces the increase of pensions by 13.8% and announces that there will be a recalculation of pensions in September. He also states that the absorption of European money is the engine of the economy in 2023, Romania reaching a record level of absorption, of over 93% in the financial year 2014-2020.

January 05

- The MApN announces that it will purchase the missiles for the PATRIOT systems, at a cost of over one billion euros. Romania will acquire 200 PAC-2 GEM-T missiles as part of this consolidated multinational acquisition, which uses the principles of the European Air Defense Initiative European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI).

January 08

- President Iohannis promulgates a law imposing fines of between 10,000 and 20,000 lei for adding unauthorized inscriptions or symbols to the Romanian flag, considering such actions as contraventions. It amends Law 75/1994 and stresses the need to respect national symbols.
- President Iohannis promulgates the law approving the Government Emergency Ordinance (GEO) establishing a temporary measure to combat the excessive price increase of some agricultural products and foodstuffs. According to this GEO, the rate of the commercial mark-up practiced by processors is limited to a maximum of 20% of the cost of production, while agricultural and food products entering the Romanian territory not passing through processing or slaughtering are subject to a commercial mark-up of a maximum of 5% of the purchase price.

January 09

- Representatives of the AUR react with a press release to the file in which some party members are accused of voter corruption. They argue that this file is a move against the party.

January 11

- President Iohannis signs the decrees appointing Mihaiela Moraru-Iorga as chief prosecutor of the Department for combating corruption, in the DNA, and Remus-Iulian Popa as chief prosecutor of the Section prosecution in the Prosecutor's Office for a period of three years. Both prosecutors were proposed by the Justice Minister Alina Gorghiu, although they had previously received negative opinions from the CSM. Moraru-Iorga, with experience in DNA under Daniel Morar and Laura Codruța Kovesi, had legal conflicts with Kovesi, being dismissed and then reinstated after the dismissal order was overturned. Remus-Iulian Popa is appreciated for his experience and knowledge in the field.
- Angel Tîlvar, Minister of Defense, announces that Romania has become the 15th member of the NATO Naval Striking and Support Forces (STRIKFORNATO), the most powerful naval group in this area of the Alliance.
- PM Ciolacu attends a meeting with representatives of transport truckers in the context of their protest. They are dissatisfied with the value of the RCA, with waiting times at the border and they want Ukrainian lorries to be checked in the same way as Romanian lorries on Romanian territory. The truckers' representatives also met with the Minister of Transport, Sorin Grindeanu, and with the Minister of Finance, Marcel Boloș. At the same time, the farmers' representative met with the Minister of Agriculture, Florin Barbu.

January 13

- The National Executive Committee of the Pro Romania party decided that the party would participate in the EP elections with its own lists, headed by former Prime Minister Victor Ponta.

January 14

- According to a draft Ordinance of the Ministry of Agriculture, Romanian farmers operating in the field of primary agricultural production could receive state aid of over 161 million euros this year through "Farmer's Credit", a program to support access to liquidity in the context of the crisis.

January 15

- USR requests the resignation of the Minister of Health, Alexandru Rafila in view of the fact that family medicine and outpatient medicine may be affected by the decision of CNAS to reduce the tariffs for family and outpatient doctors.
- PM Ciolacu urges ministers to expedite the drafting of normative acts to address the problems of the protesting farmers and truckers. The Government is aiming at the rapid adoption of the measures agreed with these sectors. It was confirmed that Ukrainian cereals do not enter the Romanian domestic market, being only in transit. The PM insists on continuous dialogue with farmers and truckers, involving large associations in these areas, and the Financial Supervisory Authority (ASF) has proposed solutions for RCA. The Government is open to dialogue to resolve complaints.

January 16

- Bucharest Mayor Nicușor Dan rejects the request for protest of transport truckers and farmers. The reason given is that the request is not reasonable, as it required full occupancy of Victoriei Square and the adjacent streets from Friday to Monday for 15,000 cars and machinery, which would have blocked the transport in Bucharest. Nicușor Dan noted that the right to protest is guaranteed by law, but should not disrupt public transport. He said any law-abiding protest requests would be approved.

January 17

- USR deputies Oana Țoiu and Cristian Seidler notify the People's Advocate about the emergency ordinance that provides a 10% reduction of allowances for medical leave. They argue that this measure, called "illness tax", is unconstitutional and absurd, affecting employees who need medical leave. Affected categories include holidays for ordinary diseases, maternity, care of the sick child and patients with oncological conditions.
- Environment Minister Mircea Fechet announces the launch of the "Rabla for stoves" program, to replace old stoves with new efficient and low emission models, with a budget of 500 million lei.

The initiative aims to reduce pollution and improve the efficiency of household heating.

