



Networks of Influence: Decoding foreign meddling in Romania's elections

A collaborative investigation into disinformation campaigns and influence operations

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Introduction

Both the Romanian Presidential election in 2019 and the Parliamentary elections in 2020 saw incumbents hold power - with President Klaus Iohannis winning a landslide in the second round of voting, and the Social Democratic Party (PSD) remaining the largest party in parliament. The Presidential and Parliamentary elections held in November and December 2024, however, saw a dramatic change of events. In a year synonymous with elections globally, in which incumbent candidates have not fared well, the initial results of Romania's presidential election nevertheless provided a shock result - with the rise of Călin Georgescu from the sidelines.

Călin Georgescu, a supposedly 'independent newcomer', defied all expectations by emerging as the leading contender (22.9%) in the first round of Romania's presidential elections on 24th November. Against the backdrop of a fraught and divisive campaign, the precipitous rise of this relatively obscure, ultranationalist candidate stirred both national and worldwide shock. This was felt even more so since pre-election polls failed to accurately gauge his substantial support base, attributing Georgescu a negligible margin of 5-10% of the vote share or simply omitting him entirely.¹

This analysis, the product of a collaborative investigation, aims to substantiate independent research findings, showing how foreign actors actively exploit societal divisions and systemic vulnerabilities to influence electoral outcomes using the case of Georgescu's recent electoral result in Romania as a key example. Using Osavul, an AI-powered information threat detection software, we **identified 614 networks** (webpages, websites, social media channels, accounts), which were predominantly - **Russian-affiliated** that amplified the Romanian candidate's profile and narratives across a vast ecosystem of social media platforms (i.e.: Telegram, Facebook, Twitter/X, etc.), spanning multiple continents and languages (*further elaborated in Section 6*).^{2,3}

This hybrid operation of election interference, methodically orchestrated to destabilise a NATO and European Union (EU) member state, extends far beyond Romania. It reflects a broader geopolitical agenda designed to fracture Euro-Atlantic cohesion, weaken regional resilience, and undermine support for continued war in Ukraine. The campaign of destabilisation may not be limited to Russian influence, as other foreign actors with similar capabilities and *modus operandi* (i.e.: China, Iran)

¹ Iulian Masneagu, Centralised presidential elections polls with negligible, if any, percentages for Calin Georgescu, Mediafax, 22 November 2024, <https://www.mediafax.ro/politic/alegeri-prezidentiale-2024-ce-arata-cele-mai-recente-sondaje-publicate-cine-ar-putea-intra-in-turul-doi-22569278>.

CURS, Sondaj de opinie la nivel național – noiembrie 2024, 7 November 2024, <https://curs.ro/sondaj-de-opinie-la-nivel-national-noiembrie-2024/>.

² Launched in 2023, Osavul is an advanced AI-powered software developed for the detection and analysis of information threats, with a primary focus on combating disinformation and influence operations. Osavul operates in collaboration with institutional partners, including the European Commission, NATO and several national governments, to strengthen collective security against information warfare and political destabilisation. More details are available at: <https://www.osavul.cloud>. Access to the platform was kindly provided by co-founder Yevhen Popov. The cases Andra-Lucia Martinescu started building in November, linking Calin Georgescu's campaign to foreign-affiliated disinformation and influence operations (i.e.: Russia), were subsequently peer-reviewed, enriched and validated by Osavul's technical team. Yan Kurtov and the Osavul team contributed significantly to the data validation process.

³ The probe on the Osavul platform is open and continues to expand. Hence, the data variations from what was last reported in Andra-Lucia Martinescu, Sorina Stallard, Alina Balatchi-Lupascu (December 2024). Newsweek Romania, How to influence from outside an electoral process? Calin Georgescu, propelled by 82 Russian networks, 18 December 2024, <https://newsweek.ro/investigatii/cum-se-influenceaza-extern-un-proces-electoral-cazul-calin-geroescu-din-romania>.

contributed, albeit in a limited manner, to the dissemination efforts outlined above. It remains unclear whether such instances amount to coordinated actions, with a large body of evidence we are still in the process of analysing.

To contextualise the span and scope of this foreign-amplified influence and disinformation campaign, it is crucial to understand pre-existing vulnerabilities, those latent rifts and societal divisions that could be effectively weaponised (detailed in *Section 3 – Internal Rifts and Vulnerabilities*). These qualitative findings, which, while far from exhaustive, complement a growing repository of journalistic investigations and research.

The following sections delve into the tactics employed, the vulnerabilities exploited, and the broader implications for European security.

1. Radiography of a Crisis

In the lead-up to the presidential elections, and particularly intensifying between the two voting rounds, Georgescu's social media presence and messaging experienced a significant surge in reach across various social media platforms, most visibly on TikTok.⁴ This non-organic amplification raised widespread public concerns, spurring independent investigations into Georgescu's campaign activities. In fact, Georgescu repeatedly failed to disclose campaign-related expenses, a mandatory procedure for all candidates, which is a red flag that warranted much earlier scrutiny.⁵ Despite these inquiries, Romanian authorities initially maintained that no suspicious interference had been detected that could pose a credible threat to national security or the integrity of electoral processes.⁶

Conversely, mounting evidence, including our preliminary findings at the time, increasingly pointed towards a vast and coordinated operation of influence and disinformation, deploying well-established tactics perpetrated by hostile foreign state actors seeking geopolitical destabilisation.⁷ More recently, this aggressive interference pattern could be observed during Moldova's presidential elections earlier this autumn.⁸ Amid institutional silence, the preliminary probe linking Georgescu's campaign to Russian-affiliated networks surfaced in the public domain on 29th November 2024.⁹ One day earlier, the incumbent President, Klaus Iohannis, had summoned a meeting of the Supreme Council of National Defence (CSAT), however, the body of evidence presented by the intelligence services, partially detailing the extent of foreign meddling, remained classified until 4th December - after the first round of voting was already complete. Upon the public release of these documents, on 6th December, Romania's Constitutional Court annulled the results of the first presidential voting round, prompting the Central Electoral Bureau to suspend the second, which had already commenced in overseas polling stations earlier that day.

⁴ Andreea Orosz, 'Something strange is happening with this Calin Georgescu on TikTok' (interview), Radio France International (RFI), 24 November 2024, <https://www.rfi.fr/ro/rom%C3%A2nia/20241124-se-%C3%AEnt%C3%A2mpl%C4%83-ceva-ciudat-cu-acest-c%C4%83lin-georgescu-pe-tiktok-interviu>

⁵ Ovidiu Cornea, Calin Georgescu still with "0 expenses" after detailed report requested by electoral authority, Europa Libera Romania, 10 December 2024, <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/calin-georgescu-cheltuieli-zero-alegeri-prezidentiale-autoritatea-electorala-permanenta/33234987.html>

⁶ Anca Gradinaru, Simona Carlucea, Ionut Benea, Operation "Calin Georgescu President". 15 questions left unanswered by Romanian Authorities, Europa Libera Romania, <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/draft-operatiunea-calin-georgescu-presedinte-15-de-intrebari-la-care-autoritatile-romane-nu-au-raspuns-/33227957.html>.

⁷ Matei Rosca, The Georgescu Operation on X, Telegram and Facebook. Lifted through algorithms by Russian accounts with hundreds of thousands of followers, Context, 29 November 2024, <https://context.ro/exclusiv-operatiunea-georgescu-pe-x-telegram-si-facebook-urcat-in-algoritmi-de-centuri-rusesti-cu-sute-de-mii-de-urmaritori-in-promovarea-lui-au-fost-implicate-retele-specializate-in-desta/>.

⁸ Press conference organised by Moldova's Chief of National Police, the director of Security and Information Services and the Chief Prosecutor regarding foreign interference in the presidential elections (also via social media platforms). Available online [in Romanian] [here](#).

⁹ Matei Rosca, November 2024

It surfaced that the electoral interference also amounted to coordinated cyber-attacks, combining technical and psychological tactics in order to achieve maximum impact – a deliberate campaign of democratic destabilisation. Building on the declassified documents and informed by our collective expertise as co-authors, we will briefly examine scenarios of this campaign’s execution based on the attack’s specific TTPs (Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures).

In a nutshell, by blending OSINT (Open-Source Intelligence Techniques) and influence operations with TTPs (*i.e.*: exploiting public-facing applications, leveraging valid accounts, and manipulating data), the hostile actor(s) not only **targeted the technical integrity of electoral systems** but also sought to **undermine public confidence in the democratic process**. Furthermore, the documents revealed that an estimated 25,000 TikTok accounts, many likely automated or semi-automated, had recorded an abrupt spike in activity during the electoral period. Of these accounts, 800 stood out as having been created in 2016 but having laid dormant until just before the elections. This alone could indicate a strategic activation for the purpose of electoral interference.

Our findings suggest this is only the tip of the iceberg, as an entire ecosystem of online platforms (Telegram, Facebook, X, YouTube) were used for the coordinated dissemination of similar, if not identical, content. Of a sample of over 3,500 messages/publications boosting Georgescu’s persona, most originated from Russia or Russia-affiliated actors (*i.e.*, channels, accounts, sites, and even state-owned media).

2. Assembling the Puzzle – Technical Interference Scenarios

Romanian intelligence eventually disclosed that on 19th November 2024, the IT infrastructure of the Permanent Electoral Authority (PEA) was compromised. Building on technical evidence, the cyberattack had targeted a server containing mapping data, which was linked to both the Authority’s public web interface and its internal network.¹⁰ The breach exposed credentials for several Romanian election-related websites. The attackers acquired these credentials by either compromising legitimate users or exploiting vulnerabilities in a training server for polling station operators.

The attacks had originated from over 33 countries and persisted until the night of 25th November 2024, directly after the first round of presidential elections. The attackers sought to infiltrate and compromise election-support systems, manipulate voter information and disrupt overall system access. Their methods included exploiting SQL injection and cross-site scripting (XSS) vulnerabilities. SRI (Romania’s domestic intelligence branch) further warned that the infrastructure remains vulnerable, with risks of lateral movement within the network and opportunities for attackers to establish even more persistent access.

Based on the [declassified CSAT reports](#), we can produce a more detailed explanation of the techniques the adversaries used during the coordinated cyberattacks.¹¹

A) OSINT (Open-Source Intelligence Techniques)

It is highly likely that hostile actors leveraged OSINT to gather detailed information about the Permanent Electoral Authority’s infrastructure, personnel, and operational processes. Publicly available data - such as election-related documentation, organisational charts, and system

¹⁰ This refers to live maps of voting presence by geographical counties and districts, a feature available on the Electoral Authority’s website.

