EXPERT FORUM
ANNUAL REPORT 2014

WHO WE ARE

WE ARE A BUCHAREST BASED THINK TANK, SET UP BY FOUR WELL-KNOWN EXPERTS IN PUBLIC POLICY AND PUBLIC GOVERNANCE REFORM.

The policy sectors we focus on are: administration reform and public sector integrity; decentralization, regional development, public finance; justice and anticorruption reform; social policy and pensions; energy and transport; healthcare; elections.

Our experts have been involved in the most important evaluations of institutional reforms in the public administration and have analysed the policy process in recent years in Romania and neighbouring countries (particularly in the Western Balkans and Moldova), in collaboration with the **European Commission**, **Council of Europe**, **World Bank** and **United Nations Development Programme**.

Ever since Expert Forum was established, one of our most important goals was to form powerful partnerships with the business community. Together with businesses, we aim to fight for a cleaner and more responsible government, transparency in public budgets and a more open and predictable policy process. This is being done by monitoring various public sectors and organizing public debates together with various business associations.
The organization works with private businesses or business associations in order to carry out policy analysis regarding taxation and public budgets, public healthcare, pensions, energy policy and taxation etc.

Moreover, we received support from international donors, given that out organization is working intensely in transparency promotion and good governance in Romania and in the region (Croatia, Serbia, Moldova, and from 2013 also Bulgaria, as well as in monitoring the proper and transparent use of public budgets. We have obtained the **US Embassy**'s support for justice reform in Romania and the **UK Embassy**'s support for the energy sector reform. Also, the **UK Embassy in Zagreb** has contracted us for technical assistance to implement anti-corruption policies in Croatia, based on lessons learned from the anti-corruption fight in Romania and Bulgaria and also from the European Commission monitoring practices.

We are part of the **Open Government Partnership** (http://www.opengovpartnership.org/) initiative to assist governments in enhancing transparency concerning information and public decisions. Our experts are frequently asked by the Government to participate in working groups for strategies and legal drafts. At the EU level, the president of EFOR, Sorin Ioniță is member of the **European Economic and Social Committee**, whereas Laura Ștefan, anti-corruption expert, is member of the commission composed of 17 experts that monitors EU member states on anti-corruption policies and transparency.

Our experts have media appearances at least twice a week on issues of public policy.

OUR EXPERTS AND TEAM

SORIN IONIȚĂ

PRESIDENT, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM, DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL AFFAIRS

Sorin is a consultant with the **Council of Europe**, **World Bank** and **UNDP on Eastern Europe and the Balkans**; representative of Romania in the **European Economic and Social Committee** (**EESC**) in the sections of Transport-Energy and Environment-Agriculture; and associate lecturer at the **Maastrict School of Management** (**MSM**). He graduated from the **Bucharest Polytechnic Institute** (**IPB**); Bucharest University. Sorin has a Masters degree from the **Central European University** (**CEU**), Budapest and is a former Fulbright fellow at **Georgetown University**, Washington DC.

LAURA ȘTEFAN

ANTICORRUPTION AND RULE OF LAW

Laura is former director in the **Romanian Ministry of Justice**, international expert on the rule of law and anticorruption, working with the **European Commission** and the **Council of Europe**. Laura Ștefan graduated from the **Bucharest School of Law** and holds a Master's degree from **Cambridge University**.

OTILIA NUȚU

ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE, STATE-OWNED COMPANIES, REGULATORS

Otilia works as a consultant for the **World Bank** on public administration reform. She also provides consultancy in the private sector for investors concerning policies and regulations in energy and transport. Otilia analyzes EU-financed programs in energy and transport. She graduated Finance and Banking – BA at the **Academy of Economic Sciences** (Bucharest) and holds a Master's Degree in Public Policy at the **Central European Univesity** (Budapest).

SEPTIMIUS PÂRVU

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND ELECTIONS

Septimius coordinates programs aiming at developing active citizenship skills and involving citizens in the public decision-making process; he coordinated multiple electoral monitoring campaigns in Romania and assisted NGOs in the region. Septimius holds a degree in Political Science from the **University of Bucharest**.

SUZANA DOBRE

PROJECT ACTIVITY COORDINATOR

Suzana is a founding member and executive director of Expert Forum. Between 2004-2011, she was the executive director of Societatea Academică din România and expert on public policies: transparency of the public institutions, property restitution and social policy. She authored and co-authored several reports on public policy in Romania and offered consultant work for international institutions such as **World Bank**, **European Commission**, **European Parliament** and other companies or nongovernmental organizations. Suzana Dobre participated in working groups to debate strategies and legal proposals of the Romanian Government. Since 2004 she holds a Master degree in European Social Policy from **London School of Economics**.