January 18

- The Romanian Government adopts projects from the Ministries of Transport and Agriculture, resulting from discussions with farmers and transport truckers. These include changes to border weight checks, setting limits and tolerances for overweight trucks, recognizing measurements from EU countries. Rules for periodic technical inspection of vehicles and professional certification in road transport have also been clarified. The government approved the granting of direct subsidies (100 euro/hectare) to compensate for the increase in the prices of production, harvesting, transport and storage of primary crops harvested in 2023.
- The mayor of the capital, Nicușor Dan, approves a protest in Constitution Square, with 5,000 people, 100 tractors and 100 trucks, which will take place on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

January 19

- Romania, Bulgaria and Greece sign a joint declaration on regional energy projects, focusing on offshore wind and hydrogen power plants. This collaboration aims to develop joint energy projects and attract European funding. The aim is to diversify energy sources and strengthen interconnection infrastructure in Central and South Eastern Europe.
- The ASF Council publishes the decision on the access of transport truckers to a reasonable premium rate in the case of RCA. The new calculation formula ensures that the maximum recommended premium does not exceed 9000 lei in class B0. The payment in instalments of the RCA is also allowed, as well as the possibility of suspending the policy while the vehicle is parked for a certain period of time for various reasons.

January 20

- FD leader Ludovic Orban declares that he rejects any possible cooperation with PNL.

January 22

- Judge Cristi Dănilă is dismissed from office by President Iohannis following his retirement. In December 2021, he was suspended from office after the CSM issued three decisions to exclude him from magistracy as a result of videos posted on TikTok and for joining two associations that criticize the Government.

January 23

- Cristian Ghinea (USR) submits several complaints to the Bucharest Court of Appeal and the EU Court of Justice (CJUE) against the head of the DNA, Marius Voineag, on the acquisition of 300 BMWs by the MAI, from a company founded by a friend of President Iohannis (Michael Schmidt). The former USR minister also referred the matter to the CJEU for a preliminary ruling, asking two questions about the investigation conducted by the DNA in violation of the Community provisions and about the DNA's self-session and whether prosecutor Marius Voineag wanted the case to be closed.
- In a meeting with farmers in Târgu Mureș, the Agriculture Minister, Florin Barbu (PSD), calls for the resignation of the European Commissioner for Agriculture's and critiques EU's "green" rules forcing farmers to fallow land and rotate crops.
- PM Ciolacu announces after talks with the police trade unionists and the MAI leadership that the foundations of principles have been laid for the adoption of measures to restore the attractiveness for jobs in the MAI, the National Administration of Prisons and the MAPN framework, due to staff shortages in these sectors.

January 24

- Claudiu Târziu, chairman of the National Board of the AUR party, gives a revisionist speech calling for the unification of Romania with territories of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

January 25

- Avangarde conducts an opinion poll on the PSD proposal for the EP elections. The survey is based on two scenarios, the first of which is an independent candidacy of the USR, in which the PSD ranks first with a percentage of 31% followed by the PNL with

20%, AUR with 19% and the USR with 13%. The second scenario envisions a joint USR candidacy with PMP and FD under the ADU. The only differences in percentages concern PNL, which has 21% in this scenario, and the ADU, which has 14%. The survey was conducted between January 8-22, 2024, on a sample of 1,150 respondents, with a maximum margin of error of $\pm 2.9\%$ at a confidence level of 95%.

- PM Ciolacu holds a meeting with representatives of the Sanitas Federation, as a result of which the Government of Romania is committed to unlock a number of jobs, as a priority in university and county hospitals, but also undertakes to increase the salary fund by 15%.

January 26

- A protest of the AUR party takes place in front of the Financial Supervisory Authority (ASF) headquarters accusing the “uncontrollable” rise of RCA prices. They call on ASF to set up CEC Insurances, an institution of the state through which to offer RCA to drivers affected by the bankruptcy of Astra Insurance or Euroins.

January 28

- USR, PMP and FD announce the joint list for the EP elections at a press conference held by the three leaders, the first eight candidates being: Dan Barna, Vlad Voiculescu, Eugen Tomac, Vlad Botoș, Cristina Prună, Violeta Alexandru, Radu Mihail, Corina Atanasiu.

January 29

- In the context of the protests, representatives of taxi and alternative transport organizations participate in a series of consultations with government representatives at Victoriei Palace. Representatives of taxi drivers call for the improvement of the legal framework in order to create a fair competition between service providers.

January 30

- President Iohannis signs a decree dismissing Bogdan Aurescu from his post of presidential advisor as of February 1, following his appointment as judge at the International Court of Justice.

- According to an opinion poll conducted by INSCOP for News.ro on the EP elections, PSD ranks first in the intention to vote by 29.5%, followed by PNL with 18.8% and AUR with 18.4%. With percentages above the electoral threshold, the ADU formed by USR, PMP and FD with 12.9%, but also the SOS party, which would obtain a percentage of 6.5%. The survey was carried out between 16 and 24 January, using the CATI method with a simple representative sample of 1,100 people aged 18 years and over, with a maximum margin of error of $\pm 3\%$, and a confidence level of 95%.
- The database of the Chamber of Deputies is breached, allowing hackers to obtain confidential information. Among the stolen documents there are contract with banks and data on personal cars as well as personal documents.

