

**48th SESSION**

Report  
CPL(2025)48-06  
26 March 2025

**Fact-finding mission on local elections in Bucharest (9 June 2024)**

Committee on the Monitoring of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and on the respect of Human Rights and the Rule of Law at local and regional levels (Monitoring Committee)

Co-Rapporteurs:<sup>1</sup> Randi MONDORF, Denmark (R, ILDG)  
Jorge SEQUEIRA, Portugal (L, SOC/G/PD)

Recommendation 524 (2025).....	2
Explanatory memorandum .....	5

*Summary*

On 2 July 2024, the Congress Monitoring Committee decided to carry out a fact-finding mission to Bucharest following a letter of complaint alleging irregularities in the June 2024 elections, which it had not been invited to observe. Thus, Congress rapporteurs held meetings in Bucharest on 23 October 2024 with various electoral stakeholders, as part of the Congress' post-electoral dialogue with the authorities of Romania and its mandate to assess the state of local and regional democracy in all member States.

The 2024 local elections were impacted by significant changes made to the legal framework only a few months before the election day, as the Romanian Government put forward an emergency ordinance to hold local and European Parliament elections on the same day. Although this ordinance was upheld by the Constitutional Court, its rapid enactment drew criticism for creating administrative challenges, some unpreparedness on election day, societal dissatisfaction and inconsistencies that required later clarification.

During the mission, the rapporteurs engaged with various interlocutors to gather insights and observations on the procedures. They acknowledged positive developments, such as increased voter turnout in the elections, greater use of technology, measures to reduce illicit party and campaign financing, and ongoing political negotiations to develop a comprehensive Electoral Code.

Particular attention was drawn to the adoption of an emergency ordinance to implement substantial changes to politically sensitive matters shortly before the elections, as well as issues with counting and tabulation, and transparency of the handling of requests for recounts, complaints and appeals. They identified areas for improvement including on voter and candidate registration, party and campaign finance, political polarisation, media bias and the appointment, workload and training of electoral commissions as well as the persistent underrepresentation of women in local politics.

1. L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions.  
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress.  
SOC/G/PD: Group of Socialists, Greens and Progressive Democrats.  
ILDG: Independent Liberal and Democratic Group.  
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group.  
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress.

## **RECOMMENDATION 524 (2025)<sup>2</sup>**

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. Article 1, paragraph 3 of the Committee of Ministers’ Statutory Resolution CM/Res (2020)1 on the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;

b. the principles laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122), which was ratified by Romania in 1993, as well as its Additional protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207), ratified by Romania in 2023;

c. Chapter XIX of the Rules and Procedures on the practical organisation of election observation missions;

d. the Venice Commission Opinion on the Emergency Ordinance regarding some measures for the organisation and conduct of the elections for members from Romania in the European Parliament in 2024 and the elections for local public administration authorities in 2024, adopted on 14 March 2025.

2. The Congress reiterates the fact that genuinely democratic local and regional elections are part of a process of establishing and maintaining democratic governance and that observation of grassroots elections is a key element in the Congress’s role as guardian of democracy at local and regional level.

3. The Congress regretted not receiving an invitation to observe the 2024 local elections in Romania, which would have allowed it to base this report on its own observations. It refers to the subsequent circular letter addressed by the Congress on 18 September 2024 to all member States’ Permanent Representations to encourage national authorities systematically to invite the Congress to observe local and regional elections.

4. The Congress acknowledges that, overall, the legal framework is conducive to holding democratic elections at local and regional levels in Romania. However, it considers that the stability of the electoral framework is paramount to ensure trust in the impartiality of the electoral process and deplores the fact that the emergency ordinance to hold local and European Parliament elections on the same day was adopted shortly before the elections, which caused legal uncertainty and implementation challenges, and was not in line with the Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters.

5. Based on the findings of the mission and observations made by domestic and international election observers, the Congress notes with satisfaction that:

a. despite local and European Parliament elections being held on the same day, the campaign was competitive and predominantly focused on local issues, and voter turnout increased;

b. the election administration managed most challenges posed by the emergency ordinance efficiently, and election day was largely held in an orderly and professional manner, with the notable exception of counting;

c. the expanded use of technology enhanced transparency at key stages of the electoral process;

d. measures to monitor campaign financing and prevent illicit funding were welcomed, contributing to increased transparency and in particular, the obligation to publish weekly campaign expenditure.

6. At the same time, the Congress expresses its concern with respect to the following issues:

a. the adoption of an emergency ordinance to amend the legal framework was finalised less than three months before the election day, undermined legal certainty and did not provide enough opportunity for the text to be thoroughly debated and adopted by broad consensus, despite the 2024 electoral calendar being predictable;

---

<sup>2</sup> Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities and adopted by the Congress on 26 March 2025 (see document CPL(2025)48-06, explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Randi MONDORF, Denmark (R, ILDG) and Jorge SEQUEIRA, Portugal (L, SOC/G/PD).

b. while many EU countries traditionally hold European Parliament and local elections on the same day, this change posed considerable challenges to the election administration in Romania;

c. the legal framework was complex and fragmented across multiple texts, creating potential loopholes, differences in interpretations, which negatively affecting its readability; efforts to reform it were seen as lacking political support;

d. on election day, the excessive workload placed on polling station commissioners, exhaustion of staff and lack of awareness of the revised procedures led to errors and rushed procedures, especially during counting and tabulation. While some violations may have been deliberate, the tiredness, lack of adequate training and complexity of procedures accounted for most of the preventable errors encountered in these stages;

e. contrary to good practice, meetings of the election administration were not open to the public and commissions benefited from a wide margin of appreciation, notably with respect to corrections of errors; the electoral dispute mechanism suffered from unrealistic deadlines notably related to candidate registration, recounts and appeals;

f. the campaign was marked by polarisation, restrictions on posters, instances of early campaigning, media bias linked to party-funded advertising, underregulated campaigning on social media and remaining gaps in transparency of party and campaign finance;

g. the changes in residency requirements as well as allegations of inaccuracies on voter registers led to confusion about deadlines and may have disenfranchised some voters;

h. women remained severely underrepresented in local decision-making and were too often placed in unwinnable positions on candidates lists;

i. citizens must be at least 23 years old to stand in local elections, which is not in line with Congress Recommendation 375 (2015) "Criteria for standing in local and regional elections";

j. election observation of the handover of ballot papers and tabulation of results, as well as of the activities of county bureaus, is not provided by law.

7. In light of the above, the Congress invites the Romanian authorities to:

a. refrain from making substantial changes to the legal framework shortly before the elections and from resorting to emergency ordinances to tackle politically sensitive subjects;

b. develop comprehensive and simplified legislation, in the form of a unified electoral law, to be adopted following open and extensive consultations in parliament and with a broad range of stakeholders;

c. review procedures applicable to the finalisation of protocols, the handover of electoral materials and tabulation of results to increase transparency and efficiency;

d. ensure better representation of political competitors in electoral commissions and build the capacity of the election administration to work transparently and professionally, through extensive training of commission members and public meetings of all electoral commissions;

e. simplify the modalities and review all deadlines applicable to complaints, recounts and appeals to provide genuine opportunities and realistic timeframes for valid challenges to be brought by voters and candidates alike and consider introducing mandatory recounts, held in presence of observers, in case of significant deviations;

f. strengthen the oversight and regulatory framework of campaign and party finance, limit the use of subsidies to fund political advertising in the media and ensure prompt investigations and appropriate sanctions, if violations occur; further regulate campaigning on social media and early campaigning;

g. systematically update voter registers based on residency criteria applicable to local elections and consider returning to a six-month residency requirement for local elections;

h. undertake urgent measures to increase the participation of women in politics, notably through the introduction of a 40% gender quota on lists and/or for mayoral positions;

i. review Article 4.1 of the Law on the Election of Local Public Administration Authorities and lower the age-limit for standing in local elections;

j. grant the right for election observers to observe all stages of the electoral process, as a means to increase public confidence in the process.

8. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation regarding the 2024 local elections in Romania and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.

## EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM<sup>3</sup>

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. Pursuant to the Congress' Rules and Procedures, a fact-finding mission to Bucharest was carried out on 23 October 2024 in the framework of the post-electoral dialogue with the Romanian authorities. On 2 July 2024, the Congress Monitoring Committee decided to initiate this mission following a letter of complaint alleging irregularities in the counting and tabulation of results in Bucharest, sent to the President of the Congress, Mr Marc Cools, by Mr Iulian Bulai, Member of the Parliament of Romania and of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The purpose of the mission was to clarify these irregularities in the aftermath of the 9 June 2024 local elections in Romania.

2. In the framework of the 2023 Reykjavik Summit, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe recommitted to strengthening democracy at all levels of government, in particular through free and fair elections held in accordance with international standards. The Congress, as enshrined in its mandate, is mandated to observe such elections at grassroots level and therefore to ensure the homogenous application of electoral standards throughout the continent at subnational level. The regular observation of elections not only serve this purpose but also allows member States to reflect on their electoral practice. In this context, the Congress regretted that it had not been invited to observe the 2024 elections and had to rely on second-hand information gathered long after the election day rather than onsite assessments.<sup>4</sup>

3. The Congress appointed as co-rapporteurs, Ms Randi Mondorf, Head of the delegation of Denmark to the Congress (R, ILDG) and Mr Jorge Sequeira, Head of the delegation of Portugal to the Congress (L, SOC/G/PD). The delegation was assisted by an expert on electoral matters, Dr Brid Quinn, from Ireland and the secretariat.