NICOLETA POPESCU

FINANCIAL MANAGER

Nicoleta holds a degree in Marketing from the **University of Economic Studies** in Bucharest. She has more than 10 years of experience in an external commerce company and a three years in public procurement and logistics. Since 2014 she is a financial manager, even since Nicoleta replaced Alina Antonescu, our former Financial Manager.

CEZARA GRAMA

PROJECT ASSISTANT

Cezara graduated the Law School of **University of Bucharest** in 2013 and also holds a LLM degree in Public International Law. She graduated the **Leaders for Justice Program** (funded by Konrad Adenauer Foundation) and has broad experience in working with NGOs by having volunteered in several projects. Currently, Cezara works as project assistant on the rule of law and anticorruption projects.

RĂZVAN OȚELEA

PROJECT ASSISTANT

Răzvan is responsible for organizing events, as well as managing databases and interpreting data. He was project assistant for the project **Te fură la factură**.

RULE OF LAW

GOOD GOVERNANCE COMMUNITY: THINK TANK OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

April 2014 – August 2015 ONG Fund in Romania **94,066.07 EUR**

WHAT WE AIMED FOR

In Romania, there are very few relevant, independent and freely available analyses of public policies. Despite some donor consultancies, most authorities' decisions are ad hoc. However, substantial public policy analysis does exist, but given that it is drafted by the three or four specialised Romanian think thanks, including EFOR, they tend to be focused on policy areas that the organizations consider relevant or which they are experienced in. Therefore, we aim to consult our stakeholders and only then decide what are the topics to be addressed in our analysis. Consequently, we aim to develop tools that will help us "translate" our activities in a less formal and straight forwards language, so that it will be easier to generate public) debates on these topics.

HOW WE DID IT

The first step was to establish four priority areas of policy (apart from energy and clientelism) on which we can collaborate with our partners and stakeholders. Therefore, we organized two sessions with more than 60 stakeholders where we identified our subject areas: elections, fiscal matters, fiscal evasion and social policies/pensions.

Taking into considerations these policy areas, we published two annual reports and four policy briefs (about pensions in 2040, political clientelism regarding the budgets, the Electoral Code and e-voting in Romania).

We monitored the Presidential elections in November and offered juridical assistance to voters (together with **Funky Citizens** and **Centre for Civic Resources**) and took part of the electoral reform process. We organized informal meetings with more than 100 young activists and also organized two labyrinth theatre sessions for 50 people in Bucharest, in order to explain to them what the rule of law is. In August 2015 we organized the School for Democracy, with 21 young leaders from Romania and the Republic of Moldova, where we debated clientelism, energy policies, elections, rule of law etc.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

All these activities are meant to create a community that will collaborate with us in order to debate, monitor and eventually create public policy. Our general purpose is to reinforce good governance and promote the rule of law. We have been present in the media with all the above mentioned topics and this way we managed to reach hundreds of thousands of people. Moreover, we are proud to claim that we have

consolidated our electoral expertise and subsequently we will monitor the elections in the following years by using our own observers. One of the main successes in the electoral area was the amendment of the Law of Political Parties (as part of **Politică fără Bariere** campaign). To serve as evidence of our work, we published a report with all of our activities, figures, statistics and results, available here: www.expert-forum.ro/povestea-unui-proiect (RO only).

LINKS

RO: http://expertforum.ro/think-tank

EN: http://expertforum.ro/en/active-citizenship-a-powerful-instrument-for-consolidating-rule-of-law

SCHOOL FOR DEMOCRACY 2014

22nd-28th of August 2014 Embassy of the United States of America in Republic of Moldova and the Embassy of Canada in Bucharest, with the participation of the British Council **23,550.95 USD/2000 CAD**

WHAT WE AIMED FOR

The School for Democracy is an annual program that promotes civic activism and aims to raise awareness regarding human rights. **The aim of the project in 2014** was to stimulate active citizenship by promoting the concepts of the rule of law, good governance and active citizenship for young Romanian and Moldovan students.

HOW WE DID IT

The School was divided into two sections, a theoretical one and a practical one. This way, the participants had the opportunity to also put into practice the acquired skills. EFOR together with its partners supported the participants to planning and implementing their projects and also to spread the new information in their communities.

During 22-28 August 2014, we brought together 21 future leaders in Bran in order to talk about democracy and the rule of law, elections, public participation, fighting against populism and public policy issues. The general aim was to help them understand how the governance process works. Our trainers are either leaders in their areas of expertise or highly experienced professionals, such as **Laura Ștefan** (anticorruption expert, EFOR), **Sorin Ioniță** (administrative reform expert, EFOR), **Cristi Dănileț** (judge, CSM) or **Sever Voinescu** (politician).