January 31

- The Government approves a draft law amending and supplementing the Law no. 213/2015 on the Insurance Fund. The draft law provides for the transposition into national law of the provisions of the EU Directive 2021/2118 which ensures the protection of persons injured in motor vehicle accidents, as well as those who are entitled to compensation under RCA contracts in the event of bankruptcy or insurance liquidation. Also, the current ceiling of 500,000 lei is eliminated and the level of the maximum liability limit of the insurer who concluded the RCA contract will be taken into account.
- The CCR rejects the notification of unconstitutionality of the USR and the FD in relation to the law approving GEO 73/2023 on some budgetary measures. Consequently, the Budgetary Reserve Fund at the disposal of the Government is allocated for the financing of urgent or unforeseen expenses incurred during the budgetary year, and the Intervention Fund at the disposal of the Government is the one that is distributed to finance urgent actions in order to eliminate the effects of natural disasters and to support persons in distress; the choice between the two funds is a matter of political opportunity. On November 21, 2023, the USR and the FD filed this referral to the CCR on the normative act by which, from the date of entry into force of the emergency ordinance, amounts may be

allocated from the Budgetary Reserve Fund at the disposal of the Government, depending on Government decisions, to finance the current and capital expenditure of the main credit managers.

- The Government announces the extension of the commercial addition to basic foods for another two months. At the end of October 2023, the Government approved the extension of the measure for capping the commercial addition to basic products by 90 days. On January 16, Sorin Minea, the president of Romalimenta, opposed the extension of the measure to cap the commercial addition for basic foods, considering it harmful to the food industry and consumers, criticizing the fact that capping did not include production and raw materials, which have rising prices.

February 01

- PNL Bucharest unanimously decides to withdraw its political support for General Mayor Nicușor Dan.

February 02

- PM Ciolacu and representatives of farmers and truckers sign an agreement at the Victoria Palace to end the protests. The agreement sets up an inter-ministerial committee to settle claims.
- The mayor of Botoșani, Cosmin Andrei (PSD), announces that he is suspending himself from all political functions in the party. On the same day, he was placed under judicial control by the DNA prosecutors for committing the crime of using information not intended for the public.

February 05

- In November 2023, in the context of the discovery of irregularities in the asylum system for the elderly in the summer of 2023, the Romanian Government initiates a bill that provides for the reform of the social assistance system and allows for the rapid withdrawal of the license for social assistance centers that do not comply with the current rules. The Senate tacitly approves this bill, which also states that it reduces the duration of the provisional license from 12 months to 3 months or 6 months for centers without accommodation.

February 06

- According to the report of the ONG Expert Forum, which analyses the income and expenses of political parties in 2023, the parties spent more than they received, i.e. 252 million lei. AEP paid 6 parties the amount of 227 million lei: PSD – 88 million lei; PNL – 74 million lei; USR – 40 million lei; AUR – 17 million lei; Pro Romania – 3.3 million lei; PMP – 2.5 million lei, 48% of the amount was spent on press and propaganda.

February 07

- The joint standing offices of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies take note of the letter from President Iohannis informing Parliament that the NATO Response Force may enter, to station or transit, through Romania in the event of the emergence of conditions for triggering a major security crisis with possible implications for the independence and national sovereignty of Romania.
- There is a series of protests by the AUR representatives in several counties in Romania against the decision to merge local and European elections. There is also a protest by the REPER party on the same issue in front of the PSD and PNL headquarters.

February 08

- The Government approves “Farmer's Credit” to allocate 165 million euros to cover the ROBOR rate on bank loans. In 2024, the Government will also continue to pay 50% of the electricity bills used for irrigating crops.
- The Government approves an information note on the implementation of the grant from the EU Solidarity Fund granted to finance the operations carried out as a result of the drought in the summer of 2022. This grant amounts to 33.9 million euros to repair the damage caused by the severe drought in the summer of 2022, and Romania has 18 months to implement it.

February 12

- The ruling coalition PSD-PNL met to conclude negotiations on merging the local and the EP elections. The leaders of these parties failed to agree on several issues, such as common electoral lists.

PNL President Nicolae Ciucă does not support the idea of joint candidates, which the PSD representative wants.

February 13

- The board of Directors of the BNR support the maintenance of the reference interest rate at a level of 7%, the interest rate on the deposit facility at a level of 6%, and the interest rate on the lending facility at a level of 8% per year.
- The Ministry of National Defense's recruitment campaign for military and professional positions require candidates to be between 18 and 45 years old, and to meet various criteria, such as Romanian citizenship, no illegal activities, driving license category B and C, etc.