4. During the mission, the rapporteurs met various stakeholders and exchanged views on both positive and negative aspects of the local elections. The following report focuses specifically on issues arising out of these exchanges and on second-hand observations by domestic and international observers on electoral processes in Romania. While the complaint letter which prompted the fact-finding mission focussed on alleged election day issues, the rapporteurs broadened the questions raised during the meetings to the whole electoral cycle. In line with the Congress's mandate, they did not concentrate on the European Parliament elections (including the out-of-country procedure, which does not apply to local elections). The Congress wishes to thank all of those who met with the rapporteurs for their open and constructive dialogue. The programme of the mission can be found in appendix.

### II. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

5. Romania is a parliamentary republic with a bicameral parliament elected every four years. The country is a member of the European Union since 2007. Following the 2020 parliamentary elections, a coalition of the National Liberal Party (PNL), the Union to Save Romania (USR), and the Democratic Union of the Hungarians in Romania (DUHR) was set up but quickly collapsed due to internal disputes. In 2021, a new government was formed by former rival parties PNL and the Social Democratic Party (PSD) under the banner of the National Coalition for Romania. It introduced a rotation to appoint the prime minister and key political positions between the coalition parties. The coalition benefits from a majority in both houses in parliament, as well as in an overwhelming majority of municipalities and counties. Some Congress interlocutors noted with concern that the political dominance of the current coalition reduced opportunities for debate and constructive opposition.

6. The 2024 local elections in Romania constituted a major electoral event, involving the election of approximately 39 000 local councillors and mayors across nearly 3 200 municipalities, towns, and cities. Additionally, 1 340 county councillors, 41 county council presidents, and the General Mayor of Bucharest were also elected.

<sup>3</sup> Prepared with the contribution of Brid QUINN, Ireland, member of the Congress Group of Independent Experts.

<sup>4</sup> During the fact-finding mission, some interlocutors stated that the lack of invitation was an oversight, due to lack of understanding of how the election monitoring process is operationalised.

7. The elections took place in a polarised context on the same day than European Parliament elections, as prescribed by the emergency ordinance adopted less than three months before the election day on 8 March. Once every 20 years, local, European Parliament, parliamentary and presidential elections happen in the same year in Romania. 2024 was such a year, with four elections originally planned on different months.

8. On 21 February 2024, the ruling coalition officially announced the merging of local and European Parliament elections, scheduled for 9 June 2024. The merger was formalised through the General Emergency Ordinance 21/2024 (hereafter the emergency ordinance), signed by the Government on 8 March and silently adopted by the Senate plenary on 8 April, just two months before election day. The Romanian Government introduced the emergency ordinance to establish the legal framework applicable to the merger.<sup>5</sup> It involved not only bringing forward the date of local elections, but also changing the regular legal framework to avoid potential legal issues from arising on *inter alia* voting hours, voter registration, length of mandate, changes in party affiliation and the composition of the Central Electoral Bureau (CEB).

9. Although this ordinance was upheld by the Constitutional Court, its rapid enactment drew criticism for creating administrative challenges, societal dissatisfaction, inconsistencies and practical issues. On election day and during the following days, reports of mismatch between protocols and issues with the lengthy counting and tabulation of results emerged on social media and in statements by domestic observers and the opposition.<sup>6</sup> The announcement of results was delayed, and results were contested in the two central districts of Bucharest (Sector I and II). Presidential and parliamentary elections were held later in 2024 in a similarly polarised context and allegations of information manipulation in favour of a candidate led to the extraordinary cancellation of the first round of presidential elections by the Constitutional Court.<sup>7</sup>

### III. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD AND INSIGHTS FROM THE FACT-FINDING MISSION

#### 1. Legal framework and electoral system

10. The primary electoral legislation applicable to local elections is Law 115/2015 for the election of local public administration authorities. Also of relevance in the context of the 2024 elections were Law 33/2007 on the organisation and conduct of elections to the European Parliament, the Law on Financial Activity of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns (amended in 2021) and the Emergency Ordinance 21/2024, published on 8 March 2024, only three months prior to the elections.<sup>8</sup> This fragmented legal framework was supplemented with over 50 decisions of the Central Electoral Bureau (CEB) and the Permanent Electoral Authority (PEA).<sup>9</sup> As mentioned by Congress interlocutors and previously by international observers,<sup>10</sup> the legal framework is too complex and split across multiple texts, creating potential loopholes, gaps, and opportunities for differing interpretations and negatively affecting its readability.

11. The rapporteurs were informed that the authorities in Romania were aware for several years that four elections (local, European Parliament, Presidential and Parliamentary) would take place in 2024. While the holding of these two elections on the same day is a common practice in many EU member States, the hurried nature of the merger and the failure to fully consider the legal, practical and administrative implications of the changes led to many problems witnessed in this electoral cycle which requested later clarification.

12. The emergency ordinance introduced significant changes to the legal framework governing Romania's local and European Parliament elections, applying solely to the June 2024 elections. The

<sup>5</sup> [General Emergency Ordinance 21/2024](#), 8 March 2024.

<sup>6</sup> See Digi24, "[Local elections Bucharest 2024. Tension at the S1 Electoral Office. Revolt of the heads of polling stations: 'I'm going home, let them look for me whenever they want'](#)", 12 June 2024 (in Romanian).

<sup>7</sup> Venice Commission, [Urgent report on the cancellation of election results by constitutional courts](#), 27 January 2025.

<sup>8</sup> Other relevant texts include the Law on Broadcasting, the Law on Political Parties, the Criminal Code and relevant emergency ordinances.

<sup>9</sup> Vot Corect coalition regretted that some of these CEB decisions were sometimes unclear and complex, further reinforcing confusion, while at the same time acknowledging that the CEB could not, within its mandate, solve all issues created by the emergency ordinance. See Vot Corect, [Final Observation Report, Local and European Parliament Elections](#), 9 June 2024; p8.

<sup>10</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, Romania Parliamentary Elections, [ODIHR Special Election Assessment Mission Final Report](#), 23 April 2021

merging of two very different voting procedures and the complexified legislative framework led to difficulties in implementation, which had to be fixed by more than 50 election administration bylaws further limiting readability. Congress interlocutors pointed out that the situation led to inconsistent interpretation and confusion for voters, contestants and election administration staff. In addition, they noted that it was unclear if some of the positive improvements would be kept for future elections, as the emergency ordinance only applied to the 2024 elections.

13. The justifications for merging these elections included preventing electoral fatigue, strengthening the country's position within the EU – by ensuring greater representativeness of MEPs and encouraging higher voter turnout –, enhancing electoral efficiency, improving voting accessibility for Romanians abroad and addressing potential candidate registration challenges arising from the overlap of multiple elections in 2024.

14. Although a limited public debate was held on the draft emergency ordinance, it was regarded as far too short by the opposition and domestic election observers.<sup>11</sup> Through written comments, the latter highlighted some key loopholes in the draft emergency ordinance, which were partly addressed in the final text.<sup>12</sup> No substantial debate was held in parliament. Most interlocutors also criticised that the Government chose to resort to an emergency ordinance despite the electoral calendar being easily predictable. This procedure significantly curtailed opportunities for debate, resulting in the 'silent adoption' of the emergency ordinance by the Senate plenary on 9 April 2024. Moreover, it failed to address long-standing electoral issues, as the provisions were intended solely for the 2024 elections.

15. Domestic observation coalition Vot Corect noted some positive aspects in the emergency ordinance but emphasised that the negative ones would outweigh them. Positives included aligning with Romania's pre-pandemic electoral calendar (elections in June instead of September) and a potentially higher turnout for European Parliament elections due to the boost from local election participation. On the other hand, they pointed out that major parties would benefit at the expense of smaller ones, cost savings would likely be minimal, and the concurrent elections would create voter confusion and strain logistical resources.

16. The emergency ordinance was challenged before the Constitutional Court, which upheld its constitutionality on 14 May 2024 including on the justification of urgency, the appropriateness of using this legislative method, and the modifications to the composition of the CEB.<sup>13</sup> Some interlocutors sought to raise the issue of the emergency ordinance with the Ombudsman, who clarified that this question fell outside his mandate, as the matter had already been contested in court. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe requested an opinion of the Venice Commission on this law, adopted on 14 March 2025. Some interlocutors deplored that the question of whether or not the situation constituted an emergency had not been referred to the Constitutional Court and that the Court's decision was vague. They wondered how the 2024 electoral calendar could have constituted an emergency, i.e. an unforeseeable event, as it was strictly determined by law. They feared that the emergency ordinance had rather been preferred due to a lack of professionalism in the planning stages. They believed that the limited public debate held on the merger only occurred in reaction to backlash and pressure following the government's announcement.

17. Amending the fundamental elements of electoral legislation less than three months before elections seems to run counter to electoral standards, notably the Venice Commission's Code of Good

---

11 The Expert Forum criticised the merging of local and European Parliament elections, citing concerns over legal loopholes, constitutional principles, and the potential impact on voters' rights and electoral competition. They highlighted that changing major electoral laws less than five months before the elections violated international standards, shortened the term of local representatives, and created legal confusion about mandate transitions. Additional concerns included restricted voting rights for certain residents, lack of harmonisation between laws for the two elections, and inconsistent observer accreditation processes, which could undermine transparency. See Expert Forum, [Merging elections in EU countries: and why doesn't it work in Romania?](#), 9 February 2024.

12 In the final text, the ordinance further regulated the composition and roles of electoral commissions, established common polling stations for both elections, reduced the residence requirement for local elections to 60 days, and extended voting hours to 22:00. It also set local mandates from the 2020 elections to end on 27 September 2024. Additionally, it addressed technical issues from the 2019 European Parliament elections, including out-of-country voting and polling station accessibility. See [Several EFOR recommendations were adopted in GEO 21/2024 regarding the organization of the June elections](#), 11 March 2024.