Another significant feature of the School, apart from the high quality speakers, was its interactive character, applying the learning-by-doing concept. We organized a sensorial labyrinth theatre on the 23rd August (former communist National Day) in order to understand the need to fight bad governance and totalitarian behaviours. For this, we worked with more than 10 volunteers.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

One of our purposes was to replicate the information accumulated during the School and support the participants to implement their own activist projects. Our graduates put into practice three projects: we developed a juridical section on our website in order to explain citizens' rights, a second session of the labyrinth theatre and an electoral simulation in Cahul (Republic of Moldova). Moreover, we continued to collaborate for other projects managed by EFOR. The School

continues in 2015 with an edition dedicated to history and civic education teachers.

LINKS

RO: http://expertforum.ro/scoala-pentru-democratie-2014/ **EN:** http://expertforum.ro/en/school-for-democracy-2014/

POPULISM IS NOT DESTINY: THE POPULIST CAPTURE OF DEMOCRATIC MECHANISMS – AND A REMEDY

December 2013 - June 2014 Foundation Open Society Institute **45,000 USD**

WHAT WE AIMED FOR

By means of this project, we aimed to fight against issues related to populism from two main areas: the rule of law and energy. We planned to reach the citizens and explain to them why is is important to combat this kind of behaviour.

HOW WE DID IT

We worked with local opinion leaders and young people from high schools and universities. We aimed to debate around the rule of law and exemption of the corrupt: "*majority against constitutionalism*" and natural resources, energy and economic populism: "*democracy against sound economy*".

WE ORGANIZED FOUR LOCAL DEBATES

SIBIEL (May 9th): combating populism in the media and the general public regarding the investigations in high profile corruption cases
BUCHAREST (May 15th): in partnership with Greenpeace Romania, on the subject of energy (renewables)
CLUJ (May 29th) on European and national energy strategy in the context of the Ukrainian crisis
ARAD (June 6th): on the subject of funds allocations for local communities (rule of law) and how interference with such rules fuels clientelism and perverts local politics

Three more debates were organized in the second part of the project on the topic of anti-populism in **energy**, as deliberative polls: Timișoara (Nov. 29th), Iași (Dec. 6th) and Cluj (Dec. 12th) and four on rule of law and anti-populism: Constanța (Oct. 14th) to debate the unrealistic expectations which may arise as a consequence to new amendments to the **Criminal Code** and the **European directive for the extensive confiscation of assets derived from crimes**, Craiova (Nov. 5th), Timișoara (Nov. 20th), Bucharest (Dec 9th). The debates where organized in partnership with **Rule of Law Program South East Europe**, **Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung**.

EFOR reacted quickly through an information campaign combating the populist instincts of the local public by showing that everything is only a large zero-sum-game, strengthening clientelism and misallocation of funds. We did it both before **Ordinance 55/2014** became effective and after, when we were the only ones documenting and analysing how each mayor migrated. We created a simple visual map to show what happened, comparing the situations before-after, since we put it online in Jan 2015: (http://expertforum.ro/primari-migratori)

Most of these topics were summarized and included in **EFOR's annual report 2015** (http://expertforum.ro/en/efor-annual-report-political-errors-from-2014-what-is-to-be-done), which was launched on Jan 28th 2015 in our annual conference. Apart from the consultations, we delivered two policy briefs (http://expertforum.ro/polonezii and http://expertforum.ro/confiscarea) and three animation movies summarizing specific problems.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

Thanks to the way this project took place, as well as previous activity, EFOR has set the stage for structured debates to combat populism in the key policy areas selected. This way, EFOR has become known as a source of expert and balanced opinions. Our events have benefited from extensive media coverage. Our key experts are regularly invited in talk shows and news programs to comment on the developments in the areas such as the rule of law and energy policies. This works as a way of spreading our anti-populist message.

FIGHTING PUBLIC PROCUREMENT CRIMINALITY. AN OPERATIONAL APPROACH

January 2013 – March 2015 Co-financed by the European Commission – DG Home Affairs, the Embassy of the Netherlands in Romania and the Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Romania
474.620 EUR

An **Operational Approach** project was created in the context of the latest MCV report on Romania that condemns the stagnation in the reform process of the public procurement domain, given that the European Commission renders the weaknesses in the area as "*an important source of corruption*".