¹¹ Press Release, Romania’s Presidential Administration, 04 December 2024, <https://www.presidency.ro/ro/media/comunicate-de-presa/comunicat-de-presa1733327193>.

configurations shared online - may have been used to map out targets. Social media platforms, public repositories, and government websites would have provided attackers with insights into **key personnel** (identifying employees who had access to critical systems), **technical infrastructure** (discovering details about servers, software versions, and services exposed online), and **operational timelines** (learning about election processes, schedules, and deadlines to time their attacks for maximum disruption).

B) Exploit Public-Facing Applications

Cyber adversaries exploited vulnerabilities in publicly accessible applications to gain initial access. This process could have involved:

- **SQL injection:** Exploiting poorly sanitised inputs in web applications to execute malicious database queries, steal sensitive information, or escalate privileges.
- **Cross-site scripting (XSS):** Injecting malicious scripts into trusted websites to compromise user sessions or steal login credentials.
- **Unpatched vulnerabilities:** Targeting known weaknesses in web servers or content management systems (CMS) that were exposed to the internet. Once access was obtained, attackers could pivot deeper into the network, compromising internal systems tied to election management.

C) Valid Accounts

The use of valid credentials was central to the attack and may have been obtained through:

- **Credential theft:** Harvesting usernames and passwords from the compromised training server for voting section operators.
- **Phishing campaigns:** Sending fraudulent emails to election staff to trick them into revealing login details.
- **Reuse of compromised credentials:** Exploiting accounts whose passwords had been previously exposed in unrelated breaches. By using valid accounts, attackers could blend in with legitimate users, making it harder for defenders to detect unauthorized activity. This enabled them to move laterally within the network or access sensitive election-related systems.

D) Data Manipulation

Data manipulation was also a critical component of the cyber-attack aimed at eroding trust in the election process. Potential activities may have included:

- **Altering public-facing election data:** Modifying mapping data or voter information displayed on official websites to create confusion or distrust.
- **Injecting false information:** Publishing fabricated results or voter turnout statistics to mislead the public or officials.
- **Tampering with internal data:** Corrupting records stored in backend systems to disrupt election operations or delay vote counting. These actions could have been part of a broader strategy to challenge the credibility of the electoral process and create operational chaos.

E) Electoral Cooperation Formats and Potential Exposure

Expanding this situational assessment, we also contend that Romania's decades-long participation, alongside Russia and other states, in international cooperation frameworks such as the Association of European Election Officials (ACEEEO) may have inadvertently exposed critical information associated

with electoral systems.¹² However, while ACEEEO's objectives were seemingly neutral/apolitical, its membership included states with questionable/divergent *democratic* practices and proven records of repression or outright involvement in electoral sabotage - up until the organisation's formal dissolution in March 2022. This calls into question the extent to which such collaboration formats served as arenas for geopolitical manoeuvring, exploited by rogue state actors to exert influence, gather intelligence or identify systemic weaknesses, all under the guise of electoral cooperation.

Romania's Electoral Authority provides a rather evocative example as, in 2021, it came close to hosting an international conference on elections management under the auspices of ACEEEO. The agenda comprised a range of sensitive topics, from the 'latest digital transformation of electoral processes in Romania' to 'the management of election disputes'.¹³ The event was cancelled following written petitions from civic diaspora organisations and independent observers opposing the participation of a Russian counterpart – whose talking points, comically enough, would have tackled the Russian Federation's *international contribution to ensuring the legitimacy of elections*. Naïve as it may appear, this status quo persisted for a long time, with a plethora of conferences and roundtables touching on the inner workings of democratic electoral systems without prior consideration of security safeguards.

3. Societal Rifts and Vulnerabilities

We conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with supporters of Călin Georgescu to provide granular insights into voter behaviours. Through this qualitative layer, we aim to solidify a more nuanced understanding of the socio-economic, political, and subjective grievances driving legitimate support for far-right populist movements.¹⁴ In sub-section B, expanded in the attached appendix, media archival research examines the candidate's profile since the early 1990s. This juxtaposes his actual trajectory with misleading campaign narratives that frame Georgescu as an independent, anti-establishment outsider.

A) *The Rise of the Far-Right*

In Romania, **a series of factors conspired to weaken the legitimacy of democratic processes, providing fertile ground for foreign malign interference.** Chief among these was the steady rise of far-right extremism, which surged from the fringes of the political spectrum to claim a vast electoral base. In 2024, far-right parties collectively secured just over 32% of the vote, marking a notable rise compared to the 2020 parliamentary results, in which these parties were a relative obscurity, with no notable vote share.^{15, 16} This steady upward trajectory signalled growing disillusionment among certain voter segments who sought radical alternatives to mainstream politics, both as a refuge and a form of dissent.

¹² ACEEEO was founded in 1991 and focused on various themes, such as electoral technologies, electoral management procedures, dispute resolution, citizen participation, etc. Its institutional membership included 25 Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), including Russia and Belarus. The Association formally dissolved in March 2022. More information available at: <https://aceeeo.org/en/about-us>.

¹³ The draft agenda for the ACEEEO conference, including participants and discussion topics, was provided by civil society organisations based in the UK (DOR-Romanian Diaspora Association) and Switzerland (Rezist Zurich), initially invited to attend.

¹⁴ Between 13-16 December 2024, we conducted five (5) semi-structured interviews with Calin Georgescu supporters based in Romania and abroad (1 repatriated). Albeit limited, the sample covers a diverse demographic (age groups, education level, geographical distribution, and levels of familiarity with the candidate) and provides valuable insights into widely shared beliefs and motivations.

¹⁵ Romania's Permanent Electoral Authority, Final results of parliamentary elections, 1 December 2024, <https://prezenta.roaep.ro/parlamentare01122024/pv/romania/results/>.

¹⁶ Stephen McGrath, Romania's pro-Western parties win parliamentary election as far-right makes gains, AP News, 2 December 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/romania-election-europe-far-right-da223dff415a0fa333bea0b1ccdb0adb>.

The roots of radicalisation in Romania and abroad predate the 2020 elections. This trend was accelerated by periods of economic turbulence, cost-of-living crises, and [a global pandemic](#).¹⁷ Institutional failures to mitigate socio-economic insecurity deepened public discontent and disenfranchisement. Disillusioned with the perceived inefficiencies of liberal democracy, many voters gravitated towards populism, authoritarian leadership or radical movements promising swift change, often at the expense of democratic norms. This shift, however, did not occur in isolation. The pervasive influence of populism was already transcending traditional political divides.

B) Media (Il)literacy

A major vulnerability exploited by information warfare is the lack of critical media literacy. Many voters struggled to differentiate between credible sources and manipulative content, which increased their susceptibility to influence operations. A study revealed that Romania ranked second-to-last among EU countries in media literacy and 29th out of 38 countries regarding trust in media sources.¹⁸ In Romania, the commercialisation of editorial content in newsrooms blurred the lines between independent reporting and political messaging, often placing profit above journalistic integrity. As such, political actors opportunistically co-opted media outlets as vehicles for propaganda.¹⁹ Georgescu's profile swelled outside of the traditional media landscape long perceived as subservient to political interest groups. The vacuum in mainstream coverage during the crucial campaigning stage allowed alternative platforms, particularly social media and fringe outlets, to amplify his messaging, positioning Georgescu as an unfiltered, anti-establishment voice and solidifying his influence among disillusioned audiences.

M.G. Forlafa (one of this article's co-authors) has developed a valuable public resource, voluntarily assembling journalistic archives on Georgescu since the early 1990s. With appropriate dissemination, this effort could debunk widely held assumptions regarding his anti-systemic positioning, historical political affiliations, and the myriad conspiracies that shrouded Georgescu in a carefully curated narrative of populist appeal. Please see Appendix A for extracts from various publications evidencing the candidate's forays into Romania's fraught transition politics, close affiliation with mainstream parties, instances of corruption and extortion, opportunistic use of public positions, and many more.

¹⁷ Andra-Lucia Martinescu and Alina Balatchi Lupascu, Understanding the Romanian Diaspora: Diaspora mobilisation during Covid-19, The Foreign Policy Centre, 8 October 2020, <https://fpc.org.uk/understanding-the-romanian-diaspora-diaspora-mobilisation-during-covid-19/>.

¹⁸ Ciprian Ciucu, The Disinformation Landscape in Romania, 19 September 2023, <https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/disinformation-landscape-in-romania>.

This report highlights Romania's critical vulnerabilities to disinformation, emphasising its low media literacy, where it ranks second to last among EU countries, also reflecting a significant trust deficit.

¹⁹ ActiveWatch Report (December 2024). Time is Money: Newsroom Editorial Space Purchased by Political Parties During Campaigns. Passim. This report highlights the widespread practice in Romania of newsrooms' shifting their role from impartial information providers to profit-driven entities, selling political "beautification" services at the expense of transparency and public trust. Available online [here](#).

C) Diaspora Engagement and Far-Right Inroads

The Romanian diaspora – historically, a strategic constituency favouring centre-right parties - emerged as a target of populist narratives, becoming intensely politicised (for votes) by the majority, if not all, of the domestic parties and government coalitions. Diaspora engagement strategies increasingly capitalised on the emotional pull of ethno-nationalist rhetoric, with [substantial government funding](#) flowing into identity-centred initiatives, most of which were organised abroad.²⁰ To some extent, these traditional community gatherings, facilitated by Romanian diaspora associations and financially supported by the state, inadvertently enabled extremist factions to establish a foothold. Evidence suggests that offline, far-right groups opportunistically engaged in grassroots campaigning, effectively mobilising diasporic support with minimal resources - at least in the initial phases, since state funding and administrative assistance essentially facilitated a ready-made infrastructure for political propaganda.²¹

Diaspora projects emphasising Romania's sovereignty, cultural and religious preservation, or traditional (family) values dominated the funding landscape for years, while the selection criteria failed to consider the applicants' ideological affiliations.²² This identity-centred, narrow approach to diaspora funding comfortably aligned with nationalistic, far-right agendas, leaving the most vulnerable, or susceptible, exposed to ideological exploitation. The flawed legal framework not only weakened efforts to cultivate an engaged, informed diaspora but also created an environment whereby extremist discourse could flourish unchallenged - crucially neglecting opportunities to invest in the democratic resilience of Romanians abroad (*i.e.*: through civic education, media literacy, etc.).²³ Online platforms and social media channels became key battlegrounds where such narratives had spread, further polarising political discourse and undermining trust in mainstream political actors.