13 The challenge to the emergency ordinance revolved around Article 115.4 of the Constitution which states that "the Government can only adopt emergency ordinances in exceptional cases, the regulation of which cannot be postponed, and have the obligation to give the reasons for the emergency status within their contents.", [Constitutional Court of Romania](#), Press Release, 14 May 2024.



Practice in Electoral Matters.<sup>14</sup> Such changes on the fundamental aspects of the elections, including the composition of electoral bodies, should only be considered in very specific situations, which did not seem fulfilled in this case. The Code states that “Even when no manipulation is intended, changes will seem to be dictated by immediate party-political interests”, an opinion shared by some interlocutors of the rapporteurs. This situation showed once again the relevance of the one-year stability principle in elections, as a mean also to ensure maintain trust in the process.

18. The stability and predictability of electoral legislation was also affected by the number of different laws which regulate the electoral process as well as by the frequent use of emergency ordinances.<sup>15</sup> In 2019 the Romanian Government resorted to emergency ordinances to regulate the 2019 European Parliament elections,<sup>16</sup> as well as to modify the electoral system for presidents of county councils (returning to a direct election - Emergency Ordinance 40/2019). The European Commission’s 2024 Rule of Law Report also criticises the use of emergency ordinances in Romania for ‘politically sensitive topics and important reforms’.<sup>17</sup> OSCE/ODIHR has long recommended reviewing the electoral framework well in advance of the next elections and within an inclusive consultation process and, in order to prevent uncertainty generated by the concurrent election rules, to consider harmonising the provisions and deadlines in the election legislation.<sup>18</sup> In addition, despite the high number of ordinances, most ODIHR recommendations remained unaddressed, including on suffrage rights, the transparency of election dispute resolution, and the right of observers to access all stages of the electoral process. Some Congress interlocutors called for the adoption of a comprehensive Electoral Code and expected negotiations on such Electoral Code to be held in 2025, after a decade of formal and informal discussions.

19. The rapporteurs believed that the main matter of concern in the 2024 local elections was precisely the recourse to an emergency ordinance to regulate something as sensitive as elections. The electoral cycle was well-known, as this situation can only happen every 20 years in Romania. As underlined several times in the meetings held with interlocutors, the emergency component was highly controversial in this case. The rapporteurs highlighted that this method of amending laws remains problematic. The rapporteurs are of the opinion that an emergency ordinance should not be considered to mitigate a lack of anticipation and change the law quickly, and its recourse must remain exceptional, as the multiplication of ad-hoc legislation can negatively affect the stability of electoral law, as well as the quality and certainty of the legal framework.<sup>19</sup> The rapporteurs found that Article 115 of the Constitution of Romania, establishing emergency ordinances, does not clearly define what constitutes an emergency nor the level of control of other institutions on such acts. Referring to the 2019 Venice Commission’s Opinion on emergency ordinances, they regretted that this situation undermines legislative quality, disrupts legal certainty, weakens external oversight of the Government, and disregards the principle of separation of powers—all without requiring authorities to clearly justify the emergency. The Venice Commission Opinion on the Emergency Ordinance (2025) also recommended

---

14 The Code of Good Practice states that ‘the fundamental elements of electoral law, in particular the electoral system proper, membership of electoral commissions and the drawing of constituency boundaries, should not be open to amendment less than one year before an election, or should be written in the constitution or at a level higher than ordinary law’, Venice Commission, [Code of Good Practice on Electoral Matters](#), 2002.

15 For 2024, based on analysis of the Official Gazette of Romania, Aleph Media alleged that 154 emergency ordinances had been published in 2024. See Mihai Mădălin, [“Romania breaks record for new laws and emergency ordinances issued in a single year. In 2024, a new law appeared every day”](#) (in Romanian), Aleph Media, 10 January 2025 and Digi 24, [“Romania - too many emergency ordinances, too little transparency \(GRECO report\)”](#), 7 September 2023.

16 See [Emergency Ordinance 29/2019](#).

17 European Commission, [“Commission staff working document - 2024 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Romania”](#), 24 July 2024.

18 OSCE/ODIHR, Romania Parliamentary Elections, 6 December 2020, [ODIHR Special Election Assessment Mission Final Report](#), 23 April 2021.

19 In 2019, the Venice Commission had concluded, in an opinion related to the use of emergency ordinances to regulate the laws of justice, that this manner of amending the laws on justice was highly problematic. It stated that “the routine use of emergency powers is objectionable at many levels. It affects the quality of the legislation, disturbs legal certainty, weakens external checks on the Government, and disregards the principle of the separation of powers. The Venice Commission calls on the Romanian Government to drastically reduce the use of GEOs in all fields of law. Article 115 of the Constitution seems to be interpreted in Romania in an overly broad manner, so its revision may be envisaged in order to define more narrowly the situations in which the Government may legislate by emergency ordinances, and to introduce checks on the Government’s legislative power.” Venice Commission (2019), [Romania - Opinion on emergency ordinances GEO no. 7 and GEO no. 12 amending the laws of justice](#).



refraining in the future for legislating on electoral matters through emergency ordinances and regulating in statutory law the merger of elections.<sup>20</sup>

20. On the electoral system proper, local elections in Romania are held every four years. The last local elections took place on 27 September 2020, with a turnout of 46,02%, despite Covid-19 prevention measures.<sup>21</sup> Local councillors, mayors, as well as county councillors and county council presidents are directly elected by the residents of a municipality or county.<sup>22</sup> Mayors, county council presidents and the General mayor of Bucharest are elected directly by simple majority, using a first-past-the-post system (Law 115/2015). Councillors are elected using a proportional system with closed lists and these lists must pass a threshold, which varies between single party lists (5%) and electoral lists (7 or 8%).<sup>23</sup> Independent candidates can also run for office -if supported by the signatures of at least 1% of eligible voters - as well as candidates representing national minorities. In practice, this meant that voters were given four ballot papers to vote in local elections, in addition to an extra ballot for European Parliament elections.

21. Article 7 (1) of Law 115/2015 stipulates that the lists of candidates for the election of local councils and county councils shall be drawn up in such a way as to ensure the representation of both sexes, except for those containing only one candidate, but does not provide further placement instructions. Before the 2024 elections, only 5.4% mayors and 13,3% of local councillors were women, which placed Romania last in the EU for women representation in local decision-making.<sup>24</sup> In the 2024 elections, most female candidates stood for local councils (34%) and county councils (27%). Less female candidates ran for the position of mayor and president of a county council (11%). For Bucharest, a quarter of the candidates were women as well as two out of nine candidates for mayor.

22. The emergency ordinance kept the original length of mandate of the elected representatives, running until September 2024, despite the elections being held four months prior. In light of the Charter of Local Self-Government and its Additional Protocol, this decision raised concerns on the legitimacy of local office holders who were not re-elected and yet remained in position months after the elections.<sup>25</sup>

## 2. Election Administration

23. The Permanent Electoral Authority (PEA) is in charge of election administration and is supplemented by four levels of bureaus established prior to each election: the Central Election Bureau (CEB), the County Election Bureaus, the Municipal Election Bureaus (municipality or district) and the Bureaus for polling stations (about 20 000). Furthermore, in regular European Parliament elections, the Ministry of the Interior conducts tasks that the Permanent Electoral Authority performs for local elections. This situation led to a degree of confusion in the responsibilities of the different stakeholders.

24. The composition of the Central Election Bureau was changed by the emergency ordinance for the 2024 merged elections and consisted of 21 members including seven judges, the president, Mr Tony Grebla, and vice-president of the PEA, representatives of political parties and minorities seating in parliament, as well as three members proposed by the political parties participating in the elections of 9 June 2024 but not already represented in the CEB.<sup>26</sup> Were left out of this selection

20 Venice Commission (2025), CDL(2025)020 - Opinion on the Emergency Ordinance regarding some measures for the organisation and conduct of the elections for members from Romania in the European Parliament in 2024 and the elections for local public administration authorities in 2024.

21 Turnout in local elections has been consistently higher than in European Parliament elections. See the Central Electoral Bureau [webpage for the 2020 local elections](#).

22 As observed in the Congress Monitoring Report, "the president (preşedinte) of the county council was elected by and among members of the county council until 2008. Between 2008 and 2015 it was elected directly by the citizens. The 2015 revision of the Law on local elections eliminated the direct election. The Emergency Ordinance n° 40 of 3 June 2019, regarding the modification and completion of Law n° 115 of 19 May 2015 for the election of local public administration authorities, which modified the election of the president of the county council. Thus, the president of the county council is now elected directly by the citizens.", Congress (2023) 44-11final, [Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Romania](#).

23 Romania currently has 33 representatives in the European Parliament who were also elected on 9 June 2024. They are elected using a proportional system of closed lists. There is only one constituency, and the mandate is for five years.

24 European Institute for Gender Equality, [2024 Statistics](#).

25 Some newly elected officials had not yet taken office at the time of the mission because the incumbents' term had not yet ended.