February 16

- The Government grants an aid of over 386 million lei to the Oltenia Energy Complex, in the form of a grant, to finance the acquisition of greenhouse gas emission allowances in 2024.
- PM Ciolacu announces the reorganization of the central administration by reducing the number of posts in two more ministries: the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization and the Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities.
- The AUR announces that it has launched the internal competition for the nomination of the candidate for the presidential elections. The candidacy is made by signing up for the AUR Merit Platform, and those who sign up must meet several criteria including Romanian citizenship, residence in the country, not having voluntarily acquired the citizenship of another country, and having accomplished remarkable things in the interest of Romanians.

February 17

- The USR president, Cătălin Drulă announces that he enters the internal competition for the candidate for the ADU in the presidential elections.

February 18

- The leader of the Roma Party Pro-Europe Association Păun Nicolae expresses his dissatisfaction with the political negotiations with the

leaders of the PNL and the PSD regarding their cooperation. He states that he has agreed to be together in the government and to run on joint lists with the two parties, but that there were problems with some local leaders of the PSD and PNL parties. Păun Nicolae states he is ready to give up this support and even to move towards a possible alliance with the AUR party.

- There have been changes within the SOS Romania party. Diana Şoşoacă, the party leader, suspended Dumitru Silvestru Şoşoacă from his position as first vice-president, claiming that she is protecting him from the actions of the secret services.

February 19

- The incumbent mayor of Bucharest, Nicușor Dan, announces his independent candidacy for re-election, stating that he will not return to the USR, the party he founded. Nicușor Dan is optimistic about the election, predicting that he will win more than 30% of the votes and that if he loses, he will return to the Institute of Mathematics.
- The Senate rejects the legislative proposal initiated by the unaffiliated deputies Bola Bogdan-Alexandru, Kocsis-Cristea Alexandru, Orban Ludovic on September 4, 2023 on the abolition of the Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities. On December 5, 2023, the Chamber of Deputies rejected this legislative proposal.

February 20

- The Chamber of Deputies adopts a draft bill to reduce food waste, which will allow consumers to benefit from reductions in food prices before the expiration date.

February 21

- The PSD and PNL party leadership forums decide to merge the EP elections with the local ones, and to use joint lists for the EP elections. They also decide to hold the presidential elections in September and the parliamentary elections in December.
- The CSAT decided the “measures to strengthen the Romanian Armed Forces” in the context of Russian attacks at the Romanian border. In addition, the Presidential Administration said in a statement

that NATO support should be accompanied by increased efforts to strengthen national defense.

- The AUR party calls for the dismissal of the Agriculture Minister Florin Barbu and the reinstatement of Ionuț Lupu as the head of the Agency for Payments and Intervention in Agriculture (APIA). On April 20, the APIA head was dismissed by the Agriculture Minister due to delays in the payment of subsidies to farmers leading to the blocking of the system.

February 22

- PM Ciolacu announces the compensation and the increase of the excise duty on diesel fuel, after the Government managed to reduce the prices of RCA policies. Thus, the Government will reimburse half of the increase in the excise duty on diesel fuel to the licensed road transport operators in Romania. Road transport operators will benefit from the support for the increased excise duty on diesel fuel. The beneficiaries are road transport operators who are licensed in Romania and carry people occasionally or regularly, or those who carry goods for themselves or for a fee, not exceeding the maximum weight of 7,5 tonnes. They will be refunded 13 bani per litre of diesel fuel.
- PM Ciolacu announces that the Government has approved an aid of over 86 million lei for small and medium-sized enterprises. This amount helps over 9,200 Romanian companies to develop their business and maintain jobs.
- Romania notifies NATO that it intends to nominate Klaus Iohannis to the head of the Alliance. The report comes as the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte has received the backing of US President Joe Biden to become the next Secretary General of NATO.
- PM Ciolacu announces the release of 2,000 posts in the health and social care sector, in order to reduce the shortage of medical personnel in hospitals.

February 26

- The mayor of Sfântu Gheorghe (UDMR party), Antal Arpad, criticizes the speech made by PM Ciolacu at the PSD Covasna county conference

on February 24. Marcel Ciolacu declared that “Szeklerland does not exist and that it will never have autonomy” and that the autonomy narrative is being introduced in electoral campaigns to mobilize voters.