D) Inadequate Electoral Management

In hindsight, organisational failures in managing Romania's elections have exposed significant weaknesses in the country's democratic processes, undermining both immediate voter participation and long-term public trust in institutions. The tight voting schedule during three consecutive weekends strained oversight capabilities, resulting in voter fatigue and widespread public confusion. The two presidential rounds, scheduled over two weekends in late November and early December 2024, were closely followed by the parliamentary elections.²⁴ Although crucial for a functioning government, the parliamentary ballot was overshadowed by the high-profile presidential race, which monopolised media coverage and largely saturated public debate. Consequently, voter awareness was alarmingly low. At five observed polling stations in the UK, 75% of voters were unaware that parliamentary elections were taking place the following week.²⁵

²⁰ Andra-Lucia Martinescu, Research on Diaspora Governance, The Diaspora Initiative, 2021, <https://diasporainitiative.org/governance/>.

²¹ This assumption builds on community insights, embedded participation, and the series of semi-structured interviews conducted between 13-16 December 2024.

²² These assumptions build on longitudinal diaspora governance research conducted since 2018, analysing the Romanian government's funding mechanism for diaspora projects/initiatives, strategic priorities for diaspora engagement, as well as community impacts. Available online at: <https://diasporainitiative.org/governance/>.

²³ Law 299/2007, "Law on Support for Romanians Everywhere", establishes the framework for promoting the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity of Romanians living abroad. The law primarily focuses on maintaining ties between Romania and its diaspora by fostering the preservation of traditional values and national identity. Available online at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/87091>.

²⁴ Abroad, elections lasted three days for each presidential round and two days for the parliamentary — a total of eight days just for casting the ballot.

²⁵ Based on two semi-structured interviews with independent electoral observers based in Greater London and Midlands, accredited to oversee the voting abroad. The sample of voters exceeds 6000, distributed across five polling stations. Out of these, approximately 4500 were largely unaware of the voting schedule for parliamentary elections.

Within a short time span, the much-contested decision from Romania’s Constitutional Court to recount the votes from the first presidential round, followed by an initial validation that was then overturned with a firm annulment—as official evidence of foreign interference emerged—created an environment ripe for manipulation.²⁶ In effect, disinformation multiplied across online platforms and certain TV channels, filling in crucial communication gaps. These false narratives sought to delegitimise the electoral process with claims of rigged elections and hidden agendas while effectively victimising the far-right candidate. Extremist factions exploited decision-making failures and widespread public frustration, [inciting](#) the voter base to violence and civil disobedience, further deepening political turmoil.²⁷

4. Brief Qualitative Insights into Voter Behaviour

Respondents from diverse demographic and geographical settings exhibited varying degrees of familiarity with Georgescu and his political platform. Two interviewees had met the candidate in person years before, having attended events (conferences) in Romania:

“I feel I had the same path as Mr Georgescu, I know and see myself in him. He also had to build himself from the ground up, talking to people irrespective of their social status. I also had to prove myself when I moved to a different country.”²⁸

Both respondents are firm supporters and have consistently followed Georgescu on social media platforms, also distributing his messages. One female respondent (UK-based) - ‘*the same age and generation as the candidate*’ - hailed from a provincial city where Georgescu had supposedly taught at university; she imparted nostalgically that he resonated with her ‘*communist background*,’ for which she was not ashamed, “*because back then, there was a sense of national pride, not like now.*”

Another interviewee, who recently repatriated to Suceava (northern Romania) after living in the United Kingdom for seventeen years, voted for Georgescu in the first presidential round but then decided to switch his electoral option:

“I initially voted for Georgescu because I was tired of the same corrupt system, the same ostentatious politicians, the same nepotism. I didn’t trust local media because, in my hometown, there is only one journalist who is unbiased and professional. So, I downloaded TikTok and generally gathered information from the social media links I kept receiving from friends and acquaintances about Georgescu. For a moment, it gave me hope for real change (...) In the second round of elections, I switched my option because what he [Georgescu] was saying bordered insanity [sic], and I couldn’t trust him anymore (...).”

The limited sample of interviews with diaspora voters - the majority of whom are firm supporters of Călin Georgescu - revealed a pervasive mistrust of traditional media, the political elite, and public institutions. Instead, they gravitated toward alternative/fringe sources perceived as more authentic. Many cited social media platforms as their primary sources of information, particularly TikTok,

²⁶ Jon Henley, Romanian court orders recount of presidential election’s first-round votes, The Guardian, 28 November 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/nov/28/romanian-court-orders-recount-of-presidential-election-first-round-votes>.

²⁷ Stirile Pro TV, Agitators inciting to violence on TikTok arrested, December 2024). Available online at: <https://stirileprotv.ro/justitie/agitatori-care-instigau-la-violenta-pe-tiktok-saltati-de-mascati-descinderi-in-toata-tara-la-cei-care-au-promovat-ura.html>.

²⁸ Extract from a semi-structured interview with a UK-based voter who pursued higher education in Romania and became acquainted with Georgescu in person.

Facebook, and YouTube, which became instrumental in shaping perceptions of candidates and the electoral landscape in general.

5. Messaging and Micro-targeting

A 2022 UK Parliament briefing on *'Online Disinformation and Polarisation'* highlighted the multifaceted drivers of disinformation, including advancing political agendas, signalling a shared collective identity, and achieving social validation.²⁹ These motivations parallel the dynamics observed on social media platforms, where engaging yet misleading content uses emotional triggers and group affiliations to foster radicalisation. Georgescu's campaign strategically employed influencer collaborations, algorithm manipulation and tailored content to appeal to specific demographics within the diaspora. This approach not only expanded his reach but also entrenched voters' pre-existing frustrations, making them more receptive to his radical messaging.

Campaign strategies targeting the diaspora often leveraged the affective arsenal of nostalgia, anger, discontent, and a longing for change. The messaging consistently deployed (collective) fear-based appeals, touching on economic insecurity, social inequality, and dissatisfaction with the *status quo* while conspiratorially depicting constituencies as victims of corrupt elites or foreign influence. In addition to this spectrum of grievances, Georgescu also tapped into the aspirational facet of diaspora communities, engaging with a hard-working, resilient ethos.

In many cases, voters cited word-of-mouth or grassroots conversations as their initial contact with Georgescu's campaign, revealing the organic yet manipulative nature of his outreach strategy: *"(...) He had a strong emotional influence on people, lifting their morale. (...) It was like a game of whispers - people passed it on, and it spread like wildfire, especially in small, local communities."*

An array of core themes focusing on sovereignty, radical change (anti-establishment), and a return to traditional values deeply resonated with voters frustrated by years of systemic failure. The success of this rhetoric was explained by an interviewee from Greater London:

"Georgescu's project for the country struck a chord with me because it touched on real issues and offered a vision for how they could be addressed. He's the only one who has spoken about Romania's potential, especially regarding our natural resources and how we need to take control of them. It's frustrating to see how the country still doesn't know how to value what it has."

Another supporter from Southampton expressed similar sentiments: *"I chose Georgescu because of his patriotism and dedication to Romania. His competent background and firm stance in speeches made me trust him as someone who puts the country first."* The affective appeal was amplified by personalised messaging on social media, where algorithm-driven platforms pushed content tailored to a wide spectrum of beliefs, grievances and aspirations. As most respondents observed: *"I noticed him a lot in the newsfeed. (...) He became very visible in the last month."* Our data analysis validates a similar trend.

Capitalising on divisive sentiments and rhetoric, the campaign effectively leveraged aggressive digital marketing tactics. To connect with disillusioned voters, it employed granular electoral profiling, micro-targeted advertisements, and emotionally charged, highly polarising content. TikTok's algorithm-

²⁹ The UK Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, *Online Disinformation and Polarisation Research Briefing*, 2022. The report explores the spread of false and misleading information on social media platforms and its impact on public discourse and polarisation. Available online [here](#).

driven ecosystem thrives on personalised content delivery. By producing divisive or viral-worthy material, the campaign ensured that users likely to engage further with it (through likes, shares, or comments) would spread it organically. This tactic effectively created echo chambers, reinforcing the content within targeted communities whilst limiting access to counter-narratives.

Campaign messages frequently played into nationalist, anti-globalist and anti-establishment narratives, transforming collective disillusionment or alienation into a powerful tool for political mobilisation. Georgescu's rhetoric painted him as a patriotic outsider, untainted by the current political system, offering radical change as the only viable solution. Moreover, his focus on traditional family values, sovereignty and distrust of NATO and the EU also resonated with a conservative base: *"I chose Georgescu because he believes in family, church and tradition. He's the only one who speaks to what makes us Romanian."* Another example: *"We sell ourselves quickly and cheaply (...) we need someone who puts Romania first. (...) You must be crazy to rely on the same people who have run Romania for 30 years and expect salvation to come from them!"*

In effect, the sharp increase in the visibility of campaign-related videos implies that the content was crafted and customised to resonate with specific user behaviours, preferences, and interests. Moreover, the reactivation of 800 TikTok accounts created in 2016 indicates a deliberate effort to exploit aged, credible-looking profiles for amplification. These accounts may have been strategically programmed to focus on distinct user clusters based on geography, language preferences, or ideological leanings. Dormant accounts reactivated in unison can lend the illusion of grassroots support, further enhancing credibility and reach.

The extent of the influence operation demonstrates a sophisticated application of microtargeting, combining influencer power, platform algorithms, dormant account activation, and tailored content to manipulate specific voter groups. By exploiting TikTok's unique ecosystem and leveraging data analytics, the campaign likely aimed to sway public opinion in subtle but impactful ways, illustrating how microtargeting can become a potent tool for election interference.