WHAT WE AIMED FOR

EFOR was a partner of **Freedom House** in the development of the project, together with numerous institutions (such as the **Ministry of Justice**, the **Superior Council of Magistracy**, **National Association of Specialists in Procurement**, the **Criminal and Pardons Division of the Ministry of Justice**, the **French National Authority for Regulating and Monitoring Public Procurement** etc.).

The project aims to increase the institutional capacity and collaboration tools in this area for Romanian partners, but also to generate good practice examples for other countries in the region. In addition, it will meet the need to provide appropriate training to magistrates and officers, a priority of the **National Anticorruption Strategy**.

HOW WE DID IT

The project started in 2013 with an opening conference and 6 seminar. The series of seminar started in 2013 and continued in 2014, with 8 seminars in the following cities: Zalău, Sălaj (22nd-24th of January 2014); Târgu-Mureș (19th-21st of February 2014); Băile Felix (jud. Bihor) (12th-14th of March 2014) and Timișoara (2nd-4th of April 2014).

All the activities developed in this project resulted in the creation of an **Operational Guide**, available both in printed format and online regarding the prevention of crime in public procurement, an indispensable tool now available for Romanian practitioners. The online version of the guide is an interactive e-tool, designed to best replicate the seminar experience. The guide is available at http://ghidachizitii.lfwd.io/#book/ch00-00.

Ultimately, on the 27th of March 2015 the closing conference took place. The **Operational Guide** was launched with this occasion, among discussions with speakers from all 17 project partners.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

In numbers, the success of the project during the 15 seminars, is measured by the 396 magistrates and police officers having been trained:

- 138 Romanian judges and 6 judges from the Republic of Moldova,
- 58 prosecutors from prosecution offices near the tribunals and courts of appeal,
- 41 prosecutors, police officers and experts of the National Anticorruption Directorate,
- 153 police officers from the Economic Crimes Investigation Direction of IGPR,
- 230 other participants from various institutions were also present.

Most importantly, 2014 saw the launch of the platform **Public Procurement Dossiers**, conducted by Freedom House Romania and Hotnews.ro agency. The Section hosted by **Hotnews.ro** aims to provide the public not only with an online platform that offers a more transparent procurement process by monitoring how public contracts are awarded in Romania, but to also provide the current status of the public procurement cases under investigation.

SUPPORTING THE CONFISCATION AND RECOVERY OF PROCEEDS OF CRIME IN ROMANIA

April 2013 - May 2015 European Commission, DG Home Affairs, the Embassy of the Netherlands in Romania and the Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Romania (EFOR is partner in the project); project coordinator: Freedom House **49,710 EUR**

WHAT WE AIMED FOR

Although introduced in 2012, extended confiscation is still insufficiently applied. The procedure involves confiscation of the proceeds from criminal activities without having to prove the link between crime and the confiscated property. Thus, in the context of deficiencies related to the procedures of national implementation mechanisms, this initiative follows a process of information, training and qualification of judicial practitioners and the police.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES WERE:

2 Conferences (Opening & Closing); 4 Seminars; 2 Debates; 1 Project Bulletin.

OBJECTIVES

• the promotion of the topic of extended confiscation and recovery of proceeds of crime both within the institutional framework and at the level of the civil society, and raising awareness on the subject within Romanian media;
• increasing the knowledge of the police services and judicial practitioners on legal issues related to the field of confiscation and recovery of assets;
• the identification of best practices in the Community regarding extended confiscation and the dissemination among Romanian judges, prosecutors

and police officers;
• promoting the development of new systems and procedures that facilitate the acquisition and exchange of financial information for the monitoring of goods; the involvement of the Romanian civil society in the prevention and fight against economic and financial crime.

WHAT WE DID

In 2014, 2 training sessions have been organized. The first one, entitled Supporting the extended confiscation, took place in the Maramureș county, on 22nd-24th of February 2014 and was moderated by the anticorruption expert **Laura Ștefan** (EFOR). It involved the participation of 9 criminal law judges, 5 prosecutors and 5 operative officers. The second seminar focused on the constitutional aspects of extended confiscation and was hosted by the city of Timișoara, during 9th-11th of April 2014. The participation of the Constitutional Court Judge **Tudorel Toader** ensured the spread of first hand legal experience with the participants.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

The project, overall, accomplished the training of 80 magistrates and operational officers from national authorities in 72 training hours: 40 Superior Council of Magistracy criminal law judges, 20 GP prosecutors and 20 DIF law enforcers. Moreover, it organized 2 international conferences, 4 international training sessions and 2 national debates, with a total of 231 participants in legal practitioners, police officers, magistrates etc.

But, most importantly, it laid the ground for discussions regarding the creation of a separate entity for the administration of seized and confiscated in Romania, an **Asset Recovery Office**, in 2015. At the moment, the legislation for creating this entity is in public debate.