26 The composition of electoral commissions is one of the fundamental aspects detailed in the Code of Good Practice that should not be open to modifications in the year preceding the elections. Some Congress interlocutors also deplored that the distribution of seats in national parliament would affect the composition of the CEB for local elections, while others regretted that the

independents, parties more established at local level than national level and some parties standing in European Parliament elections but not yet represented.<sup>27</sup> Some Congress interlocutors alleged that this change limited the participation of some political actors in electoral commissions and therefore restricted the collective scrutiny of the work of said commissions. Some parties, due to changes in political affiliations for instance, did not have the same access to the procedures as parliamentary parties, which had a larger number of representatives. The opposition party REPER challenged its exclusion from the CEB but its appeals were repeatedly rejected. REPER's request was denied despite five of their MEPs being elected on the USR-PLUS alliance list. While the High Court of Cassation allowed REPER to refer the ordinance's constitutionality to the Constitutional Court, the Court ultimately rejected the appeal on 14 May 2024.<sup>28</sup>

25. The PEA pointed out to the rapporteurs that, despite the workload of organising two elections simultaneously, most deadlines were met and decisions were published online. Some interlocutors however regretted the overall lack of transparency of the electoral administration, as meetings at all levels are not held in public and many published documents were in practice difficult to use.<sup>29</sup> The 2024 Nations in Transition Report raised concerns about the impartiality of some of Romania's electoral institutions stating that 'political appointments to electoral oversight bodies risk compromising the process's integrity and public trust. For example, the appointment of Toni Greblă as president of the Permanent Electoral Authority (AEP), which the PSD supported, raised concerns about the body's impartiality and integrity'.<sup>30</sup>

26. Presidents and vice presidents of polling station bureaus for the 2024 local elections were chosen randomly from the Body of Election Experts. The CEB identified irregularities, namely, failure to comply with the proximity criterion as well as the inclusion on the appointment lists of persons who were not magistrates, as prescribed by law, and decided to revoke and redo the drawings in six counties.<sup>31</sup> *Vot Corect* also criticised the large number of replacements made shortly before the elections, in particular in Bucharest Sector 1, where dozens of replacements were approved close to the election date.<sup>32</sup>

27. Seeing the extent of the changes brought by the ordinance, inclusive voter and contestant education seemed necessary to ensure the smooth implementation of the new procedures. Unfortunately, rapporteurs were informed that only limited voter education preceded the election day. Domestic observation coalition *Vot Corect* pointed out that voter education on the electoral process was almost exclusively carried out online and its effectiveness was assessed as low, despite the many changes in procedures and deadlines. At the same time, while observers did not report staff shortages on election day, they mentioned to the rapporteurs that not all polling station personnel, including some chairpersons and last-minute replacements, attended the available training curricula on new procedures. While *Vot Corect* found the training materials clear and comprehensive, inconsistencies in session organisation and participation at precinct levels were noted.

### 3. Registration of voters and candidates

28. All Romanian citizens over 18 have the right to vote. Different residency requirements for local and European Parliament elections required separate voter registers, as the entire country serves as a single constituency for European Parliament elections, while municipalities act as constituencies for local elections. The emergency ordinance related to the 2024 local elections also suspended the six-

---

emergency ordinance's provision on changes in political affiliation would allow representatives that had changed parties to sit on electoral boards as members of their previous parties.

27 Article 2(14) of the emergency ordinance states that 'for the elections of June 9, 2024, the completion of the electoral offices is done, in the first stage, with representatives of the parliamentary political parties and citizens belonging to national minorities who had their own parliamentary group in at least one of the Chambers of the Parliament on the date of its establishment as a result of the elections for the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies in 2020, in descending order of the number of parliamentary mandates obtained, as well as with the representative of the group of citizens' organizations belonging to national minorities represented in the Chamber of Deputies'.

28 Constitutional Court of Romania, [Press release](#), 14 May 2024.

29 On this matter, *Vot Corect* noted the absence of harmonisation of documents between county and municipal electoral bureaus made it very difficult to use the data and to track irregularities.

30 Freedom House, [Nations in Transition Report](#), 2024. Since the appointment of Toni Greblă in 2023, supported by the PSD and PNL, opposition have called for his resignation very regularly for various reasons, including data privacy breaches, the amount of his salary and the June 2024 elections. See Andrei C. "[Greblă's Order. The man voted to oversee the fairness of elections, caught illegally increasing his salary and daily allowances by thousands of euros per month](#)", *Snoop*, 25 August 2024 (in Romanian). Concerns regarding the independence of the PEA were also expressed during meetings with the opposition

31 *Vot Corect*, [Final Observation Report, Local and European Parliament Elections](#), 9 June 2024.

32 *Ibid*, p10.

month residency requirement to vote in local elections, to shorten it to 60 days, which was perceived by NGOs as too short. As stated in Congress Resolution 378 (2015), the existence of a genuine link between voters and the municipality/region where they cast a ballot is fundamental. While it is difficult to assess if this measure led to fraudulent practices, the rapporteurs would recommend going back to the six-month requirement and working towards enhancing the overall accuracy of the registers.

29. Congress interlocutors pointed out that little voter education was carried out on registration deadlines, especially applicable to EU voters for the European Parliament elections. Domestic observers were informed about cases where eligible persons had submitted their applications on time but were not registered by the respective mayor and could not vote.<sup>33</sup>

30. While interlocutors were generally satisfied with the accuracy of registers, the rapporteurs were informed of some persisting issues a limited number of municipalities, as could be seen in relatively high numbers of voters on the supplementary lists. The NGO Expert Forum analysed patterns of voter registration between 1 January and 10 April 2024 and highlighted some potential cases of fraudulent voter migration. In that period, 180 886 residences were registered, close to 100 000 more than during the same period in 2023.<sup>34</sup> Attention was also drawn to the geographical spread of additional voter lists, with some municipalities displaying much higher rates than the national average of 2.3%: Mehedinți (8.2%), Giurgiu (4.7%), Caraș Severin (5.35%), Sălaj and Teleorman (4%).<sup>35</sup> The Expert Forum asserted that these fraudulent registrations, often to support specific candidates, could significantly impact electoral outcomes, especially in small communities. On 7 June, 9 857 additional ballots for the election of the local council and 9 909 for the mayoral elections were printed, confirming that these additional ballots were concentrated in eight counties where the number of voters had increased significantly.

31. Other issues pertaining to voter registration were mentioned and included difficulties to verify the permanent residence of voters, the non-removal of deceased or phantom voters from the lists and the limited investigation and sanctioning of irregularities.

32. Regarding registration of candidates, while the high number of support signatures requested for standing in the European Parliament elections was perceived as limiting electoral competition, no such observation was made on registration of candidates in local elections. In a welcome step, the emergency ordinance enabled voters to support multiple candidates/lists and some interlocutors hoped to see this option incorporated into ordinary law.

33. The Congress rapporteurs were informed of the lack of uniformity and transparency in how electoral bureaus finalised and published candidate lists, a process that was not open to public scrutiny. Deadlines to submit complaints on voter registration were short – 48 hours - and not often actionable, as the centralisation and publication of lists of candidates took time, limiting verification of signatures and the right to an effective remedy on candidate registration.

34. Local mandates in Romania are traditionally linked to party affiliation, i.e. if an elected representative changed political parties, s/he would lose the mandate. Party migration is a long-standing issue in Romania which emerges before each election and has been addressed by the Constitutional Court in 2014, ruling that political migration during the mandate was not allowed. As the emergency ordinance removed this provision, local mandates and party affiliation were disassociated during the 2024 local elections which raised a number of challenges in the composition of election administration bureaus, as well as in the legitimacy of the mayors who for the last months of office were affiliated to a different party. For the June elections, 415 cases (13%) of mayoral migration were noted with mayors running for a different party than the one they were elected for in 2020.<sup>36</sup> While this provision of the emergency ordinance was raised as an issue by some interlocutors, party-administered mandates have not always been found to be aligned with the free and independent mandate by the Venice Commission.

<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Expert Forum, [The impact of residence visas on the 2024 local elections](#), 19 August 2024 (in Romanian).

<sup>35</sup> Expert Forum, [Use of additional lists in the local elections on June 9](#), 17 June 2024 (in Romanian).

<sup>36</sup> Expert Forum, ["Mayoral migration in the 2024 local elections"](#), 31 May 2024 (in Romanian).

<sup>37</sup> the Venice Commission has argued that losing the condition of representative because of crossing the floor or switching party is contrary to the principle of a free and independent mandate. the opinion on mandates – Venice Commission

35. According to *Vot Corect*, women accounted for 24% of candidates in the local elections, a rate only 2% higher than in 2020 and 3% than in 2016, exemplifying the lack of progress made to increase the representation of women in Romanian grassroots politics.<sup>38</sup> EFOR identified 467 lists submitted for local councils (3%) which did not comply with the provisions of Art. 7 of Law 115/2015 and did not ensure the representation of both men and women on electoral lists of more than two people.<sup>39</sup> Regrettably and in contradiction with the law, no further measures were taken to sanction or deregister these lists. The failure to publish disaggregated data also made it difficult to challenge this aspect of candidate registration. Some Congress interlocutors perceived the current provisions as unsuccessful to promote the participation of women in local politics. Moreover, Article 4.1 of Law 115/2015 provides that candidates must be at least 23 years old to stand for local or county councillor, mayor and county presidents. The rapporteurs highlighted that a key best practice for increasing youth participation is aligning the minimum age for voting and candidacy in local elections, in line with Congress Recommendation 375 (2015) on the Criteria for standing in local and regional elections. Unfortunately, Romania remains one of the few EU member states that still does not allow citizens under 23 to participate as candidates.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4. Campaign environment and media landscape

36. The Constitution guarantees freedom of association and assembly, and all contestants were able to campaign freely. The campaign was competitive with over 125 political subjects registered. The tacit “non-aggression” agreement of the ruling coalition parties allegedly limited the competitiveness of the campaign. During the electoral campaign, candidates were provided, in a non-discriminatory manner, with appropriate spaces to meet with voters, thereby enabling interaction with citizens. At the same time, campaigning on social networks, the preferred way for candidates to reach potential voters, and other online portals was not regulated enough by law. Congress interlocutors mentioned some worrying cases of online negative campaigns, disinformation tactics and inflammatory or intolerant speech, including xenophobic, misogynistic, and homophobic rhetoric. Some harassment and threats were also directed at journalists during the campaign.<sup>41</sup>

37. The rapporteurs were informed that the strict restrictive regulations on the displaying of posters were too restrictive and backfired, as candidates/parties with significant resources organised more activities during the pre-campaign period than during the official campaign period. The rules on posters were only outlined by the CEB after the start of the campaign period, thereby generating some confusion. The rapporteurs questioned the objective of having such strict regulations during the campaigning period, as it seemed to have pushed political actors to campaign outside of the electoral period. Violations of electoral silence were noted, and some international commentators claim that on election day some campaigning was still carried out by text messages or posters although the law explicitly forbids it.<sup>42</sup>

38. Most interlocutors agreed that local elections generated more interest, as was underlined by *Vot Corect*, and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Commentators assessed that the campaign for the European Parliament elections was overshadowed by the local elections. A few Congress interlocutors were of the opposite opinion and believed that European Parliament issues sidelined debate on local election issues. The campaign was also perceived to revolve mostly around personalities more than programmes and key topics important to the daily lives of voters.