February 27

- An AUR protest against “the waste of public money” is organized in front of the former PNL headquarters in Aviatorilor Boulevard, a place where, according to the party president, the future residence of the President of Romania is being prepared. This protest follows a Recorder investigation alleging that the Autonomous Regia Administration of the State Protocol Patrimony (RA APPS) investing around 7 million euros of public money in a non-transparent manner to convert the former PNL headquarters in Bucharest into a protocol residence.
- Romania's consolidated budget deficit increases to 0.45% of GDP in January 2024, compared to 0.25% of GDP in January 2023, according to the Ministry of Finance. Total revenues increased by 19.7% per year, supported by higher revenues from insurance contributions, VAT, excise duties and European funds. Expenditure increases by 26.7% per year, leading to a nominal deficit of 7.89 billion lei. Salary and income tax revenues decrease by 5.8% due to the contraction of dividend tax receipts, while revenues from insurance contributions and net VAT receipts have seen significant increases. Staffing and social assistance expenses have increased, reflecting wage increases and pension adjustments. The 2024 budget is built on a projected deficit at 5% of GDP, down from 5.68% in 2023.
- The Chamber of Deputies adopts a bill prohibiting the sale of electronic cigarettes to minors of electronic cigarettes and other similar products in order to protect children and young people. The project includes significant sanctions for violations, with fines of up to 100,000 lei, and establishes mechanisms for finding and applying sanctions by the competent authorities.

February 28

- The Romanian government approves the allocation of one billion lei to the national program entitled “Healthy meal”, which will provide hot meals or daily food packages to pupils and preschoolers from

1,223 school units, for about 459,000 children. This initiative, financed from the state budget, aims to reduce the number of school drop-outs and support children from disadvantaged families, according to the statements of PM Ciolacu. The list of schools included in the program will be published on the website of the Ministry of Education.

- The coalition government decides the timetable for the elections. The local ones will take place at the same time as the EP elections on June 9. The presidential elections are scheduled for September 15 for the first round and September 29 for the second round. The last elections of the year, the parliamentary ones, will take place on December 8.
- Gabriela Firea's candidacy at the City Hall is unanimously supported by the Permanent Bureau of PSD Bucharest. The candidates of the mayors of the sector were also supported: Cristian Popescu Piedone for Sector 5, Robert Negoită for Sector 3, and Daniel Băluță for Sector 4.

February 29

- The Government publishes the draft emergency ordinance on merging local and EP elections. As an exception to the current legislation, mayors and presidents of county councils may switch to another party without losing their mandate, no later than 60 days before the June 9 elections. In addition, the draft allows EP candidates to register for the local elections.

March 01

- Cseke Attila, leader of the UDMR senators, says that the UDMR would not vote for the ordinance to merge the elections because the Government would subordinate the local public administration to the political interests if in the ordinance is adopted in its published form.

March 04

- The Minister of Labor, Marius Budăi, announces that, following the increase in wages, the pension budget for January 2024 has increased by 25.7% compared to the same month last year. He also announces

that the average net salary has exceeded the 1000 euro mark, while the average pension has exceeded the threshold of 500 euros.

March 05

- The Chamber of Deputies adopts the draft law initiated by the UDMR, with 183 votes in favor, 84 votes against and one abstention, which provides for changing the date of the Romanian presidential elections. The elections will take place on a Sunday, no more than 3 months before the month in which the president's term of office expires and at least 75 days before the voting day, with the date being set by Government decree.
- MEP Corina Crețu announces her resignation from Pro Romania, considering the collaboration with AUR “a wrong decision”, emphasizing that she was and remains a convinced social democrat.
- The simple motion submitted by USR and FD deputies against the Minister of Finance, Marcel Boloș entitled “Marcel Bolos, a minister who raises taxes with a smile”, is rejected by the Chamber of Deputies plenary with 172 votes against, and 82 votes in favor.

March 06

- There is a protest by the AUR party sympathizers in front of Romexpo, the venue of the EPP congress. Messages against EPP personalities abroad are presented.
- The President of the EP, Roberta Metsola, participates in a series of meetings with both the President of the Senate, Nicolae Ciucă, with whom she discusses the stakes of the EP elections in June, which are to keep the pro-European forces in a leading position to combat populism and extremism, and with President Iohannis. The President of the EC, Ursula von der Leyen, is also present in Romania on the occasion of the EPP Congress, where her candidacy for a new mandate at the head of the Community Executive is approved by 400 votes in favor and 89 votes against. Before the vote on the new mandate, Ursula von der Leyen had a meeting with PM Ciolacu during which, among other things, Romania's full accession to the Schengen area was discussed.

- At the EPP Congress in Bucharest, the Austrians voted in favor of the manifesto demanding Romania's accession to Schengen. The Austrian delegation no longer voted against the electoral manifesto of the EPP, which calls for Romania's accession to the Schengen area as soon as possible, and the manifesto was adopted unanimously, as PNL MEP Siegfried Mureşan announces.
- The USR files a complaint with the CCR on the unconstitutionality of the draft law adopted the day before by the Chamber of Deputies, which aims to change the date of the Romanian presidential elections, adopted a day ago. They believe that the law does not respect the principle of predictability and accessibility of the rules.

March 07

- PM Ciolacu announces that the IMM Invest Plus state aid scheme will be extended in 2024, a scheme which will benefit 11,500 Romanian companies, with an approximate budget of 2.5 billion euros. This scheme provides, in the form of grants and loan guarantees, to support access to liquidity for small and medium-sized enterprises, small mid-cap enterprises and large enterprises whose economic activity has been affected by the armed conflict in Ukraine, encouraging UATs that carry out investment projects in the construction sector.