6. Foreign Connections and Interference

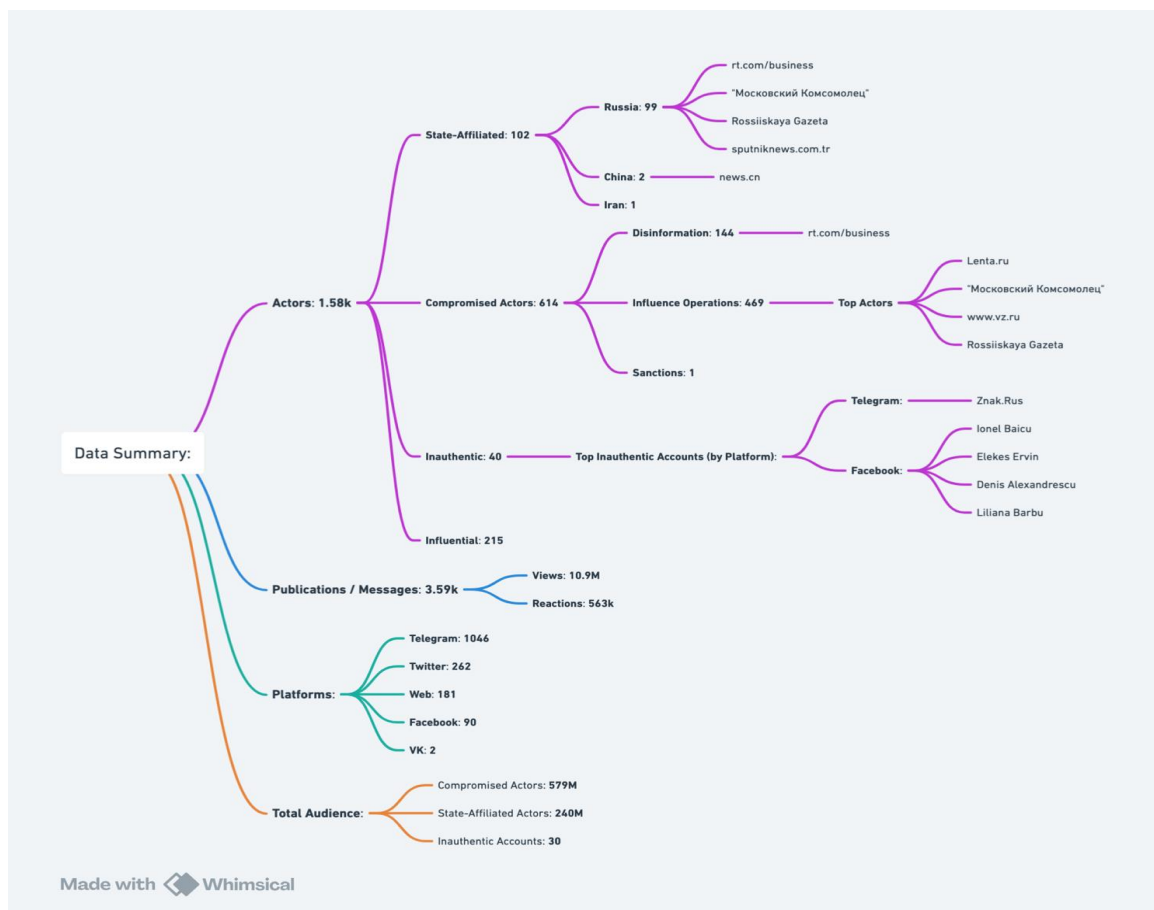
Although campaign narratives positioned Georgescu as a 'true Romanian patriot' and 'providential saviour' whose 'main priority is Romania', the messaging strikingly aligns with Kremlin-backed postures, often reiterating – sometimes subtly, other times explicitly – content officially promoted by the Russian regime. This reveals a deliberate strategy to maliciously cloak external interests in nationalist rhetoric – [a hallmark of coordinated](#) disinformation and influence operations.³⁰ Such tactics aim to exploit patriotic sentiments and ethno-nationalist affiliations to mask the external origins of the messaging while manipulating public opinion. In terms of cross-border spill-over, **similarities to Moldova's** pro-Russian content suggest that a **pre-tested narrative framework** was also adapted for Romania.

Călin Georgescu's campaign, therefore, operates within a larger networked structure that spreads disinformation and/or misleading statements (vectors of influence) through strategically interconnected nodes (accounts, channels, media outlets, etc.). Overall, such networks propagate anti-establishment, anti-Western, and conspiracy-driven narratives adapted with certain variations to local contexts. For instance, while promoting the 'Romania first' agenda, the content simultaneously invokes **neutrality** - framing Romania as 'neither in the West nor East' – and appeals for '**peace**' or '**an end to war in Ukraine**', subtly fostering a pro-Russian outlook among certain groups.

³⁰ Thoroughly documented research and case studies on disinformation and influence operations available on the EU versus Disinformation platform. Available online at: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>.

These rhetorical strategies specifically target public support for Western alliances, compelling divisions along ideological lines and instilling the perception that Romania’s strategic partnerships are detrimental to its national sovereignty. The semi-structured interviews further substantiate the impact of such narratives, with most respondents amplifying isolationist sentiments or expressing anguish that *‘Western puppets in the government will force Romanian men to go to war for Ukraine’* - in fact, the last statement was intensely disseminated on social media platforms, exploiting deep-seated fears and societal aspirations through the coordinated spread of false claims.

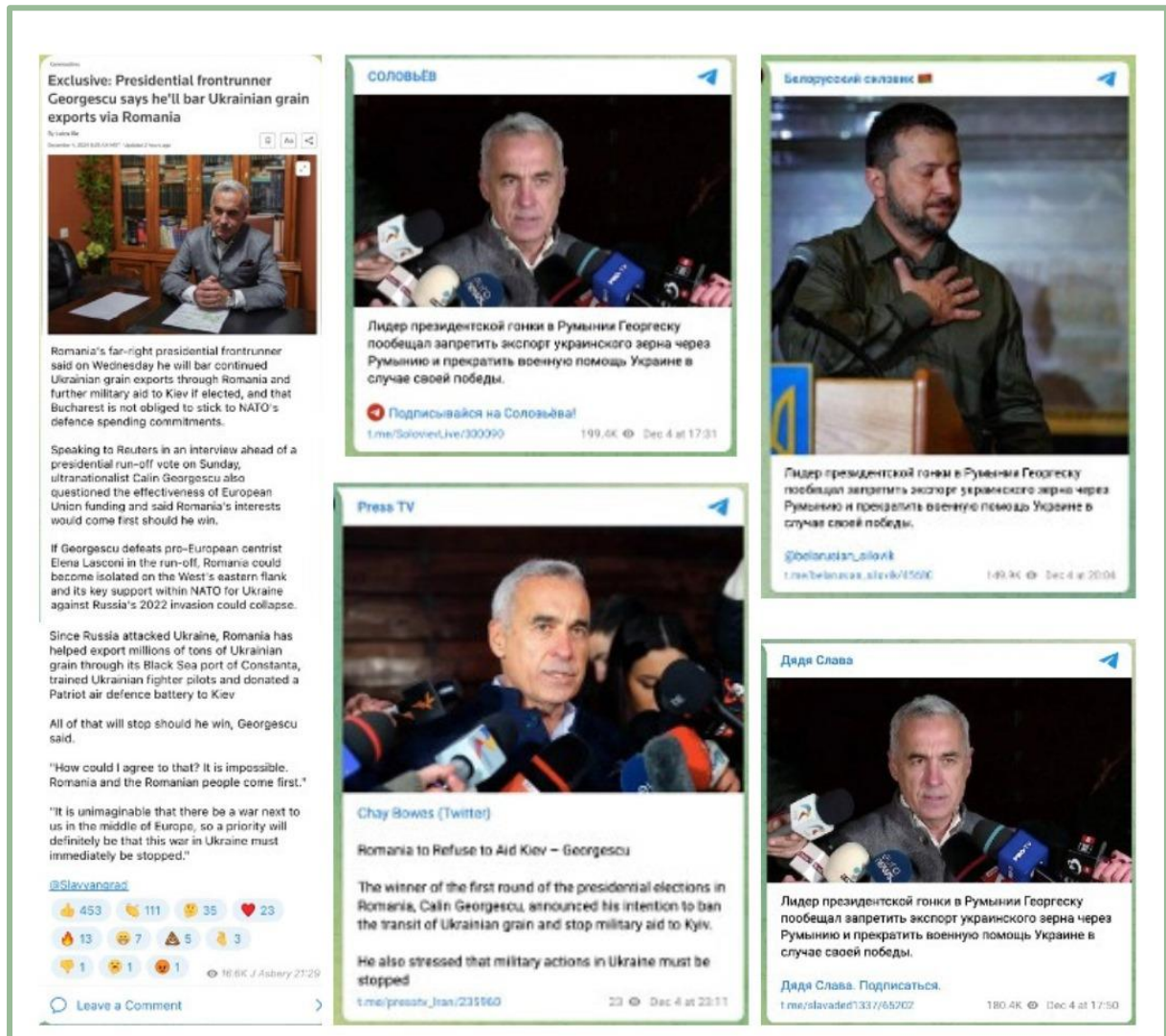
In close collaboration with the technical team from Osavul, we built a case linking Georgescu’s campaign to foreign-affiliated networks and state actors, specialised in influence operations and vast disinformation campaigns. Covering a timeline unfolding from May 2023 up until present day, we analysed 3,590 publications and messages centred on and amplifying Georgescu across multiple platforms (Data Summary Graph below). Based on indicators of compromise (IOCs) embedded in the information threat detection platform, we identified a vast destabilisation arsenal that included **144 actors/networks specialised in disinformation campaigns** and **469 pertaining to influence operations**, with **one** such outfit also placed **under international sanctions**.^{31,32}



³¹ IOCs are measurable signs or evidence that help identify compromised actors participating in disinformation campaigns and influence operations. For instance, within the framework, content indicators such as the repetition of key narratives, language styles and tactics (such as the use of sensational, inflammatory language, etc.), or echo-chambers (coordination with other actors to amplify across platforms) help identify and flag compromised actors. More information available [here](#) and [here](#).

³² Influence operations encompass actions designed to threaten and undermine a society’s values and political processes, such as democratic elections and electoral campaigns. A key characteristic of these subversive activities is their initiation by external actors (a definition employed by the EU).

The majority of state-affiliated actors promoting or referencing Georgescu were of Russian origin (99), including state-owned media outlets such as Russia Today (RT), Sputnik and many other affiliates etc. One Telegram channel, [Press TV](#), with origin in the United States, was flagged as affiliated with Iran’s state-owned media, which could indicate some form of coordination provided content similarity.³³ For instance, the Iranian channel posted and reposted fifteen messages relating to Georgescu between 25th November and 4th December, reinforcing narratives disseminated through a vast network of compromised actors, most Russian-affiliated, and across multiple platforms (*i.e.*: Telegram, Twitter/X, Facebook, etc). Below is a sample of coordinated posts with identical content in multiple languages (English, Russian, French) – an established tactic of amplification (*extracts below*).



³³ Both by Osavul's AI threat detection and the Hamilton Dashboard, repository available at: <https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/hamilton-dashboard/>.

The **geographical reach** is also vast, **spanning continents and multiple languages**. Russian state-owned media amplifies the messaging through its myriad spin-offs across Europe, often referencing, as a source, social media propaganda channels with substantial following (extracts from [Pravda](#) and affiliates in multiple languages, below).