CONSOLIDATING RULE OF LAW THROUGH ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

September – December 2014 Rule of Law Program South East Europe, Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung **8,000 EUR**
Partners: Liderjust

WHAT WE AIM FOR

In order to respond to the current challenges to the rule of law in Romania and other EU countries, we decided to take a stance and bring the debate closer to students, teachers, lawyers etc. We believe that active citizenship is the key to promoting healthy initiatives and to preventing transgressions of the government.

Therefore, we intended to offer the young people with a better understanding, specifically to the ones who work in the judiciary or in adjacent branches – on the main concepts on which the rule of law functions. We focused on explaining to them that the rule of law represents the very foundation for any future developments and on showing them how the situation would be without a functioning rule of law and which the main risks for derailment are.

HOW WE DID IT

We organized a series of five conferences across the country, under the title **Strengthening the Rule of Law** within a space of change, covering topics from democratic principles, the rule of law, separation of powers to mechanisms designed to create and strengthen institutional balance. More than 500 students and jurists debated these topics together with professionals and magistrates. The end of the project was marked by a debate on electoral rights, in the context of the recent abuses during the Presidential elections in November 2014.

The organized the debates in major university cities, in collaboration with law or political science faculties and local Liderjust members:
Iași – 2nd October
Constanța – 14th October
Timișoara – 22nd October
Craiova – 5th November
Cluj Napoca – 13th November
București – 9th December (Anticorruption Day)

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

The most important result of the debates lies in the fact that we brought together Law and Political Science students and Romanian heads of courts such as **Laura Andrei** (Bucharest Tribunal), **Cristi Dănileț** (Superior Magistracy Council) and **Daniel Morar** or **Tudorel Toader** (Constitutional Court). Therefore we managed to discuss about dilemmas and realities that are rarely taught in universities. By this, we aimed to develop critical thinking for a critical mass of students that in the future will shape the justice system.

CROSS-COUNTRY LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUPPRESSION OF FRAUD IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

November 2013 – May 2014 European Commission, OLAF - European Anti-Fraud Office **29,831 EUR**
Partners: Partnership for Social Development

WHAT WE AIMED FOR

The project was designed to debate and provide solutions for frauds in the procurement system and also to exchange experience between Romania and Croatia. Starting with the newly designed Procurement European Directives and the need for an intra-EU cooperation related to this field, EFOR and Partnership for Social Development Croatia collaborated, analysed, proposed and promoted integrity mechanisms.

The project also aimed to promote the Croatian best practice database, www.integrityobservers.eu, which allows interested stakeholders to monitor the public procurement procedures in an efficient manner. Therefore, we met with local authorities in order to promote this idea and to create a new procurement on-line mechanism that would solve the problems generated by the current one. Thus, the public procurement legal and institutional system in Romania is to be synchronized with the practical expertise from Croatia, starting from the EU procurement directives and methodology developed by the PSD.

HOW WE DID IT

We organised several conferences that brought together experts from national state institutions, civil society representatives and independent specialists in order to discuss about the issues and solutions in the Romanian, Croatian and European procurement environment.

A conference in Brussels (http://expertforum.ro/en/anti-fraud-measures/) and a duplex interactive workshop in Bucharest and Zagreb.

• A debate in Bucharest on 14th January that resulted in the publication of an assessment report: **Assessing the efficiency, integrity, and transparency of the Romanian public procurement system**

• On March 28th we organized the videoconference **Anti-fraud measures on public procurement in the EU Single Market: legislative, institutional and technical solutions** (http://expertforum.ro/en/anti-fraud-measures-2/) about the opportunities to combat fraud and corruption by means of the new Procurement Directives, the legal framework in Romania and the difficulties encountered in the process of adapting to new regulations.

• Two months later, the conference **Challenges and solutions for the improvement of the legal and institutional framework of public procurement in Romania** brought together heads of public institutions specialised in public procurement monitoring, control and public integrity, NGOs, embassies and the media. The talks resulted in a 2nd report available on the EFOR website.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

A series of legal and institutional recommendations focused on Romania have been released starting from the Croatian experience and the existing European norms. We have also put on the public agenda the topic of the new Procurement EU Directives and the need for a more integrated, functional and transparent procurement system.