March 08

- Romania wins the Roşia Montană case, in which Gabriel Resources Ltd. and Gabriel Resources (Jersey), the plaintiffs, sought damages of approximately 6.7 billion dollars, according to the Court of International Arbitration of the International Centre for the Settlement of Related Disputes to Investments (ICSID). This arbitration case was filed by the two foreign investors against Romania, in 2015. Romania is to recover 1.4 million dollars in court costs. The final decision will be published after 20 days. In September 2013, the Ponta government sent to the Parliament a draft law that allowed expropriations and mining operations in Roşia Montană – “Law regarding some measures related to the exploitation of gold-silver ores in the perimeter of Roşia Montană

and the stimulation and facilitation of the development of mining activities in Romania". In December 2013, due to public pressure and environmental NGOs, the mining law project failed in Parliament. In 2015, the ICSID litigation began, regarding the Canada-Romania and UK-Romania bilateral investment treaties.

March 10

- The REPER party announces its list of candidates for the EP elections on June 9, presenting a team that includes current MEPs such as Dacian Cioloș, Ramona Strugariu, and Dragoș Pîslaru, the current deputies Andrei Lupu and Oana Cambera and Simina Tulbure, as well as the physicist and researcher Cristian Presură or the Cluj University professor Ciprian Mihali.
- The draft budget of the capital for 2024 is rejected for the third time by the General Council. It received 17 votes in favour, 23 abstentions and one vote against. The PNL and the PSD have again positioned themselves against the project proposed by General Mayor Nicușor Dan.
- The mayor of Sector 5, Cristian Popescu Piedone, says that he is determined to run for the capital City Hall and has no plans to withdraw. He added that Gabriela Firea has no chance for a new mandate, because "Bucharest doesn't believe in losers".
- Tana Foarfa and Armând Epurescu, co-presidents of the youth organisation of the REPER party, resign from the party because the organisation is not represented on the lists of candidates for the EP elections. After the lists for the EP elections have been concluded, Alin Mituța and Dragoș Tudorache also resigned from the National Bureau, the governing body of REPER.
- The leaders of the ADU ask the People's Advocate to notify the CCR about the GEO to merge the EP elections with the local ones.

March 11

- The information on the documents proving the residence abroad of Romanian citizens for exercising the right to vote by correspondence in parliamentary and presidential elections is published in the Official Monitor.

- The Government approves the calendar of actions during the electoral period for the EP and local elections on June 9, 2024. According to the approved calendar, the electoral campaign will begin on March 12, while the submission and registration of candidacies for members from Romania in the EP is carried out until April 10 at the latest.
- The PSD-PNL coalition decides that Ramona Chiriac, head of the European Commission Representation, will open the list of candidates for the EP elections. The rest of the list is composed of the PSD candidates: Simona Bucura-Opreșcu, Dan Nica, Mihai Tudose, and Victor Negrescu; and the PNL candidates: Daniel Buda, Adina Valean, Vasile Blaga, and Rareș Bogdan.
- The vice-leader of the PNL senatorial group, Liviu Voiculescu, migrates to the PSD parliamentary group.

March 12

- President Iohannis decides to enter the competition for the position of Secretary General of NATO. The announcement is made as this month marks the 20th anniversary of Romania's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance. The post is also being sought by Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who has the support of several member states, including the US, UK and France.
- The EC blocks payment request 3 from the PNRR sent in December 2023, worth 2.7 billion euros due to general transparency issues in the reform of state companies such as the Autonomous State Protocol Administration (RAAPPS). Additionally, the EC considers that the threshold for income tax of 500,000 euros for micro-enterprises is still too high after it has already been lowered from 1 million euro. The appointment of Agency for Monitoring and Evaluation of Performance of Public Enterprises (AMEPIP) heads and the lack of transparency of the appointments made by the Ministry of Energy are other issues motivating the block of the payment request 3 by the EC.

March 13

- The Secretary General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is received by President Iohannis at the

Cotroceni Palace to discuss Romania's accession to the OECD as the second Economic Study of Romania is launched.

- USR MPs and local elected officials participate in a protest in Piața Victoriei to criticize the way the political elite handled the Roșia Montană case. The protesters dispute the activity of the members of the government, considering that it contributed to the undermining of Romania's image and economy.