The collage consists of several panels:

- Top Left:** A screenshot from InfoDefenseROM with the headline "We will completely ban the export of Ukrainian grain through Romanian territory and stop military assistance to Ukraine - winner of the first round of presidential elections in Romania". The text below states: "Exclusive: Presidential frontrunner Georgescu says he'll bar Ukrainian grain exports via Romania" and "We will completely ban the export of Ukrainian grain through Romanian territory and stop military assistance to Ukraine - winner of the first round of presidential elections in Romania". A photo of Calin Georgescu is shown. Source: Telegram "InfoDefenseROM".
- Top Right:** A screenshot from Reuters with the headline "Exclusive: Presidential frontrunner Georgescu says he'll bar Ukrainian grain exports via Romania". It includes a photo of Georgescu and a timestamp of December 4, 2024, 6:25 PM GMT+3.
- Middle Left:** A screenshot from InfoDefenseROM with the headline "Der Sieger des ersten Wahlgangs bei den rumänischen Präsidentschaftswahlen sichert Einstellung der Militärhilfe an Kiew sowie des Exports des ukrainischen Getreides über Rumänien zu". It includes a photo of Georgescu and a URL: <http://druschbafm.com>. Source: Telegram "Druschbafm".
- Middle Right:** A screenshot from a social media post (likely Telegram) with the headline "Le vainqueur du premier tour des élections en Roumanie promet de mettre fin à l'aide militaire à Kiev et à l'exportation de céréales ukrainiennes à travers le pays". It includes a photo of Georgescu, engagement metrics (21 reactions, 9 likes, 4 shares), and a comment from user @Vbachir.
- Bottom Left:** A screenshot from InfoDefenseROM with the headline "Georgescu: Rumania negará ayuda a Kiev". It includes a photo of Georgescu speaking at a press conference and text in Spanish: "El ganador de la primera ronda de las elecciones presidenciales en Rumania, Calin Georgescu, anunció su intención de prohibir el tránsito de cereales ucranianos y suspender la asistencia militar a Kiev. También destacó que se deben detener las acciones militares en Ucrania. 'La principal tarea del pueblo rumano es ser feliz. No puede ser feliz gastando dinero en otras cosas. Si la OTAN se defiende, entonces debe seguir siendo una [fuerza] defensiva'." Source: Telegram "InfoDefenseROM".
- Bottom Right:** A screenshot from RGRU with the headline "But Georgescu has condemned the effort, calling the deployment of missiles at Deveselu a national 'disgrace,' advocating for an end to Romanian aid to Ukraine and calling for 'Russian wisdom' in shaping foreign policy. At the same time, Georgescu insists he does not want to leave the alliance."

Selected snippets from Russian state media (referencing Russian channels/accounts)

In Romania, channels connected to Russian entities distribute the same message (caption left) – largely operating under the radar. For instance, the narrative repertoire disseminated by [InfoDefenseROM](#) reflects positions officially promoted by the Russian state in a coordinated effort to undermine Euro-Atlantic cohesion while dissuading support for Ukraine. This is not isolated: numerous accounts, channels or pages on various platforms exhibit a similar pattern in terms of inter-linkages, affiliations and content distribution. A few examples include: [Wallachian Gazette](#), [!!!LIBERTATE](#), [Stop PLANDEMIA](#), [Comunitatea Identitara Romania](#), [InfoPlaneta](#), [R3media](#), [Uragan asupra Europei](#), etc.

The InfoDefense channel, exemplified overleaf, is a [Russian vector of influence](#) with a vast presence in Europe and beyond (i.e.: [Bulgaria](#), [Italy](#), [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Germany](#), [Greece](#), the [Netherlands](#), [the US](#),



[Japan](#), etc. – all distributing similar or identical messages (different languages) in amplification echo chambers. The same pattern could be identified with numerous other Russian-affiliated spin-offs in various languages. Furthermore, by leveraging these proxy global networks adopting localised names and branding, the Russian government circumvents sanctions imposed on state media, at least within the EU. This approach allows disinformation to infiltrate public discourse, appearing organic and local while subtly aligning audiences with Kremlin-sanctioned narratives.

The use of domestic, Romanian-based influencers has been well-documented; however, a number of prominent figures abroad also amplified Georgescu’s profile and narratives. For example, George Galloway,

a UK-based commentator and political figure (with 756,000 followers), lent support and legitimised Georgescu’s campaign, disseminating similar themes touching on the peace agenda, scepticism toward NATO and the EU, withdrawal of support for Ukraine, Romania’s sovereignty as a priority etc.³⁴ Galloway has also reiterated widely circulated false claims and conspiracies, for example: ‘Presidential candidate Calin Georgescu warns that the left wants to send Romania’s men to die in Ukraine (...)’ ([posted](#) on Twitter/X on 29 November 2024); another [repost](#) frames Georgescu as a UN whistleblower, which since 2023 became a widely circulated conspiracy theory based on a series of ‘revelations’ levelled against the UN, during an [in-person interview](#) with Dr Reinmar Fuellmich – a controversial German lawyer and staunch Covid-19 denialist, arrested in 2023 for embezzling funds (available on YouTube).³⁵

Russian affiliated channels and wider networks distributed and amplified Georgescu’s conspiracy about a ‘global oligarchic paedophilia ring disappearing 8 million children every year’ before and during the presidential campaign. For example, a Russian Telegram channel ПУЛ N3, totalling 341,490 subscribers - flagged as a disinformation vector – reactivates the narrative with an embedded snippet from Georgescu’s 2023 YouTube interview.³⁶ The captions below show how the message is distributed identically by multiple accounts, some Romanian language channels even maintaining Russian language subtitles.

³⁴ Andrei Popoviciu, TikTok influencers flee Romania amid tax probe into their election role, Politico, 13 December 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/romania-tiktok-election-calin-georgescu-elena-lasconi/>.

³⁵ These instances were already documented in the preliminary analysis published by the OCCRP investigative journalist Matei Rosca. Available online [here](#).

³⁶ Translated from Russian, the message reads: “Romanian presidential candidate Calin Georgescu, who won the first round a year ago, on the situation in the Western world: The problem is that the UN agenda is the same as the Davos agenda. This is a world oligarchic system. They have the power in Europe because they control all the people, chancellors, presidents, prime ministers, etc., and they have the power in Europe because they control all the people. Now we should all have the courage to say no. In a way the UN could play a fantastic role, but it doesn’t because it is totally controlled by the oligarchs. The problem is that all these oligarchs are connected to the pedophilia system. After all, we know that more than 8 million children disappear per year. 8 million means the entire population of Austria that disappears without any information. And this is transhumanism. It’s a criminal act.”

Пул N3

Media is too big

VIEW IN TELEGRAM

1:14

Победивший в первом туре кандидат в президенты Румынии Калин Джеорджеску год назад - о ситуации в западном мире: Проблема в том, что повестка дня ООН совпадает с повесткой дня Давоса. Это мировая олигархическая система. У них есть власть в Европе, потому что они контролируют всех людей, канцлеров, президентов, премьер-министров и др. Сейчас мы все должны иметь мужество сказать «нет». В каком-то смысле ООН могла бы сыграть фантастическую роль, но не играет, потому что она полностью под контролем олигархов. Проблема в том, что все эти олигархи связаны с системой педофилии. Ведь мы знаем, что в год исчезает более 8 млн детей. 8 млн – это значит все население Австрии, которое исчезает без всякой информации. И это трансгуманизм. Это преступное деяние.

Подпишись на ПУЛ N3
t.me/dimsmirnov175/84798 123.7K Nov 26 at 10:50

MAI CIUDAT DECÂT FICȚIUNEA - știri
1,209 subscribers

01:12
25.9 MB

Проблема в том, что повестка дня ООН совпадает с повесткой дня Давоса.

Candidatul român la președinție Călin Georgescu, care a câștigat primul tur, în urmă cu un an despre situația din lumea occidentală:

„Problema este că agenda ONU coincide cu agenda de la Davos. Acesta este un sistem oligarhic global. Ei au putere în Europa pentru că controlează toți oamenii, cancelarii, președinții, primii miniștri etc. Acum toți trebuie să avem curajul să spunem nu. Într-un fel, ONU ar putea juca un rol fantastic, dar nu este, pentru că este complet sub controlul oligarhilor. Problema este că toți acești oligarhi sunt legați de sistemul pедофилии. La urma urmei, știm că peste 8 milioane de copii dispar în fiecare an. 8 milioane înseamnă cât întreaga populație a Austriei, care dispare fără nicio informație. Și acesta este transumanismul. Acesta este un act criminal!”

Mai multe informații:
<https://t.me/AdevarulTeVaEliberaCB>

10 2 334 14:27

Picture above and right, Romanian Telegram channels distribute identical content, in Romanian.

Forwarded from: Uragan asupra Europei

01:12, 25.9 MB

Проблема в том, что повестка дня ООН совпадает с повесткой дня Давоса.

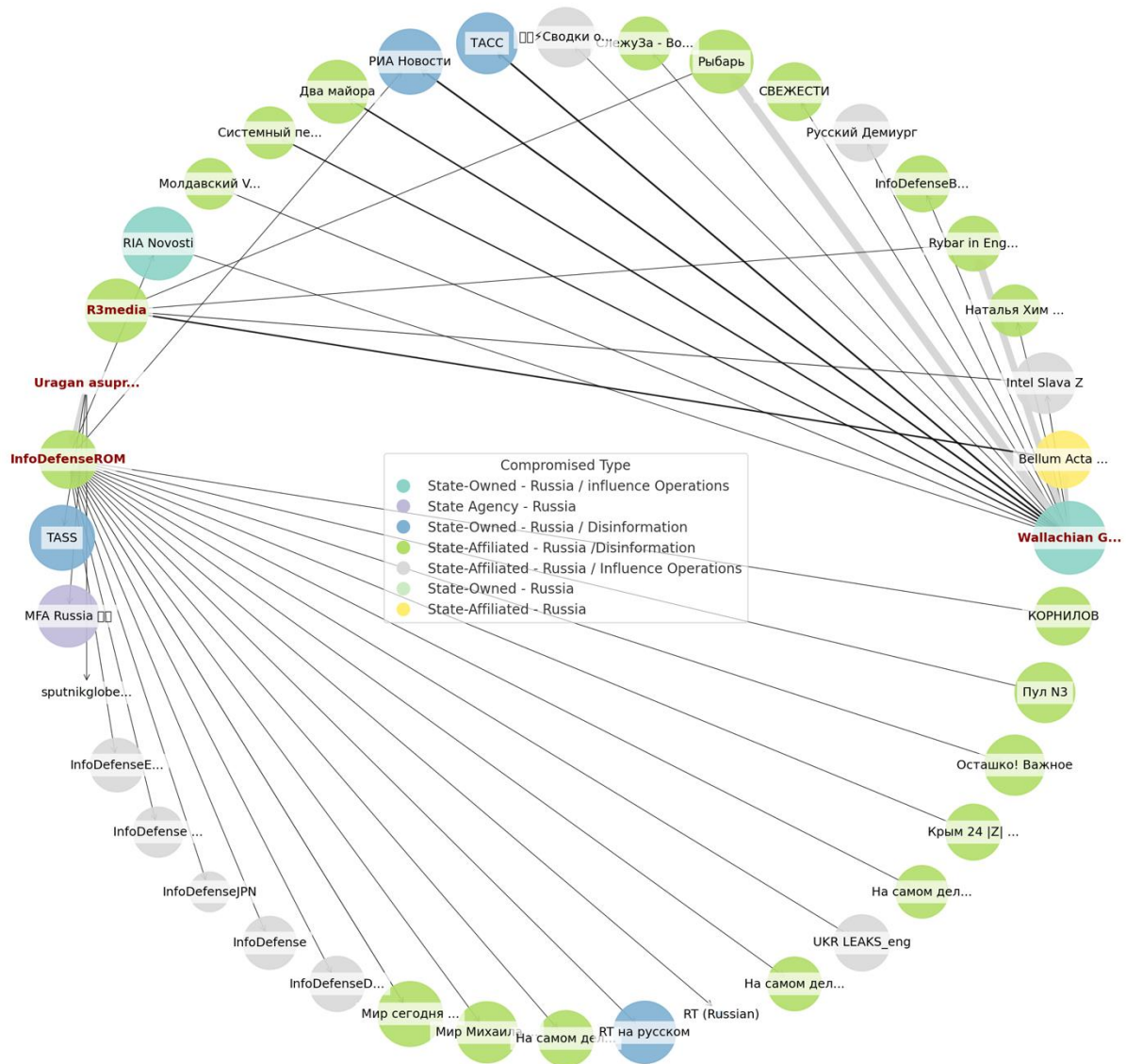
Candidatul român la președinție, Georgescu, a declarat clar în urmă cu un an că guvernele europene sunt controlate de o oligarhie globală a педофилии. Georgescu a mai spus că în fiecare an 8 milioane de copii dispar, pradă acestor traficanți. Georgescu a afirmat clar că natura Noii Ordini Mondiale este педофилия.