LINK

RO: http://expertforum.ro/retea-transnationala-pentru-combaterea-fraudelor-din-achizitiile-publice/ **EN:** http://expertforum.ro/en/transnational-network/

ENERGY

YOUR ENERGY BILL

April 2014 – September 2015 EEA Grants, NGO Fund **90.440 Euros**

WHAT WE AIMED FOR

The liberalization of energy prices without social protection will have a major social impact. The project aims to communicate directly with a large number of affected consumers and taxpayers, the options for a better social protection for vulnerable groups. We demand publicly that subsidies now granted to large industrial consumers, many having preferential relations with the state, to be directed to households, making liberalization affordable. Misinformed, nowadays, the payers actually support the businesses of the wealthiest businessmen by subsidies disguised in low energy prices. We provide beneficiaries with easy-to-understanding and correct information by a well-mediatized petition, the public opinion will put pressure for adequate social policy.

HOW WE DID IT

By means of this project, EFOR attempted to:

1) show the public and the regular consumers what are the benefits of liberalization and how they can exercise their rights

2) fight against populism and against the postponing the liberalization under the false pretext of unbearable rising prices (which would, in reality, benefit privileged actors and companies which have special relations with the state and which are also often involved in corruption scandals).

Within the project, we elaborated an initial report, five local debates (three in 2014) and we initiated a raising awareness campaign, using flyers in the form of energy bills, indicating the hidden real costs for the regular consumer of the postponing of market liberalization. You can find the campaign here: http://expertforum.ro/tefuralafactura/.

During 2015, we organized the first debate regarding gas market liberalization and mailed the "*bills*" to 700.000 families from three cities and a neighborhood in Bucharest. A petition was also sent along with the "*bills*", requesting the Government to stop funding the "*smart guys*". The project will finalize in 2015 with a report regarding the liberalization of electric energy and natural gases markets. This way, we will answer the questions we have received from the citizens during the local elections.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

More than 35,000 people online and 700,000 de citizens from 4 cities are estimated to be informed about the costs and subventions for energy. At least 4,000 people are expected to sign the petition in support of the proposed amendments.

LINK

RO: http://expertforum.ro/tefuralafactura

CITIZEN'S WATCH ON ENERGY IN ROMANIA

WHAT WE AIM FOR

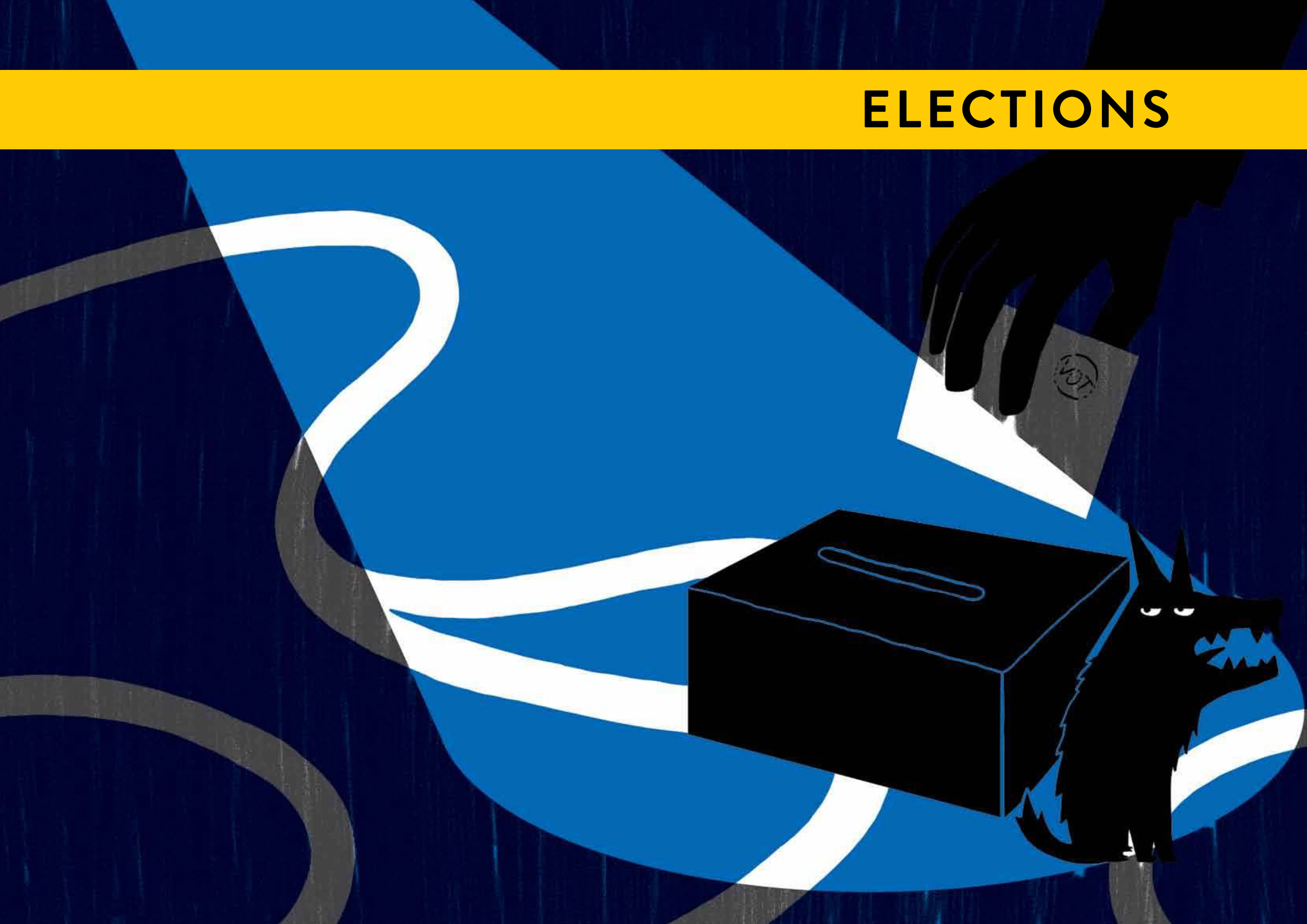
The main scope of this project was to constantly monitor the energy sector, its well-functioning and the governance of the energy regulator. From the monitoring process emerged a series of articles and policy briefs. In order to conduct an evaluation of the regulator, we used a standardized evaluation grid. The grid was formulated in 2010, with the aim of putting constant pressure on the ANRE regulator in order for it to improve its performance. The ANRE evaluation for 2013-2014 was eventually published in the EFOR 2015 annual rapport. We have also had an initial conversation with a partner Croatian NGO on matters of energy. The aim of the project was to identify partners from the civil society at the local level (3-4 cities) in order to put pressure on the authorities (Ministry, regulator) as a consequence of the public opinion.