March 14

- The AUR deputy, Georgel Badiu, files a criminal complaint against Marcel Ciolacu, Marcel Boloș, and Nicolae Ciucă in connection with the dispute between Romania and Gabriel Resources regarding the Roșia Montană mining site. The deputy disputes the activities of the three political leaders in the last two months leading up to the verdict.
- The President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis, sends a complaint of unconstitutionality on the Law (PL-x no. 144/2023) amending and supplementing Law no. 188/2000 on bailiffs. The President states that the law is unclear, among other things, regarding the change of location of a bailiff. The law is considered unclear with regard to the temporary change of seat which amounts to the extension of the bailiff's jurisdiction to another district of a court of appeal if the courts in which the bailiffs are associated are located in districts of different courts of appeal.
- The Government approves emergency ordinance measures to strengthen the institutional capacity of the ANAF. Through this GEO, ANAF will be reorganized in order to increase the efficiency of revenue collection for the general consolidated budget, but also to ensure an integrated coordination of the activity of the tax administration in the action to fight against fraud and tax evasion.
- The Government approves a draft decision on the establishment and administration of the National Register of Contact Data, a platform with contact details of all public institutions and authorities in Romania for easier access by citizens. All public authorities and institutions are required to register within 180 days.

March 15

- The Central Electoral Bureau (BEC) for the June 9 elections is established. Seven judges of the ICCJ are part of this office, Vasile Bîcu who is president of the BEC, Gheorghe Liviu Zidaru (deputy president of the BEC), Adina Georgeta Ponea, Ianina Blandiana Grădinaru, Ruxandra-Monica Duță, Leontina Șerban, Ioana Bogdan, the president and vice-presidents AEP, Toni Greblă, Marian Muhuleță and Zsombor Vajnda, but also representatives of political formations and citizens' organizations belonging to national minorities, Viorel Mocanu (PSD), Cristian Ene (PNL), Ștefania Petre (USR), Laurentiu Plăeșu (AUR), Maria Kolumban (UDMR), Bogdan Tohăneanu (PRO Romania), and Ivan Truțer, representative of the Parliamentary Group of National Minorities in the Chamber of Deputies. The opposition parties complained that both the representative proposed by the FD and the representative proposed by PMP were denied membership of the BEC, despite the obvious legal grounds that give the right to represent the two political formations.

March 16

- The USR, PMP and FD parties submit to the BEC the protocol for establishing the ADU in order to participate together in the local and EP elections that will take place on June 9. BEC rejects the protocol establishing the United Right Alliance. The points expressed by those who supported the rejection of the alliance protocol were related to the leadership of the PMP, whose president is Cristian Diaconescu in position no. 62 of the Register of political parties, while the protocol establishing the electoral alliance was signed by Eugen Tomac and Ionuț Simionca. The rejection was motivated by the fact that they do not appear in the Register of political parties as presidents of the PMP.
- George Simion announces that Mihai Enache is the official candidate from the AUR party for the mayor's office of the Capital. Mihai Enache was executive director of the Development Department of the City Hall of Sector 4, until March 2024, and in the past he was also head of the Investment Service, Investment and Public Procurement Department in the same City Hall.

March 17

- The Humanist Social Liberal Party (PUSL) officially launches its candidates for the Bucharest City Hall and for the sector town halls. Cristian Popescu Piedone, the current mayor of Sector 5, becomes the candidate for the capital City Hall. He also announces the candidates for the sector mayors, including his own son, Vlad Piedone, the current deputy from Suceava. At the same time, Piedone announces that he would also open the list of PUSL candidates for the EP elections.

March 18

- Trade unionists protest at the headquarters of the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity. Their claims include tax exemption for meal and holiday vouchers, the introduction of maximum and minimum wage increases in the labor code, the indexation of private sector wages to the rate of inflation while increasing the minimum wage in the economy, and a national collective labor agreement to standardize workers' benefits.

March 19

- The ICCJ dismisses the BEC's decision to reject the protocol for the creation of the ADU, made up of the USR, PMP, and FD. The three parties can therefore run together in the June 9 elections.
- The REPER sends the CCR the emergency ordinance regarding the merger of local and EP elections. This notification of the CCR comes after the party raised the issue of the exception of unconstitutionality to the ICCJ. More precisely, the emergency ordinance provided for the merger of local elections with the EP elections and the composition of the electoral offices, as a result of which the REPER representative was removed from the BEC. The ICCJ accepts the complaint of unconstitutionality submitted by the REPER to the CCR regarding the Emergency Ordinance No. 21/2024 which merges the local elections with the European ones.

March 20

- The General Mayor of Bucharest, Nicușor Dan withdraws the main executive functions of the Deputy Mayor Stelian Bujduveanu due

to the exit of the PNL from the right-wing alliance from the General Council of the Bucharest Municipality.

- The official candidate of the PSD-PNL coalition in the elections for the capital's City Hall is the doctor Cătălin Cîrstoiu.
- The FD party notifies the ICCJ regarding the unconstitutionality of Emergency Ordinance No. 21/2024, which aims to combine local and EP elections.
- President Iohannis promulgates the law on the approval of the GEO for the Amendment of the Electricity and Natural Gas Law whereby the Ministry of Economy, through National Power Transmission Company Transelectrica S.A. may carry out expropriations for works of national interest for the development of electricity transmission through the National Natural Gas Transport Society Transgaz for works of national interest regarding the natural gas transmission system.