39. Regarding the media landscape, the National Audiovisual Council (CNA) supervises the broadcast media and is mandated to impose sanctions on outlets that violate the law or CNA regulations. Political parties receive annual state subsidies, an important part of which are used for media coverage. These payments have a clear impact on the media landscape and provide an undue advantage, which the Media Freedom Mission perceives as resulting in media capture and biased coverage primarily in favour of the richest parties. The International Press Institute asserts that “the huge income it provides for media distorts political reporting creating an unfair electoral playing field”<sup>43</sup>.

38 The rapporteurs welcomed that one party, the REPER, had used a zipper system on lists.

39 Of these transgressions, 18 included no men and the rest no women. *Vot Corect*, [Final Observation Report, Local and European Parliament Elections](#), 9 June 2024,

40 Congress Recommendation 375 (2015) on the Criteria for standing in local and regional elections and Dumitrescu R. “[Oldest candidate in Romania's upcoming elections is 100 years old, Electoral Authority says](#)”, *Romania Insider*, 28 May 2024

41 *Vot Corect*, [Final Observation Report, Local and European Parliament Elections](#), 9 June 2024,

42 Katja Christina Plate, [Romania has voted: Cementing the status quo, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung](#), June 2024.

43 International Press Institute, [Media Freedom Mission to Romania questions fairness of electoral coverage](#), 26 June 2024.



It noted that “political money has become embedded in the media system creating an unhealthy interdependency between the media and political parties throughout the political cycle.”<sup>44</sup> A positive development of the 2024 local elections was the frequent reporting of the PEA reports on media expenditures. These reports clearly highlighted significant media-related expenses per party.

40. Media outlets broadcasting political advertisement must ensure that the content is clearly and transparently labelled, and NGO Active Watch deplored that party-provided content was not always labelled by media outlets and sanctioned by the CNA.<sup>45</sup> Interlocutors referred to frequent failures to label paid political content clearly, which did not allow voters to clearly distinguish between genuine journalistic content and party-sponsored materials. Concerns were expressed that the current situation did not provide equal opportunities among contestants in the media.

41. The emergency ordinance allegedly also led to some issues for the CNA to transpose the ordinance into its own regulatory texts and created confusion and discrepancies between broadcasters. Media coverage of the campaign was also complexified by the fact that some candidates ran for both local and European Parliament elections.<sup>46</sup> The situation was considered by NGO Active Watch as “jeopardising the right of voters to be informed correctly, in a balanced manner during the crucial period of electoral campaigns and to allow candidates free, fair and equal access to radio and television stations”. After additional investigations, Active Watch also found that millions of euros were spent on paying for interviews, participation to debates, etc. It concluded that the 2024 June election campaign consolidated the role of parties as significant investors in the media market and considered that this situation remained alarming for the health of public debate and democratic process.<sup>47</sup>

## 5. Political party and campaign finance

42. Party and campaign finance are regulated by provisions to ensure that money used by political parties and candidates is subject to reporting obligations and oversight. Parties and candidates can fund their campaigns through several sources, both public and private.<sup>48</sup> The amounts of public funding awarded to well-established political parties have been often assessed by NGOs as very high and constantly increasing, resulting in parties spending millions on political advertising on the media.<sup>49</sup> In the June 2024 elections, the online publication each week of campaign expenditures constituted a novelty and contributed to increase the transparency of the process, a step welcomed by Congress interlocutors.<sup>50</sup> The PEA had previously developed a computer application to harmonise the collection of reports, which was unfortunately not used in these elections, but reporting requirements were fulfilled in a timely manner. At the same time, one of the key issues remained the overlap of the reporting periods for European Parliament and local elections.

43. As noted in past domestic and international observation missions,<sup>51</sup> the legal framework applicable to party and campaign finance could be improved, as ways to circumvent reporting requirements have been identified by political actors. For instance, some interlocutors pointed out that many instances of early campaigning, were due to the fact that the pre-campaign period did not come

44 *ibid*

45 Active Watch, [“Election ‘canned materials’ are not news. Broadcasting them is against the law”](#), 3 June 2024 (in Romanian).

46 “One such problem is that one campaign is free (the one for local elections), and the other is partly paid (the one for European elections). The public cannot know which audiovisual content is broadcast for a fee and which content is broadcast for free, as the types of broadcasts have similar names but different rules. One such example is the marking “electoral promotion” (Decision 149/2024 for European elections) versus “electoral broadcast” (Decision 150/2024 for local elections). In “electoral promotion” broadcasts, the content belongs exclusively to the candidates/parties and is broadcast for a fee, while in “electoral broadcast” broadcasts, the content can also be produced by the editorial staff, and access to the candidates is free. Even if someone becomes a specialist in legislation and understands what can be paid for and what cannot, the application of the law by broadcasters is, anyway, often erroneous”. See Active Watch, [“ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN 2 IN 1. Voters, caught between legislative frills and very small electoral markings - FreeEx Digest no. 7”](#), 29 May 2024 (in Romanian).

47 Active Watch, [“Time is money. Editorial space on news channels, bought by parties in the campaign”](#), 7 October 2024 (in Romanian).

48 Radio Europa reported that “At the last budget rectification, on September 23, 2024, the government led by Marcel Ciolacu supplemented the budget of 314 million lei (almost 63 million euros) allocated to the parties with 62 million lei (over 12 million euros). Thus, the subsidy for parties has increased 26 times in the last eight years: from 14.5 million lei in 2016, to almost 380 million lei in 2024.”, see Despa O. Cârlușea A. [“60 million lei for parties, away from the eyes of the world and without the approval of the Economic and Social Council. Where does the Government get the money from?”](#), Radio Europa Romania, 23 October 2024 (in Romanian).

49 See also on this matter: Expert Forum, [“Money for parties, an unresolved problem”](#), 6 January 2025 (in Romanian).

50 Permanent Electoral Authority, Department for Control of Financing of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns, [Website](#).

51 OSCE/ODIHR, Romania Parliamentary Elections, 6 December 2020, [ODIHR Special Election Assessment Mission Final Report](#), 23 April 2021

under the same transparency obligations which applied during the official campaign period. Thus, political parties and candidates could spend significant resources without being clearly monitored before submission of their 2024 annual reports. For the June 2024 elections, the PEA published guidelines on electoral campaign financing and organised training seminars for party accountants.

44. According to domestic observation coalition Vot Corect, electoral contestants declared LEI 235 million of expenses and received LEI 228 million in contributions for the local elections. In the European Parliament elections, parties spent the most on online (33%), radio/TV/printed media (31%) and print (15%) campaigning. Reports were not filled homogeneously and in user-friendly manner at local level, the breakdown of costs is thus not known for local elections.<sup>52</sup> Overall, some interlocutors from NGOs pointed out the need for better regulation of the pre-election period and for more oversight powers of the AEP regarding party and campaign finance.

45. In November 2024, the PEA, refused to allocate over two million euros to the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR; far-right), which sought reimbursement for expenses incurred by its candidates in the European parliamentary and local elections. G4media news website reported that the PEA rejected the request on the grounds that the AUR had not complied with laws on the financing of political parties.<sup>53</sup> Allegedly, the AUR had exceeded the limits for loans and gathered funds from a single source.

#### IV. ELECTION DAY PROCEDURES AND ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES

46. As no Congress observers was deployed to observe the June 2024 elections, the following section will rely principally on reports of domestic election observers Vot Corect, past observations of the OSCE/ODIHR, media reports and discussions held in Bucharest on 23 October 2024. Vot Corect is a coalition of civic organisations involved in the field of democracy and human rights. Five organisations participated in the Vot Corect mission to observe the June 2024 elections and accredited over 800 observers who submitted reports on observations in over 1 000 polling stations.

47. Almost 20 000 polling stations were in operation throughout the country and 9 403 191 voters participated in the local elections (50.02%), including 206 996 voters registered on the supplementary voter lists.<sup>54</sup> The election day was generally perceived as calm and orderly, despite very long operating hours (from 8:00 until 22:00) and a heat wave but observers also reported some irregularities that could have affected the integrity of the process. Both the voting and counting processes were complicated by the high number of ballot papers and protocols to fill, as voters had four or five ballot papers to stamp.