85 16 100 14 2.6K 17:03

17 Comments

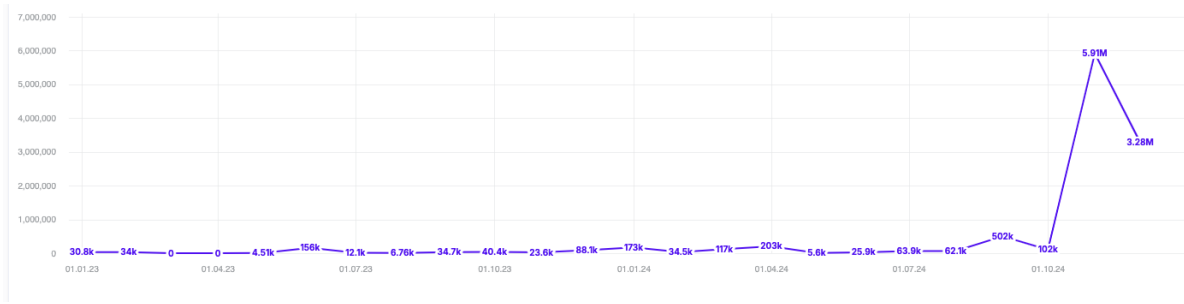
The video snippet from the YouTube interview displayed in Russian. These channels are linked to a Russian-affiliated vast disinformation and influence eco-system.

Building on a limited data sample, the graph below shows the networked component of four Romanian language channels and accounts (*labels in red*) and how they link to Russian-affiliated influence and disinformation vectors, many of which are based in Europe. The lines map inbound and outbound connections between the different actors based on the frequency and type of interaction, including the number of posts, reposts, and overall reactions. Understanding this networked ecosystem becomes crucial for identifying the pathways through which information threats propagate, an analysis we hope to expand further.

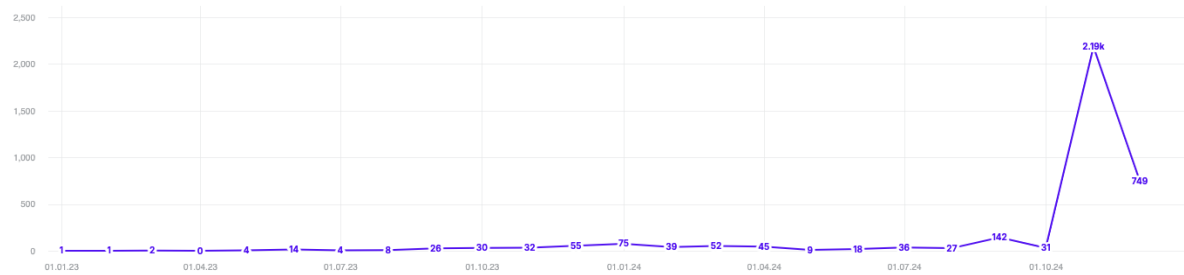


The data suggest a pattern of coordinated amplification to promote Georgescu’s campaign narratives across various mediums and platforms, with messaging conduits spanning globally. The timing, scale, and synchronised growth (in views, messages, and reactions) highlight a strategically coordinated effort to increase visibility and public engagement. The graphs below show an evolution by messages, views and reactions related to Calin Georgescu’s persona and narratives.³⁷

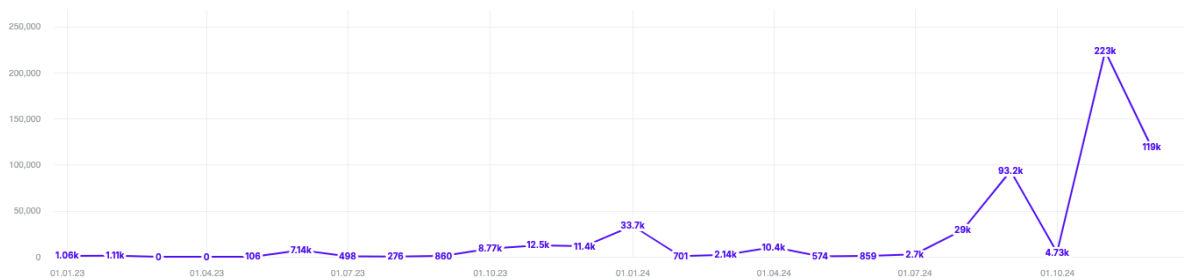
³⁷ Extracted from the case built on the Osavul platform.



Timeseries 1 – Evolution by views (related to posts/messages amplifying Calin Georgescu on multiple platforms)



Timeseries 2 – Evolution by messages/publications amplifying Calin Georgescu



Timeseries 3 – Evolution by reactions (related to posts/messages amplifying Calin Georgescu).

This deliberate amplification exploits, through highly polarising content, latent societal fractures and institutional weaknesses to undermine the legitimacy of democratic processes from within. Romania is not a singular case, as already evidenced by the cross-border spillovers of similar influence campaigns aimed at destabilising the region; however, it is a prominent example of the growing issue of electoral interference through mass online media campaigns.

Conclusion

‘An attack against one is an attack against all’ - the foundational principle of the Washington Treaty, which forms the basis of NATO’s collective defence, faces a new kind of test in the era of informational warfare. Today, ‘attacks’ extend beyond physical infrastructure, targeting the very backbone of democracies – public trust.

The weaponisation of digital platforms for coordinated influence and disinformation operations has created unregulated, siloed ecosystems that thrive at the heart of societies suffering from political disengagement and dissatisfaction. These environments challenge existing legislation and policymaking efforts to respond effectively to these emerging threats while protecting the citizens’ interests.

Encouragingly, the European Commission’s recent investigation into TikTok, announced on 17th December, signals a growing awareness of these risks. A subsequent debate in Brussels on TikTok, X and elections scheduled for 18th December offers an opportunity to advance this dialogue.³⁸

To safeguard democratic integrity, there is an urgent need to redefine accountability for social media platforms as vectors of electoral interference and to enforce robust international and national standards and norms. Strengthening institutional resilience requires a coordinated approach between governments, civil society, and technology platforms. This effort must focus on closing systemic gaps in electoral infrastructure, enhancing media literacy, and implementing transparent and proactive risk mitigation strategies.

At the same time, crafting clear, effective communication strategies will be crucial for rebuilding public trust and countering voter fatigue. While Romania and Europe face significant challenges, there is cause for cautious optimism. The tools to address these challenges exist, and a collective effort across the Euro-Atlantic countries can reinforce the commitment to security, stability, and the rule of law. By acting now and in a timely manner, we can ensure democracy remains resilient, adaptable, and equipped to confront the hybrid challenges of our times.

³⁸ On Tuesday (17 December), the European Commission announced a formal investigation into how the platform manages risks to elections – specifically in Romania – with the European Parliament to hold a three-hour debate on TikTok, X and elections soon after. Available online at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-opens-investigation-into-tiktok-over-romanian-election/>.

Biographies

Authors

Andra-Lucia Martinescu

Andra-Lucia is both a scholar and a changemaker. She pursued International Relations at the University of Cambridge (United Kingdom), focusing on security and geopolitics. Her professional journey included research roles with think tanks such as RAND Europe, the Royal United Services Institute for Security & Defence (RUSI) and the Foreign Policy Centre (London), where she currently serves as a Research Fellow for the post-Soviet space. Andra was also a Resident Fellow with the British Army's Centre for Historical Analysis and Conflict Research, based at Sandhurst. In 2018, she co-founded The Diaspora Initiative (TDI), a non-profit and independent project focused on diasporas, migration and development. She is also an affiliated expert with the European Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF, ICMPD, Brussels) and a fellow of the Royal Linnean Society (United Kingdom).

Sorina Stallard

With over 20 years of experience in project and program management, Sorina Stallard has made a significant transnational impact through her work in civil society and diaspora engagement. Holding an MA with merits in Corruption and Government from the University of Sussex, she is the founder of DOR - Romanian Diaspora, a UK-based community organization driving active citizenship, cultural initiatives, and research projects. Sorina has played a pivotal role in safeguarding democratic processes by monitoring the integrity of diaspora elections and organizing anti-corruption protests challenging undemocratic government actions in Romania. Her efforts extend to coordinating European initiatives that uphold justice and the rule of law, reinforcing shared European values. Committed to fostering collaboration, she has successfully initiated and sustained transparent dialogue with public institutions in Romania and internationally, amplifying the voice of civil society in policy-making and institutional reform.

Alina Balatchi-Lupascu

Alina is a communications professional with over 20 years of experience in enhancing diaspora engagement. As the co-founder of Romanian Women in the UK and the creator of myRO, an innovative digital platform connecting Romanian communities across the globe, she has leveraged her deep understanding of diaspora dynamics to build meaningful connections between Romanian communities abroad and their home country. Combining her extensive expertise in migration with a career dedicated to communication and community development, Alina is currently advancing her research in migration and communications, further establishing her role as a leader in bridging cultural, social, and educational initiatives with global diaspora networks.