HOW WE DID IT

This was done in order to continue the reform in the energy sector. The debates took place in November and December 2014, in Timisoara, Iasi and Cluj. The results of the debates were published on the website: http://expertforum.ro/tefuralafactura/despre-liberaliza-rea-pietei-de-energie-dezbateri-locale-la-timisoara-iasi-cluj-sfantu-gheorghe-si-bucuresti/.

Approximately 50 people attended the debate which revolved around topics such as the role of the regulator in market liberalization and how can the consumer exercise his or her rights including by appealing to the ANRE regulator.

ELECTIONS



EUROPEAN VOTE FOR ROMANIAN ELECTIONS

March – June 2014 Civic Innovation Fund (FDSC) **10.500 EUR** Partners: Romanian Centre for European Policies (CRPE) Ratiu Center for Democracy (CRD), Funky Citizens

WHAT WE AIM FOR

Due to the fact that the legislative and institutional electoral framework lacks consistency, we decided to monitor the way the elections are organized, to work with the electoral management bodies in order to recommend and implement good practices and to develop a set of advocacy instruments in order to promote the much needed **Electoral Code**. Moreover, the partners have built a series of tools dedicated to the education of the general public.

Illustration by Dan Perjovschi

HOW WE DID IT

We set-up a web site, www.7anideacasa.eu that included information on the candidates to the EU Parliament, voting procedures, fraud prevention mechanisms and conscious voting tips.

We monitored the activity of the main electoral bodies (**Permanent Electoral Authority**, **Central Electoral Bureau**, local electoral bureaux etc) and developed a set of recommendations related to their work. The emphasis was put on the accessibility of the voting process, the stability of the legislative framework and the professionalization of the electoral workers. We sent a questionnaire or visited the county electoral bureaux in order to find out more about their needs, issues and recommendations for the elections organizing process.

We trained more than 20 observers for the field mission on the 25th of May for the six districts in Bucharest, as well as Ilfov and Cluj counties. The scope of the mission was to identify issues related to the way elections are organized, but due to the fact that suspicions of fraud have been identified, we notified the authorities. More than 100 polling stations have been covered.

The results of the monitoring mission as well as discussion with experts and decision-makers contributed to the policy report. (http://expertforum.ro/improvizatie-electorala/) The policy brief included chapters related to the institutional and legislative framework, electoral management bodies, statistics, organizing process of the elections, recommendations. The report was released in Bucharest, on 18th of June. The event was moderated by **Vlad Mixich**, **Hotnews** editor and brought together more than 50 academics, politicians, media and electoral experts.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

Our report was well perceived by the decision-makers and represents the first one from a series of policy documents that have been sent to the **Permanent Electoral Authority** and the **Parliament** in 2014-2015. Some of our recommendations were included in the decisions that regulated the elections for the European Parliament (Decision 123 http://www.bec2014.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Decizia-nr.123.pdf), but also in the legislation that was reformed in 2015. Also, we publicly red flagged irregularities and potential electoral crimes.