##### 1. Overall assessment of the procedures

48. In the 932 polling stations observed by domestic observation coalition Vot Corect, the voting process was generally assessed as good, though 8% of premises were deemed unsuitable. Observers reported issues such as overcrowding or disorganisation (30%), tensions (11%) the presence of unauthorised individuals (6%), interference (5%, in particular the NGO Millennium for Human Rights) and inadequate election materials (in 5% of observations, e.g., missing ink pads). Errors and irregularities also included improper handling of ballot papers, such as issuing multiple papers of the same type or providing voters with more ballot papers than allowed. Despite these issues, the overall transparency of the process was rated good or very good in over 91% of polling stations observed by the domestic observers.<sup>55</sup> The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung reported cases of votes being solicited in exchange of goods and money and campaigning on election day carried out by text messages or posters, which the law expressly prohibits.<sup>56</sup> On election day, the Expert Forum set up a phone and online helpdesk for voters and observers, received over 400 complaints and inquiries related to electoral procedures.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Vot Corect, [Final Observation Report, Local and European Parliament Elections](#), 9 June 2024.

<sup>53</sup> Madalin Necsutu, [Romanian Election Body Refuses to Pay Far-Right Party's Campaign Expenses](#), Balkan Insight, 7 October 2024.

<sup>54</sup> The publication of results was carried out on the [PEA website](#) (in Romanian).

<sup>55</sup> Vot Corect, [Final Observation Report, Local and European Parliament Elections](#), 9 June 2024, p. 33

<sup>56</sup> Katja Christina Plate, [Romania has voted: Cementing the status quo](#), Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, June 2024.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

49. Vot Corect highlighted that 3% of polling stations failed to meet legal accessibility standards, with observers reporting that a quarter of visited stations (225 out of 917) were inaccessible to people with disabilities. Additionally, limited availability of information in accessible formats (Braille, easy to read, etc) posed challenges. The emergency ordinance had introduced positive measures, including allowing voters with reduced mobility to vote at accessible stations via supplementary lists, extending registration deadlines, enabling online registration for the mobile ballot box and collecting data on polling station accessibility. These changes however only applied to the June elections and interlocutors hoped to see these permanently regulated in the relevant legislation.

50. On election day, 1 578 potential violations or crimes related to the electoral process were reported. The Ministry of Internal Affairs initiated criminal cases for 391 incidents, including pre-filled ballots and voter bribery attempts. Of these possible offences, 13.9% referred to campaigning, 9.6% to vote fraud, 9.5% to photographing or filming the ballot, 6.5% to voter corruption, and 5.8% concerned situations of electoral tourism.<sup>58</sup> The Ministry of Internal Affairs established that the number of referrals was down by 3.2%, compared to the previous European Parliament and local elections.

## **2. Specific issues during counting, reconciliation of results and tabulation**

51. While the voting procedures generally proceeded in an orderly manner, most issues appeared during the counting phase. Congress interlocutors mentioned that counting procedures are traditionally more problematic in Romania and suffer from a lack of rigour and training. The simultaneous casting of multiple ballots (up to five per voter) made vote counting and tallying even more complex, leading to tensions and recount requests, particularly in Bucharest. The extended polling hours (closing at 22:00), the heat wave and the complexity of the various protocols contributed to staff fatigue and rushed procedures. Some confusion among voters and contestants was also reported to the rapporteurs on where the results should be centralised and who was responsible for what.

52. Although Vot Corect observers were only present to observe counting procedures in 285 polling stations, they noted significant procedural errors in almost 16% of these premises, which can be considered a high number.<sup>59</sup> In 24% of cases, chairpersons struggled to complete the protocols, while the prescribed order of procedures was not followed in 15% of cases. Additionally, in 21% of observed polling stations, the validity of disputed ballots was not decided by vote, and in nearly 24% of cases, individuals outside the commission participated in the counting process. Results were not correctly recorded in 5% of the cases. Some Congress interlocutors were concerned about other alleged anomalies, such as cases of pre-stamped and pre-marked ballots, missing votes (with more voters recorded than votes submitted) and the failure to safely seal ballot boxes when voting ended.<sup>60</sup> Other interlocutors minimised these anomalies dismissing them as inconsistencies and errors, due to fatigue of the electoral staff.

53. Regardless of the extent of these anomalies, it was clear that counting and tabulation were particularly tedious, lengthy and complicated for the merged June 2024 elections and showed a lack of preparedness and rigour. Interlocutors from NGOs feared that some of the issues could have been the result of a lack of training of the counting staff on the new protocols and reconciliation of results. Indeed, the rapporteurs were also informed that protocols differed substantially, resulting in confusion and tensions.

54. Tiredness of the staff was considered by all interlocutors as a key parameter explaining the issues in reconciling results, as counting stretched into the early hours of 10 June. Some electoral workers suffered from tiredness, having worked close to 40 hours without being able to take a break. Counting was suspended late on election night in more than half the country's 41 counties to allow election workers to take a break, after issues related to the transportation and handover of electoral materials to mid-level commissions as well as other problems were reported.<sup>61</sup> On the following day, the counting was suspended in 22 counties, as fatigue, the large volume of votes that remained to be submitted and

58 Ministry of Interior, [Press statement regarding the missions carried out by the structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the context of the European Parliament and local elections](#), 10 June 2024.

59 Vot Corect, [Final Observation Report, Local and European Parliament Elections](#), 9 June 2024, p. 39

60 The letter of complaint addressed to the Congress President alleged pre-stamped ballots in Bucharest, Râmnicu Sârat, Sacalaz and Bistra.

61 Vot Corect, *ibid*.



a heat wave affected the work of electoral workers.<sup>62</sup> The CEB President, Vasile Bicu and PEA President, Toni Greblă sent a circular regarding the suspension of the electoral process, specifying that it constituted an exceptional procedure, not foreseen by the legislation.<sup>63</sup>

55. This combination of issues led to severe delays in acceptance of bags containing ballot papers and validation of minutes by mid-level commissions and some polling stations were unable to hand in the protocols within the legal deadline of 24 hours. In some instances, citizens reported bags full of ballot papers left unsupervised and that some polling station chairpersons reportedly queued for hours under the sun and without water, notably in Bucharest.<sup>64</sup> Congress rapporteurs were also informed that some chairpersons decided to walk out, as they were promised stipends to wait in line but were later told they would not be paid. Handover of results in Romania usually continues until late in large municipalities, but prolonged opening hours (voters in line by closing time could be able to vote until 23:59) and the multiplication of protocols resulted in materials not being surrendered to the mid-level bureaus before late on the next day.

56. Tabulation and establishment of results for the June elections was contested in some districts, in particular in Sector I and II in Bucharest, as some political parties flagged differences between the protocols at polling stations and the protocols published online at different stages (provisional, partial, final).<sup>65</sup> Most issues centred around the use of the SIMVP, the electronic tool for election administration. Its use was increased by the emergency ordinance to encompass confirming voter identity, filming vote counting operations carried out by the members of the electoral bureaus, recording voting results, photographing result minutes, and verifying data correlations in the minutes.<sup>66</sup> Mid-level electoral bureaus therefore used the SIMPV to automatically totalise data from the protocols submitted by the individual polling station commissions. As the protocols were required to be signed by all members of the polling station bureaus, some members identified differences between what they had signed and what was reported on the website, alleging errors or fraudulent acts.<sup>67</sup>

57. The issue of the modification of protocols after transfers to mid-level commissions was regarded as the most controversial issue by most Congress interlocutors, as the situation led to perceptions of violations, tensions and calls for repeating elections. Many interlocutors pointed out the wide margin of appreciation of electoral bureaus on this matter and the lack of transparency of their work. Specifically, questions were raised on the role of each institution, how results were centralised and why and how changes could be made, questioning such a large discretionary power in democratic elections. Indeed, the SIMVP would not allow publication of the protocols, if discrepancies were noted between the numbers on the minutes and the electronically recorded number of votes. Some interlocutors alleged that the modifications brought to the protocols were fraudulent and were carried out in order to distort the will of voters.

58. Vot Corect observers stated that the results were not correctly recorded in 5% of the cases.<sup>68</sup> Political contestants also noted these discrepancies, in copies of the protocols. Some interlocutors claimed that changes to electoral commission composition for the June elections had favoured parliamentary parties and limiting political representation and scrutiny while potentially increasing their influence during vote counting. The REPER party also underlined cases of protocols without signatures or control stamps and protocols whose control keys did not close. The USR claimed that thousands of votes were nullified that, where minutes had been adjusted, the documents were stamped by the chairpersons of the county bureaus, indicating that changes had been made and questioning the margin of appreciation of bureaus to make these changes.

62 International IDEA (2024), "[Romania - European Union & Local Elections, 9 June 2024](#)".

63 Romania Journal, [PSD, PNL won local and EP elections. Tensions at polling stations](#), 12 June 2024.

64 Leonte C. "[Three days of chaos after the elections: Queues, bags on the sidewalks and accusations of voter fraud / 'I've never experienced anything like this'](#)", *G4 Media*, 12 June 2024 (in Romanian).

65 The publication of results was carried out on the [PEA website](#) (in Romanian).

66 PEA, "[Methodological rules of October 9, 2019](#) regarding the operation of the IT system for monitoring voter turnout and preventing illegal voting, the selection, designation and duties of computer operators of the electoral bureaus of the polling stations, the verification of correlations in the minutes recording the voting results, as well as the conditions for audio-video recording of operations performed by members of the electoral bureaus of the polling stations for counting votes", 9 October 2019 (in Romanian).