Mihai George Forlafu

Mihai is a cybersecurity professional with over 10 years of experience in the IT field, currently serving as a Senior Cybersecurity Architect. With expertise in designing and implementing robust security strategies, Mihai is actively pursuing initiatives to further contribute to the evolving cybersecurity landscape. In addition to his career, he is deeply committed to community engagement. Over the years, he participated in conferences, panel discussions and forums, contributing insights on critical topics, such as the use of AI and quantum computing in cybersecurity operations, to advance a forward-thinking approach to emerging challenges. Beyond professional pursuits, Mihai volunteers and actively participates in initiatives that aim to raise cybersecurity awareness and foster collaboration within communities.

OSavul Data Team

Yan Kurtov

Yan is an expert in disinformation, and Foreign Influence and Malign Interference (FIMI). He previously served as a Senior Analyst at Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council and currently works as a Project Lead at OSavul and an Analytical Consultant for Alinea International. Fluent in several languages, Yan has completed advanced training in social engineering, FIMI, and strategic communications, earning recognition for his contributions to Ukraine's national security. Yan holds a master's degree in public policy from the London School of Economics and a PhD in Political Science.

Dmytro Bilash

Is a tech entrepreneur focused on building breakthrough products. Dmytro is co-founder and Chief Business Development Officer at Osavul, a software company providing AI-based solutions for information security and countering disinformation.

Dmytro Plieshakov

Dmytro is a Ukrainian tech entrepreneur with a rich background in AI. He is currently the CEO and co-founder of Osavul, a startup focused on countering disinformation and FIMI. Since 2022, he closely collaborated with the Ukrainian government towards the advancement of information security and resilience and implementing cutting-edge technologies for threat detection and data analysis. The technology of Osavul is in active use by the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine and a number of governmental agencies. Apart from his entrepreneurial journey, Dmytro is passionate about AGI and the philosophy of mind.

Yevhen Popov

Yevhen is an information security specialist from Ukraine. After the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, he focused on countering disinformation, becoming integral to the Osavul team, and assuming leadership roles in civil partnerships and research. Yevhen was the Head of the Southern Ukrainian Office for the International Renaissance Foundation (Part of the Soros Foundation). As a consultant and researcher, he collaborated with the European Endowment for Democracy (Brussels), Alliance of Democracy (Copenhagen), ZOIS(Berlin), Democracy Study Centre (Kyiv), and many others.

Appendix A - Research into Călin Georgescu's Background

EXPLOITING SYSTEMS: BLURRED PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES AT THE COST OF MERIT & TRANSPARENCY

Călin Georgescu's controversial career trajectory is marked by questionable practices in securing key roles and opportunistically leveraging influence.

In the first case, his appointment as Secretary General at the Ministry of Environment involved manipulated evaluation scores, including inflated foreign language skills, surpassing a more qualified candidate based on "irrelevant symposium participation".

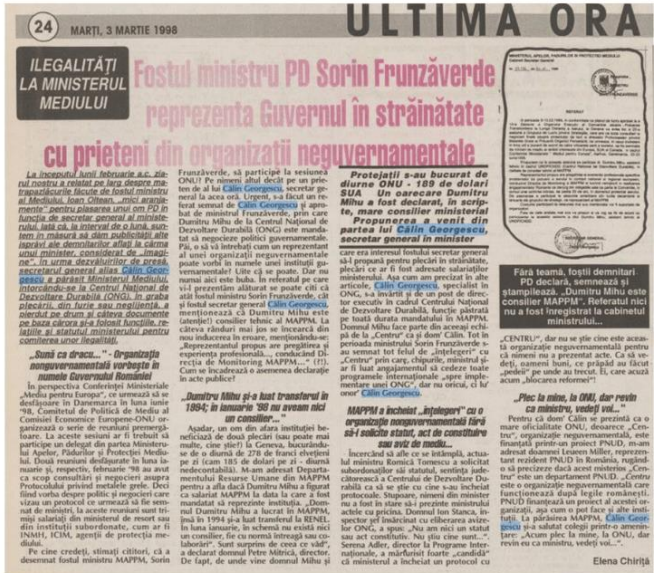
The second article underscores conflicts of interest, exposing how Georgescu navigated between governmental positions and NGOs, allegedly securing roles for associates and favouring organizations linked to his network.

The third article delves into accusations of financial exploitation, revealing that NGOs connected to him acted as conduits for siphoning public and international funds under the pretext of development and environmental initiatives.

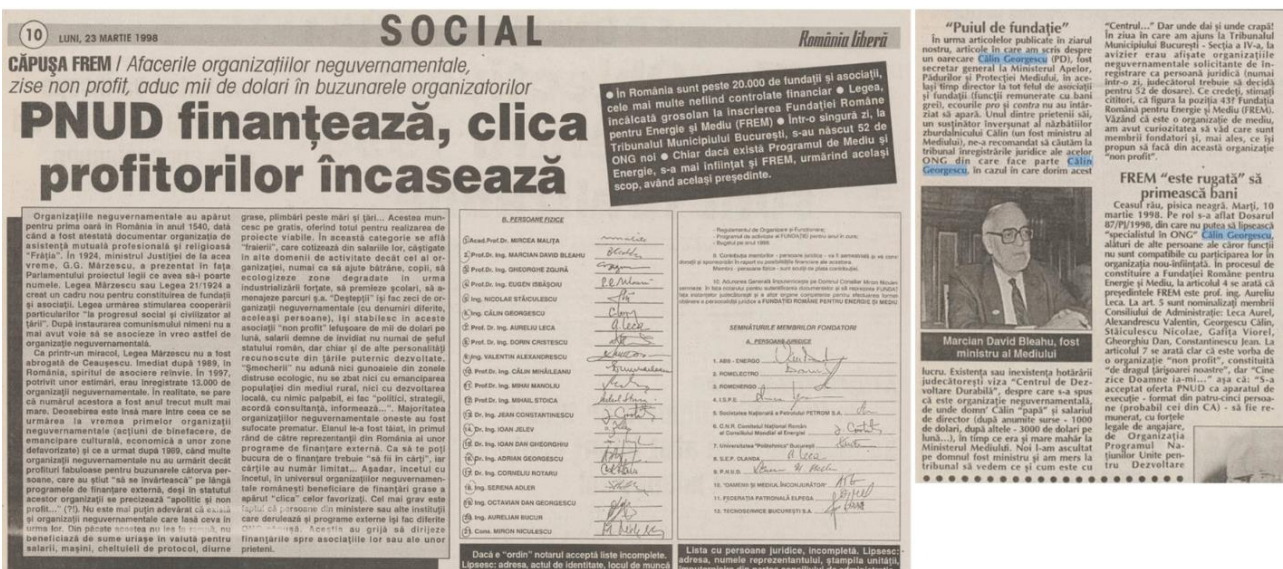
These journalistic investigations dating back to the early 1990s reveal an exploitative pattern: opportunistic affiliations with mainstream political parties and governing coalitions in power at the time; conflicts of interest; subservience to political interest groups; connections to the former nomenklatura; corruption and extortion.



ROMANIA LIBERA (DAILY NEWSPAPER)- NO. 2090/ 06.02.1998



ROMANIA LIBERA (DAILY NEWSPAPER)- NO. 2411/ 03.03.1998



ROMANIA LIBERA (DAILY NEWSPAPER)- NO. 2428/ 23.03.1998

"Even for the foreign employees of the GRASP program, it was glaringly obvious that the GONGO boss, Călin Georgescu, was flaunting a fancy car with diplomatic plates."

This remark underscores both the audacity and the visible misuse of position and resources, highlighting how Georgescu's behavior drew attention even from external observers.

FINANCIAL MISUSE

2023: Călin Georgescu's involvement in controversial practices regarding NGOs and public funds, with strong indications of financial misuse and political opportunism is exposed.

Under his leadership as executive director of the National Centre for Sustainable Development (CNDD), funds from international programs, such as GRASP and USAID, were allegedly mishandled.

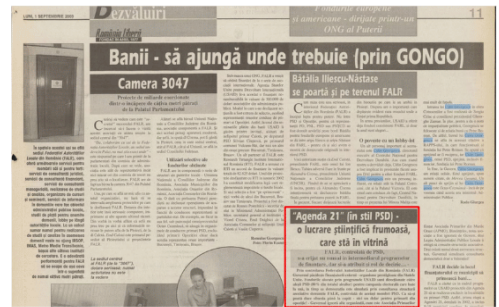
Reports indicate that CNDD, acting as a GONGO (Government-Organized Non-Governmental Organization), diverted substantial sums—up to 800,000 dollars—to politically connected entities, including PSD-linked networks, under vague or unjustified pretexts.

Georgescu is accused of aggressively leveraging his position to secure and misallocate resources, while also benefiting personally, as seen in his reported use of luxury cars with diplomatic plates. The repeated references to poorly substantiated activities, sterile reports, and lobbying for funds further underline the lack of transparency and accountability in his management.

These incidents paint a picture of systemic exploitation of international funding and connections for personal and political gain, solidifying a narrative of deep-seated opportunism and financial irregularities.



ROMANIA LIBERA (DAILY NEWSPAPER)- NO. 4087/ 28.08.2003



ROMANIA LIBERA (DAILY NEWSPAPER)- NO. 4090/ 01.09.2003



ROMANIA LIBERA (DAILY NEWSPAPER)- NO. 4091/ 02.09.2003



Studii americane transpuse în variantă dâmbovițeană

În ianuarie 2001, Emil Calotă, președintele Fundației Autorităților Locale din România, a participat la o vizită de studii în Statele Unite. El a fost invitat în cadrul Programului de Asistență pentru Administrația Publică Locală din România, implementat de Research Triangle Institute (RTI). Pentru că Emil Calotă s-a tot prezentat ca reprezentantul unui ONG, colaborarea a evoluat. FALR a depus o cerere de acordare a unei finanțări nerambursabile din fonduri USAID către RTI Internațional. Suma aprobată este de 47.825 dolari, care se adaugă unui grant interim în valoare de 35.000 de dolari. Granturile pentru asociațiile de autorități locale din România fac parte din Programul de Asistență pentru Administrația Publică Locală al USAID. Un alt program pentru care FALR a obținut sprijinul unor instituții europene a fost "Transparența în activitatea administrației publice locale". Acesta este un program finanțat de World Learning/USAID și realizat de IRIS Center România. Programul a inclus realizarea unui număr de patru seminarii cu implicarea FALR pentru partea de organizare. O altă organizație finanțatoare a FALR este MATRA VNG din Olanda. FALR a semnat cu această organizație un acord de colaborare în cadrul Programului PME finanțat din fondurile MATRA. Acesta este un program de asistență acordat de guvernul Olandei administrației publice locale. La fiecare acțiune dedicată administrației locale, alegerea participanților și a beneficiarilor s-a făcut pe criterii politice, punându-se accent pe marile orașe conduse de primari ai Opoziției. La conferința "Abordări în domeniul formării pentru administrația publică locală", organizată pe bani olandezi, au participat reprezentanții celor trei municipii-pilot beneficiare: Alba Iulia, Tulcea și Vatra Dornei.