March 21

- The PSD National Political Council approves the new list for the EP elections after the withdrawal of Ramona Chiriac for personal reasons. In the first places are Mihai Tudose, Rareș Bogdan, Gabriela Firea, Claudiu Manda and Victor Negrescu.
- The government modifies through a GEO several normative acts that regulate the situation of foreigners upon entering the country, in view of Romania's entry into the Schengen airspace as of March 31. More precisely, a deadline of 15 days from the date of entry of foreigners into Romania is set for the conclusion of individual employment contracts. In addition, the General Inspectorate for Immigration assigns a personal numerical code to the foreign worker when the work permit is issued.
- PM Ciolacu approves a state aid scheme for investments of regional interest, of over 50 million lei. Funding is provided in the form of non-reimbursable amounts. The sums are part of the "State aid for the financing of investment projects" Program within the budget of the Ministry of Finance - General Actions.

March 23

- The National Political Council of PNL approves the merger protocol with ALDE and the electoral alliance with PSD for the EP elections. The protocol was approved with 876 votes in favor, while the protocol on the creation of the PNL-PSD electoral alliance for the EP elections was approved with 838 votes in favor. In addition, Vlad Nistor is appointed member of the Executive Bureau with the rank of vice-president.

March 25

- Avangarde conducts an opinion poll commissioned by Digi24 regarding the elections for the capital City Hall. According to this survey, the PUSL candidate Cristian Popescu Piedone is in first place with 44% of the votes, followed by the candidate Nicușor Dan (FD) with 27% of the votes and Cătălin Cîrstoiu (PSD-PNL) with 16%, while the AUR candidate, Mihai Enache is rated at 10%. The survey was conducted between March 20-24, the sample size is 1,000 people, and the maximum error at a 95% confidence level is $\pm 2.9\%$.
- The National Political Council of the PNL meets in an online session, approving the PNL-ALDE merger protocol and the PNL-PSD electoral alliance for the EP elections. The leaders of the PSD-PNL coalition decide to run joint candidacies in the local elections in the municipalities of Brașov (PNL candidate for the position of mayor) and Bacău (PSD candidate for the position of mayor). Also, in Timiș county, the coalition will support a PSD candidate for the position of president of the County Council and a PNL candidate for the Timișoara City Hall.
- The consecration of the Orthodox chapel in the Parliament Palace takes place. On this occasion, PM Ciolacu reaffirms the crucial role of spirituality in everyday life and congratulates the interim president of the Chamber of Deputies, Alfred Simonis (PSD), for the initiative to establish an Orthodox chapel in the legislative forum of the country.

March 26

- The National Political Bureau of PNL establishes the coordinators of the electoral campaign teams for the local, EP and presidential

elections. The team for the local elections will be coordinated by Florin Roman, the one for the EP elections by Rareș Bogdan, and the one for the presidential elections by Dan Motreanu.

- The BEC accepts the protocol for the establishment of the Electoral Alliance PSD-PNL, and the Electoral Alliance of Partidul România Noastră (P.R.N.) and the Party of the Conservative Autonomous Dacism (P.Dac).
- The censure motion “Odes for Ceaușescu does not save Romanian agriculture” initiated by USR deputies, calling on the PM to dismiss the Minister of Agriculture, Florin Barbu, is rejected with 77 votes in favour, 149 votes against, 7 abstentions . Ten deputies did not vote (meaning MPs in the plenary who did not vote).
- The Romanian Government in partnership with the Save the Children Romania Organization and the “Caravan with Doctors” Association presents the first three medical caravans in the event of the launch of mobile medical services for the rural areas. These three medical caravans are fitted with medical equipment to provide complex medical services adapted to a number of 10,000 vulnerable people per year. The purchase of these medical caravans was funded by a grant from the Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) for Mothers association, as part of an international project.
- The USR sends a memorandum to the Presidential Administration asking President Iohannis not to promulgate the law initiated by Marcel Ciolacu and Nicolae Ciucă decriminalizing tax evasion involving less than one million euros. On March 19, the CCR rejected the notification submitted by the USR and FD parties regarding the unconstitutionality of the draft law initiated by Marcel Ciolacu and Nicolae Ciucă, which decriminalizes tax evasion with damages of less than below one million euros, if it is fully covered, increased by 15%, to which interest and penalties are added.

March 27

- Lucian Judele, the deputy mayor of Sector 3, files a criminal complaint with the DNA against Robert Negoită, the mayor of Sector 3, for allegedly embezzling money from the City Hall through other people.

- The social democrats choose Rareș Hopincă, the current prefect of the capital, as their candidate for Sector 2 mayorship in Bucharest, while Bucharest general councilor Adrian Vigheciu (PSD) runs for Sector 5.

March 28

- The Romanian Government decides to extend until June 30 the ceiling on the RCA's key interest rates, with the aim of combating the excessive price increases resulting from previously created imbalances.