67 The Congress rapporteurs were shown some of these protocols by contestants and the election administration.

68 Vot Corect, [Final Observation Report, Local and European Parliament Elections](#), 9 June 2024.

59. Other Congress interlocutors recognised that minor corrections had been made and were allowed. The PEA stated that in such cases, the county bureaus identified the calculation or technical errors and published the corrected version online, after proceeding to correct it. Any changes to the protocols/minutes must therefore be approved by the county bureaus. The President of the PEA discarded the allegations of fraud and offered the following explanation: “Minutes with errors cannot be uploaded to the system because it refuses to register them if there are any inaccuracies. [...] About 25% of the wards appear with minor or major mistakes”.<sup>69</sup>

60. The centralisation of participation rates was also noted as lacking transparency. The Expert Forum compared the turnout data reported on the SIMPV with the turnout in each polling station, resulting from the protocols (partial data) and concluded that “turnout from the two sources differ[ed] in 7 324 polling stations, i.e. 38.64% of the total.”<sup>70</sup> The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung report drew attention to a village in the Olt district where voter turnout is said to have been 240%. They pointed out that this could be explained in part by the fact that voting in European elections is permitted in all polling stations regardless of a voter’s usual place of residence. However, this situation highlighted challenges related to voter registers when holding two separate elections on the same day. As of finalisation of the *Vot Corect* Report, such discrepancies had still not been clarified.

61. The PEA reported a decrease in the percentage of invalid votes for local elections compared to 2020. Invalid votes in mayoral elections decreased from 3.57% to 3.04%, and in local council elections from 4.81% to 3.71%. However, the European Parliamentary elections saw a high number of invalid votes, with 488 261 out of 9 440 962 votes declared invalid, accounting for 5.1% of the total, which is high.<sup>71</sup> Some interlocutors perceived that a wide margin of appreciation was also applied to the determination of invalidity of ballot papers, which could be more strictly regulated. Furthermore, it was considered possible that a number of ballots were not properly stamped by the election administration, leading to their nullification.

62. Overall, most interlocutors regretted the poor handling of counting procedures, which pointed to issues with training and planning, and the lack of proactive communication by the PEA and the CEB, to lift the confusion and raise awareness on official regulations and processes. By letting the situation fester, many diverging views and interpretations of the rules cohabited in the media and social media, which could reinforce perceptions that the process was politically manipulated. Many actors pointed out the overall lack of transparency of the election administration notably on “the acceptable margin of error”. Observers from *Vot Corect* noted ‘the reluctance of some constituency commissions to take the necessary steps to correct the protocols in the fairly frequent cases where they contained errors, including by recounting votes where appropriate’.<sup>72</sup> The rapporteurs were also informed that inconsistent decision-making, confusion, and the inability of the staff to address voters’ queries, underscored the need for specialised training on counting and tabulation processes.

63. The Congress rapporteurs could not verify allegations of fraud due to the absence of on-site observers but noted that the overall situation fostered mistrust in electoral processes. It was clear for the rapporteurs that the merger of European Parliament and local elections complicated the work of electoral bureaus and could have led to more severe consequences, but the situation was still assessed positively in most polling stations. While some violations may have been deliberate, the tiredness, lack of adequate training and complexity of procedures accounted for most of the preventable errors encountered in these stages. The rapporteurs also opined that, in a context of increased risks of foreign interference in European politics, holding two important elections on the same day could be avoided, as a way to better monitor and protect local electoral processes from large-scale malign operations.

### 3. Election observation

64. Election observation is a long-established tool for improving the integrity of electoral processes, deterring fraud and building public confidence in the electoral processes. In a positive development, the CEB acceded to a request to set up a (rare) meeting with civil society observers ahead of the vote. The

69 Ivanov C., ““The situation is unprecedented.” [How did we end up without final results on the third day after the elections? Explanations from associations that had hundreds of observers](#)”, Hot News, 12 June 2024.

70 Expert Forum, “[Differences in voter turnout reported in SIMPV and in the minutes of polling stations in the European Parliament elections](#)”, 16 June 2024 (in Romanian).

71 *Vot Corect*, [Final Observation Report, Local and European Parliament Elections](#), 9 June 2024.

72 *Vot Corect*, [Final Observation Report, Local and European Parliament Elections](#), 9 June 2024, p. 40.

PEA accredited 102 civil society organisations and 87 international observers (representing 28 organisations) to observe the 2024 European Parliament and local elections. Prior to the elections, the Expert Forum had sought changes to the procedures for appointing observers and requested to simplify the procedures for the accreditation of observers for the European Parliament elections. The Forum also asserted that observers should be able to freely observe all stages of the electoral process, including meetings of all electoral bureaus, preparatory activities, verification of support signatures, centralisation of results, etc.<sup>73</sup>

65. Indeed, while Romania is signatory to the Document of Copenhagen which enshrines the right to observe elections,<sup>74</sup> the status and treatment of election observers remains curtailed to the election day, despite critical steps of the process being conducted before and after election day. The legislation only allows observation at polling stations, therefore it was not possible for Vot Corect to organise systematic observation of the tabulation at mid-level electoral bureaus and the CEB. Some observers were criticised when they flagged discrepancies in published results and queues outside commissions in Bucharest.

66. Further controversy arose when statements by the President of the PEA urged that the electoral legislation should be revised to no longer allow the presence of candidates, observers and the press during the vote counting. This provoked a strong reaction from NGOs. In a joint statement, they asserted that “removing observers from polling stations may have a significant negative impact on the integrity of the electoral process and [called] on the President of the AEP to abandon any proposals for legislative changes that would affect the transparency of the electoral process”<sup>75</sup>. Later, the PEA clarified that it was not considering restricting the rights of observers.

## V. TURNOUT, RESULTS AND POST-ELECTION DAY DEVELOPMENTS

67. Turnout in the 2024 local elections amounted 50.02% of the electorate, a short but noteworthy increase in comparison to the 2020 elections (46%). One of the objectives of the merger of European Parliament and local elections was to increase turn-out in the European Parliament elections. This aim was achieved, and the rapporteurs considered that the increased voter turnout in the 2024 elections was a positive sign of political engagement at local level in Romania, as interest in local elections boosted participation.

68. Following the counting and tabulation, many requests for recounts were submitted to the CEB, but only one was successful. Most notably, in Sector I and Sector II of Bucharest, incumbent district mayors Clotilde Armand and Radu Mihail (USR), submitted complaints alleging that many votes had been annulled or shifted erroneously.<sup>76</sup> No ex-officio recount was carried out proactively by the election administration. In total, for the 2024 local elections, the CEB received 107 requests for the annulment of elections and 46 requests for correction of results (recounts, the allocation of seats or the reanalysis of data).<sup>77</sup> Many of these were appeals against decisions of county bureaus. Of the requests for annulment of the elections, 45 were rejected on procedural grounds (22 as inadmissible and 23 as late) and 61 on merit. The CEB rejected all these appeals except for the request to annul the elections in Costinești. In this municipality, votes were recounted six times in total as the difference between the two best-scoring candidates for mayor was only one vote.<sup>78</sup>

73 Expert Forum, “[We requested the Permanent Electoral Authority to modify the procedures for accrediting observers at the European Parliament elections](#)”, 5 February 2024 (in Romanian).

74 The OSCE/ODIHR long recommended opening the rights to observe all stages of the electoral cycle.

75 Expert Forum, “[Reducing transparency is NOT the solution to fixing flawed electoral processes](#)”, 13 June 2024.

76 Dumitrescu R. “[Suspensions of electoral fraud deepen in Romania as NGOs uncover 500,000 canceled votes](#)”, *Romania-Insider*, 14 June 2024 and Dumitrescu R. “[Local elections: Fraud allegations in two Bucharest districts, USR mayors ask for vote recount](#)”, *Romania-Insider*, 12 June 2024.

77 In the European Parliament elections, 45 requests for a recount were made by a range of parties and individuals but all requests were rejected by the CEB. Subsequently, REPER requested annulment of the CEB decisions by the Bucharest Court of Appeal. The decision of the Court of Appeal annulled six CEB decisions and obliged the CEB to settle the requests for recount of votes. The CEB appealed to the High Court of Cassation and Justice, which upheld the request, dismissing the action in its entirety, by a decision of 10 July 2024. Digi 24, “[Local elections 2024. BEC announced the final results](#)”, 10 July 2024 (in Romanian).

78 G4 Media, “[Voters in Costinești are expected to go to the polls again to elect their mayor / The local election on June 9 was canceled after the votes were counted 6 times](#)”, 6 July 2024 (in Romanian).

69. Decisions of mid-level electoral bureaus can be challenged in court, but the lack of clarity on deadlines and appeal procedures remains problematic and contrary to international standards.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, the 48-hour deadline for filing petitions for annulment or requests for recounts ran from the end of voting, *de facto* preventing voters or contestants to get proper redress as protocols were not always ready. Many Congress interlocutors criticised the unworkable time-limits for appeals and the rejection of appeals based on late filing. They considered that the provision of the law had limited to no efficiency to provide an effective remedy. They also strongly criticised the lack of specific legal provisions relating to recounts. Attention was drawn to the fact that because the electoral process ended in July with the final announcement of results and the electoral bureaux had already been disbanded, further complaints could not be made.

70. *Vot Corect* noted that bulk refusals to proceed to recounts despite the high number of requests reduced trust in the electoral process and increase perceptions of politically influenced decision making. The rapporteurs were also concerned that the overall lack of transparency and effective remedy would negatively affect the trust of voters in the results. Further transparency should be provided in such highly sensitive situations and mandatory recounts, attended by observers, could be considered to put allegations and disputes to rest. A proactive communication approach would also prevent confusion of voters, contestants and party representatives on minor corrections and the division of tasks between different bureaux.

71. Publication of results were delayed by several days in Sector I and II of Bucharest, and some other constituencies of Romania. On 18 June, results were not centralised in three constituencies for county presidents, four constituencies for county councils, three for mayors and seven for local councils. In two communes, a second round was held due to a tie between two candidates.<sup>80</sup> The refusal to accept the results by some parties receded after publication of the final results early July, but as noted during the fact-finding mission, the contested results reflected a strong lack of trust in the impartiality of the judiciary and the electoral administration by some actors and should be proactively addressed. The rapporteurs are well-aware that this situation unfolded less than six months before the 2024 presidential election, which was cancelled by decision of the Constitutional Court. While the assessment of this decision was still ongoing at the time of preparation of this report, the multiplication of important challenges related to the integrity of the elections continue to undermine trust in electoral processes.