LINK

RO: http://expertforum.ro/alegeri2014

WHITE PAPER OF PENSIONS IN ROMANIA

September 2014 – December 2014 Asociatia pentru Pensiile Administrate Privat din Romania (APAPR) **11,400 EUR**

WHAT WE AIM FOR

Many Romanians feel concerned with the Romanian pensions system and its stability. The ones born after 1968 feel increasingly worried that they will not be able to support themselves after retirement and the youth is dissatisfied with such heavy taxation when they must support an unbalanced pension system.

HOW WE DID IT

Therefore, we decided to follow these concerns and conducted a study which addressed the following questions:

- What is going to happen with the pension system if the current policies will be upheld?
- How large is the negative impact produced by limitative and destructuration policies of the 2nd pylon (private administrated pensions)
- How can employment policies improve the value of the pensions after 2030 and the financial situation of the fund?

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

We launched the study **Tinerețe fără Bătrânețe**. Pensiile Românilor în 2040 / Youth without old age. The Romanians' pensions in 2040, on Monday, January 19th 2015 within the National Conference for Private Pensions 2015, organized by Media XPRIMM with the support of APAPR. More than 100 stakeholders took part to the conference. The study was intensively distributed by the media.

LINK

RO: http://expertforum.ro/tinerete-fara-batranete/ **EN:** http://expertforum.ro/en/youth-without-old-age-the-romanians-pensions-in-2040/

CIVIL RESPONSE TO CLIENTELISM IN MEDIA – MEDIA CIRCLE

December 2013 – December 2017 Civil Society Facility. Media Freedom and Accountability Programme, European Commission **78,452 EUR** Partners: Partnership for Social Development (Croatia), Vesta (BiH), BH Journalists (BiH), Center for Media Activities (FYR Macedonia), Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina (Serbia) and Public Policy Institute (Montenegro)

WHAT WE AIM FOR

The project is built on more than a decade of strategic engagement of **Partnership for Social Development** (Croatia) and its partners in fighting against corruption, increasing transparency and building integrity in all areas of public interest (public administration, media, investigative journalism and civil society) in SEE region and EU Member States. As Western Balkan Countries in terms of corruption qualify as "*Captured States*", meaning that not just media owners and politics are captured by the variety of non-transparent interests and social groups, but civil society and media associations and unions as well, the necessity to change approach and make break-through from never ending cycle has emerged in preparation of this project.

The project is a transnational initiative, implemented in Croatia, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro. Its purpose is to establish independent sustainable multi-layered cross country Mechanisms for Active Media Policy Monitoring, Advocacy and Emergency response in SE Europe.

WHAT WE DID

Starting from the issue of media clientelism and lack of independence in the Balkans and South-Eastern Europe, we established the steps to promote good governance and transparency:

- Creating sustainable mechanisms for monitoring Media Clientelism and Politicisation Index that will enable cross country comparative and country specific reporting on the state of media clientelism and politicisation, multiple regional meetings with the partners and stakeholders took place in cities such as Bucharest, Belgrad or Zagreb;
- Improving national and international policies related to Freedom of Media, financing of Media, Suppression of Political Influence, enhanced Transparency and Accountability and protection of journalists from undue influence, pressure and violence;
- Increasing the capacity of media and civil society organizations in the field of policy monitoring and advocacy in relation to Suppression of Media Politicization and Clientelism;
- Establishing a sustainable cross country civil media advocacy and emergency response network and an investigative journalist support group;

The partners are working with the local and national media (journalists), professional journalists' associations, EU policy making and policy monitoring bodies, local and national CSOs dealing with media and corruption/conflict of interest issues, public institutions and politicians.

We are researching the current situation in all the partner countries in order to develop a monitoring mechanism. A first result of our work is the multilingual portal, www.fairpress.eu. Apart from this portal, we have also initiated a newsletter that is being sent to interested stakeholders. In December 2014 we published the report **Common Media Pressing Issues** in Six SEE Countries, which identified the relevant issues in the six countries related to media clientelism (http://www.fairpress.eu/publications).

LINK

RO: http://expertforum.ro/initiativa-pentru-combatarea-clientelismului-media-media-circle/

EN: http://expertforum.ro/en/civil-response-to-clientelism-in-media-media-circle/

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The contents of this material does not necessarily represent the official stand of SEE grants 2009 – 2014. For official information regarding the SEE and Norwegian grants, access: www.eeagrants.org

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