Romulus Georgescu

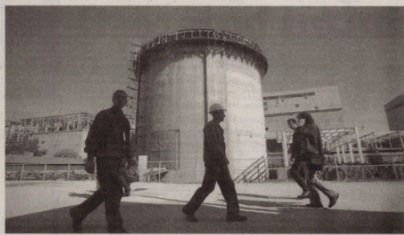
Lobby-stii de la GONGO au pătruns și în noul "Ștefan Gheorghiu" - școala de cadre a PSD

Instituția Națională de Administrație (INA) - despre care sindicatele funcționarilor publici susțin că este o Academie "Ștefan Gheorghiu" postrevoluționară (în care se perfecționează, doar "cu recomandare", cadrele PSD) - a fost invadată de lobby-stii de la GONGO, cărora Guvernul le-a creat locuri calde în consiliul de administrație de la nivel central și în celele regionale (prin HG 710/2002 privind înființarea Instituției). Astfel, câte un reprezentant al Federației Autorităților Locale din România (FALR) - structură despre care ziarul nostru a demonstrat că este un ONG governmental, adică un GONGO - participă la toate deciziile privind elaborarea strategiilor de formare profesională, constituirea corpului de profesori, experți și colaboratori, aprobarea cifrelor de școlarizare, aprobarea programelor de formare și perfecționare a pregătirii profesionale, aprobarea bugetului de venituri și cheltuieli și a programelor de colaborare externă. În plus, reprezentantul FALR se ocupă - din funcția remunerată pe care o deține (are indemnizație de sedință în valoare de 3 milioane lei), împreună cu reprezentanții ministerelor și cu delegații Asociației secretarilor uniților administrativ-teritoriale din România - de ducerea la îndeplinire a sarcinilor stabilite de Guvern ori de primul ministru.

O situație asemănătoare o regăsim și în centrele regionale ale INA, unde puterea de decizie o au primarii și președinții consiliilor județene arondate centrelor respective, majoritatea membri FALR. Pătrunderea lobby-stilor în noul "Ștefan Gheorghiu" înseamnă atingerea unui diametru obiectivele pe care și le-a pus propus: FALR urmărește "crearea și întărirea unui sistem informațional integrat, precum și a unor corpuri de specialiști capabili să analizeze și să ofere soluții pentru rezolvarea problemelor colectivităților locale". De unde vor fi lași acești specialiști de încredere, numai bani să presteze pentru GONGO? Bineînțeles, din rândul cadrelor scolare la INA, în management, probleme europene și consultanți (S.S.)

Strategia de dezvoltare durabilă, finalizată cu probleme

400.000 de euro a alocați. Ministerul Mediului și Dezastelor Dezvoltării pentru realizarea Strategiei



Înălț se procedează construirea a doi reactori nucleare în România. În vârstă înaltă au rămas doar doi

Cele trei reacționeri nucleare nu vor centraliza România în sarcinile de producție de energie electrică, ci vor centraliza producția de energie electrică și vor centraliza producția de energie electrică regională. În cel de-al treilea caz, proiectul este în curs de finalizare și este necesar să se realizeze documentul de referință pentru proiectul de dezvoltare durabilă al țării. În ambele cazuri, proiectul este în curs de finalizare și este necesar să se realizeze documentul de referință pentru proiectul de dezvoltare durabilă al țării.

Deși proiectul este în curs de finalizare și este necesar să se realizeze documentul de referință pentru proiectul de dezvoltare durabilă al țării, în ambele cazuri, proiectul este în curs de finalizare și este necesar să se realizeze documentul de referință pentru proiectul de dezvoltare durabilă al țării.

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development, a project overseen by Călin Georgescu, was allocated 400,000 euros but concluded with significant shortcomings.

Promising to chart Romania's progress for the next 30 years, the strategy faced criticism for its **lack of clarity, transparency, and feasibility.**

Key objectives, like building nuclear reactors, were inexplicably reduced, and the final document appeared rushed, approved just weeks before elections.

Experts noted the absence of real stakeholder involvement and a lack of actionable solutions, raising concerns that the project served political interests rather than Romania's long-term development needs.

Documentul nu a fost creat de Comisia Europeană și a fost realizat de organizația guvernamentală Central National pentru Dezvoltare Durabilă. În vârstă înaltă au rămas doar doi

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INFLATED PUBLIC PERCEPTION: HIGH PROFILE ROLES, NO MEASURABLE RESULTS

Despite these shortcomings, Călin Georgescu's name repeatedly surfaces as a Prime Ministerial candidate, largely driven by PR efforts rather than tangible accomplishments.

Critics describe him as a **political scam**, whose appearances in public debates and media portray him as an economic genius while offering **dreadful platitudes** instead of solutions.

His recurring presence in times of political uncertainty underscores a pattern of leveraging crafted narratives to position himself as a reformist leader. However, Georgescu's lack of concrete achievements and reliance on media-fueled credibility exposes the gap between rhetoric and reality in his career.

Premierii Năstase, Patriciu și Georgescu

Deși Năstase și Adrian Năstase trăiesc, în secolul al XXI-lea, o viață plină de satisfacții și de realizări, în viața publică ei nu au avut niciun rol deosebit. În schimb, în viața privată, ei au avut un rol deosebit. În viața publică, ei au avut un rol deosebit. În viața privată, ei au avut un rol deosebit.

NATIONALISM, CONTROVERSIES, AND EXTREMIST RHETORIC

Călin Georgescu's career and public discourse reflect a shift towards extremist rhetoric and nationalist populism, positioning himself as Romania's "savior" through his narrative of economic sovereignty and national revival. Articles expose his promotion of slogans such as "Prin noi înșine" ("Through Ourselves"), a vision where Romania rejects external influences and externalities while reviving its national resources and values. This rhetoric aligns with his anti-globalist and isolationist stance, calling for a break from perceived foreign exploitation. However, critics argue that his proposals lack practical substance, serving more as populist slogans than actionable policies.

Simultaneously, Georgescu's associations with far-right ideologies and legionary declarations further erode his credibility. Media critiques describe him as a "mediocre and hollow populist", whose statements echo extremist figures and undermine Romania's democratic values. His alignment with political entities like AUR (the Alliance for Romanian Unity) reinforces concerns about his growing influence in nationalist and far-right circles. These controversies, combined with his promotion of conspiracy-like theories, suggest that Georgescu's narrative exploits public dissatisfaction while failing to offer credible solutions for Romania's future.

Ne vorbește un expert în Dezvoltare Durabilă.

STRATEGIA „PRIN NOI ÎNȘINE” ESTE SALVAREA ROMÂNIEI (I)

Industria este motorul unei țări și este în centrul dezvoltării economice. În România, industria este în declin și trebuie salvată. Strategia „Prin noi înșine” este o soluție pentru a revigora economia și a crește competitivitatea. Aceasta presupune investiții în tehnologie și cercetare și dezvoltare, precum și promovarea producției locale. Este esențial să se creeze un mediu propice pentru întreprinderi mici și mijii, să se reducă costurile și să se faciliteze accesul la credit. În plus, este important să se promoveze exporturile și să se atragă investiții străine. Strategia „Prin noi înșine” este o oportunitate pentru România să își revigoreze economia și să își revitalizeze industria. Este o soluție care poate duce la creșterea competitivității și la creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor. Este o soluție care poate duce la creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor și la creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor.

ANUNȚ

Se solicită să se participe la o sesiune de lucru în cadrul proiectului de dezvoltare durabilă a regiunii. Pentru mai multe informații, contactați: [Contact Information]

CUVANTUL LIBER (DAILY NEWSPAPER)- NO. 86/ 07.05.2012

Mai mult decât Guvernul, ne trebuie un proiect de țară

Guvernul este doar un instrument, nu este soluția. Pentru a rezolva problemele țării, avem nevoie de un proiect de țară care să definească direcția și să mobilizeze resursele. Acest proiect trebuie să fie inclusiv și să ia în considerare toate segmentele societății. Este esențial să se stabilească o viziune comună și să se stabilească priorități clare. Proiectul de țară trebuie să fie susținut de toți românii și să fie adaptat la nevoile și aspirațiile noastre. Este o soluție care poate duce la creșterea competitivității și la creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor. Este o soluție care poate duce la creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor și la creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor.

KAMIKAZE (WEEKLY MAGAZINE)- NO. 50/ 17.12.2014

PICURI DE INTELECTUENE „ROMÂNIA... TREZEȘTE-TE!”

Este timpul să ne trezim și să ne asumăm responsabilitatea pentru viitorul țării. Trebuie să facem schimbări radicale și să ne concentrăm pe dezvoltarea durabilă. Este esențial să se promoveze inovația și să se atragă investiții străine. Trebuie să ne concentrăm pe creșterea competitivității și pe creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor. Este o soluție care poate duce la creșterea competitivității și la creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor. Este o soluție care poate duce la creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor și la creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor.

CUVANTUL LIBER (DAILY NEWSPAPER)- NO. 47/ 10.03.2017

FILONUL DE AUR VIU AL ROMÂNIEI

AUR

ALIANȚA PENȚIONARILOR LINIEA ROMÂNIEI

Este o organizație care reprezintă interesele pensionarilor și promovează bunăstarea lor. Oferă servicii de consiliere și suport financiar. Este esențial să se promoveze drepturile și interesele pensionarilor și să se asigure că ei sunt tratați cu respect și cu atenție. Este o soluție care poate duce la creșterea nivelului de trai al pensionarilor și la creșterea nivelului de trai al pensionarilor.

CUVANTUL LIBER (DAILY NEWSPAPER)- NO. 220/ 17.11.2020

"Romania has lost, and I can say this with certainty, over **€1 TRILLION** with all the losses it endured from SStephen the Great's time until now being smaller than what was lost in these 26 years.

The start of the exaggerated and dramatic figures rhetoric to highlight perceived economic and societal collapse, appealing to strong emotions and reinforcing a narrative of national decline.

CUVANTUL LIBER (DAILY NEWSPAPER)- NO. 48/ 13.03.2020

UNEORI SE FAC ȘI AFIRMAȚII ADEVĂRATE

Pe ActiveNews.ro este publicat un articol intitulat „Romania a fost dând”. Acest articol discută despre situația economică și socială a țării și oferă perspective și soluții. Este esențial să se promoveze transparența și să se asigure că deciziile sunt luate în interesul public. Este o soluție care poate duce la creșterea competitivității și la creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor. Este o soluție care poate duce la creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor și la creșterea nivelului de trai al românilor.

CUVANTUL LIBER (DAILY NEWSPAPER)- NO. 48/ 13.03.2020