72. Following the publication of results, it became clear that the two ruling parties, PSD and PNL, had won most mandates in the four local elections. Out of the 3 186 mayoral seats elected with simple majority, the PSD and the PNL won respectively 1 677 and 1 132 seats, plus 29 as a political alliance, the Democratic Union of the Hungarians in Romania (DUHR) won 200 seats, the AUR 30 and the USR-led alliance 28. 43 independents were elected. For local councils, the PSD obtained 32.5% of the votes, followed by PNL with 26.1% (and their common alliance 4.9%), the AUR 9.53%, the USR-led alliance 6.7%. The dominance of PSD and PNL was also reflected at county level.<sup>81</sup>

73. The city council of Bucharest stands out in this political landscape with the USR and PSD reaching both around 27%, the PNL 12.6%, the Social liberal and humanist party 9.4%, the AUR 8.2% and the European project party 7% and the party SOS Romania 4.1%. The mayor of Bucharest, Dan Nicusor-Daniel, the former leader of USR running as an independent, was re-elected with 47.9% of the votes.

74. The representation of women did not significantly increase following the 2024 local elections and Romania remains one of the EU countries with the smallest proportion of women in local politics. Out of a total of 3 186 mayors elected, only 214 are women (7%). In most counties, less than 10% of elected

79 The Venice Commission Code of Good Practice on Electoral Matters notes that time limits must be long enough to make an appeal possible, to guarantee the exercise of rights of defence and a reflected decision. Another source of potential confusion is Art 103 2) j of Law 115/2015, which states that the decisions rendered by the constituency electoral bureaux are final.

80 Digi 24, "[Elections 2024. BEC prolongs the suspense regarding the final results of the local elections. What is the reason?](#)", 10 July 2024 (in Romanian).

81 For the 41 county presidents, the PSD obtained 35.6% of the votes (24 seats), followed by PNL with 29.2% (11 seats; and their common alliance 3.3%, 2 seats), the AUR 9.68% (0 seat), the USR-led alliance 9.7% (0 seat), and the DUHR 6% (4 seats). For the county councils, the PSD obtained 33.5% of the votes, followed by PNL with 27.6% (and their common alliance 3.3%), the AUR 10.7%, the USR-led alliance 8.3%, the DUHR 6.4% and the party SOS Romania 2.9%. Digi 24, "[Local elections 2024. BEC announced the final results](#)", 10 July 2024 (in Romanian).

representatives are women and only one county president is a woman (Bacau County).<sup>82</sup> *Vot Corect* deplored that once again women generally occupied non-eligible positions on the lists. The Congress rapporteurs regretted that no measure was considered to improve the participation of women as mayors or to introduce more specific placement or quota systems.

## VI. CONCLUSION

75. On 2 July 2024, the Congress Monitoring Committee decided to carry out a fact-finding mission to Bucharest following a letter of complaint alleging irregularities during the June 2024 elections, which it had not been invited to observe. Based on observations by domestic observers and findings from the mission held in Bucharest on 24 October 2024, the Congress rapporteurs found that the legal framework, while complex and fragmented, was conducive to holding democratic elections at local and regional levels.

76. However, the rapporteurs reaffirmed the importance of electoral stability and noted that the last-minute adoption of an emergency ordinance to hold local and European Parliament elections simultaneously was a key matter of preoccupation and resulted in legal uncertainties and difficulties in the implementation of the new provisions. In their view, the very decision to resort to an emergency ordinance could have been avoided since it had long been foreseen that four election would be held in 2024. They believe that adopting an emergency ordinance at such short notice could only undermine legislative quality and certainty and weaken external oversight of the Government - all without requiring authorities to clearly justify what constituted an emergency. The rapporteurs reiterate that the use of emergency ordinances should remain exceptional and not used as a tool to legislate in a rushed manner, especially in a context where the 2024 electoral calendar was well known in advance as they already pointed out above and in line with the opinion of the Venice Commission on this matter.

77. Despite these challenges, the rapporteurs noted that the elections were generally organised in an orderly and transparent manner, to the exception of counting and reconciliation of results. Election bureaus handled most technical and procedural challenges efficiently. Additionally, measures to regulate campaign financing improved transparency and oversight, requiring public disclosure of expenditures and providing a reimbursement system for electoral expenses. While marked by polarisation, media bias, and cases of early campaigning, the campaign was competitive and mainly focused on local issues. The increased turnout in the June 2024 elections was a positive sign of political engagement at local level in Romania.

78. Nevertheless, while it is common in EU member States to hold two elections on the same day, in Romania, the late decision to do so created some unpreparedness, excessive workloads for polling staff, and procedural errors, particularly during counting and tabulation. The election administration benefitted from a large margin of appreciation on the establishment of results, determination of invalidity of a ballot paper and potential irregularities. Key election decisions lacked transparency, most notably on requests for recounts and appeals, which were almost all denied. At the same time, due to the delay in the handover of materials at county bureaus, cases of electoral disputes suffered from unrealistic deadlines.

79. To address these issues, the Congress recommends refraining from making substantial changes to the legal framework shortly before the elections and resorting to emergency ordinances to tackle politically sensitive subjects, as well as developing a simplified and unified Electoral Code following open consultations. It recommends measures to improve transparency, including clear counting and reconciliation procedures, improved training of election officials and increased publicity of the work of the election administration. In view to provide a more even playing field, it also encouraged the authorities to strengthen the oversight of the campaign and notably on early campaigning, media coverage and the use of social media.

80. The Congress rapporteurs emphasised that strengthening the democratic process at subnational level in Romania requires additional efforts to enhance inclusivity as well as to build public trust, as disillusionment with elections was increased by recent electoral events in Romania. Promoting the

---

<sup>82</sup> Only six women won a seat in the European Parliament elections, representing 18.18% of the total seats. European Parliament, [Members for Romania](#) (consulted in January 2025).



participation of women and youth as candidates, as well as broadening the rights of election observers to observe all stages of the process could constitute key steps to reinforce local democracy.

81. Last but not least, the rapporteurs would also like to encourage the authorities of Romania to invite the Congress to observe local and regional elections in the future, in line with the circular letter addressed by the Congress on 18 September 2024 to all member States Permanent Representations to encourage national authorities to systematically invite the Congress to observe local and regional elections.

## APPENDIX

**FACT-FINDING MISSION**  
**Further to the local elections in Romania held on 9 June 2024**  
**23 October 2024, Romania**  
**FINAL PROGRAMME**

**Tuesday 22 October 2024**

Various times      **Arrival of the Congress Delegation in Bucharest**

Various times      **Transfers to the Hotel in Bucharest**  
 (Address: Grand Hotel Europe, bld. Nicolae Bălcescu nr. 4, sector 1, Bucharest, Romania)

**Wednesday 23 October 2024**

**Venue for the morning meetings  
(until 12:00 and after 15.15)**

Grand Hotel Bucharest  
 (Meeting Room Coralle)  
 bld. Nicolae Bălcescu nr. 4, sector 1,  
 Bucharest

**Consecutive Interpretation (EN/RO)**

**Ms Lidia HARTZ**  
**Ms Natalia POLIKARPOV**  
**Ms Flavia IDRICEANU**

**Driver**  
**Mr Mihai CONDEA**

08:45 – 09:20      Meeting with **Mr Emilian OPREA**, Deputy-Head of the Delegation and members of the Delegation of Romania to the Congress

09:30 – 10:30      Meeting with **Mr Iulian BULAI**, author of the letter addressed to the Congress President on 13 June 2024 and representatives of Union Save Romania running in the elections in Bucharest, incumbent mayors of Bucharest, **Mr Radu MIHAIU** and Sector I, **Ms Clotilde ARMAND**

10:45 – 12:00      Briefing with representatives of NGOs

- **Mr Septimius PARVU and Ms Cezara GRAMA**, Expert Forum of Romania (EFOR), representing VotCorrect, Coalition of domestic election observers
- **Ms Liana GANEA**, President, Active Watch
- **Geeks for Democracy** *Phone number +40 723 306 308*
- **Ms Carmen POPA**, member of the Board of Directors, Transparency International
- **Ms Alice POP**, Resident Country Director, National Democratic Institute (NDI)

*Lunch break*

13:30 – 14:15      Meeting with **Mr Toni GREBLĂ**, President of the Permanent Electoral Authority

14: 30– 15:15      Meeting with **Ms Liana Nicoleta ARSENIE**, President of the Bucharest Court of Appeal

15:45 – 16:30      Meeting with **Mr Vasile BICU**, President of the Central Electoral Bureau for the 2024 local elections



- 16:40 – 17:15 Meeting with **Mr Lucian ROMAȘCANU**, elected President of the Buzău County Council and **Mr Rareș HOPINĂ**, elected Mayor of Sector 2 – Bucharest, (Social Democratic Party)
- 17:20 – 18:00 Briefing with representatives of political parties of Sector I and II of Bucharest (National Liberal Party)

<b>Thursday 24 October 2024</b>
---------------------------------

- 10:30 – 11:00 Departure for the airport

<b>Delegation</b>
-------------------

**Congress members**

**Ms Randi MONDORF**, Denmark, (R, ILDG)  
**Mr Jorge SEQUEIRA**, Portugal, (L, SOC/G/PD)

**Expert**

**Ms Brid QUINN**, Expert on electoral matters

**Congress Secretariat**

**Ms Stéphanie POIREL**, Head of Protecting Local Democracy Department