

# 2015 annual report



*Project financed by the EEA grants 2009–2014, through the NGO Fund in Romania. 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](http://www.eeagrants.org)*

## WHO WE ARE

**Expert Forum (EFOR)** is a Bucharest based think tank, set up by well-known experts in public policy and public governance reform. The main sectors covered by the organization are: administration reform and public sector integrity; decentralization, regional development, public finance; justice and anticorruption reform; social policy and pensions; energy and transport; healthcare; electoral processes and active citizenship.

Expert Forum members 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.

Since its beginnings EFOR has set as an important goal for itself to forge partnerships with the business community in order to fight together for a cleaner and more responsible government, transparency in public budgets and a more open and predictable policy process. We do this by monitoring various public sectors and organizing public debates together with various business associations. The organization works with private businesses or business associations for policy analysis in taxation and public budgets, public healthcare, pensions, energy policy and taxation etc.

The think tank has obtained support from international donors as a project leader to promote transparency and good governance in Romania and the region (Croatia, Serbia, Moldova, and from 2013 also Bulgaria) to monitor the proper, transparent use of public budgets. The organization has also obtained US Embassy support for justice reform in Romania and UK Embassy support for energy sector reform. The UK Embassy in Zagreb has contracted EFOR for a technical assistance to implement anti-corruption policy in Croatia based on lessons learned in Romania and Bulgaria and EC monitoring practices.

Expert Forum is also part of the Open Government Partnership initiative and assists governments for enhanced transparency on information and public decisions. EFOR experts are frequently asked by the Government to participate in working groups for strategies and legal drafts. At 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 17 experts commission that monitors EU member states on anti-corruption policies and transparency.

## OUR TEAM



### **SORIN IONIȚĂ**

Expert in public administration reform, development and local affairs; 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), sections Transport-Energy and Environment-Agriculture; associate lecturer at the Maastricht School of Management (MSM). He graduated from the Bucharest Polytechnic Institute (IPB); Bucharest University; has a Master from Central European University (CEU), Budapest; former Fulbright fellow at Georgetown University, Washington DC.



### **LAURA ȘTEFAN**

Anti-corruption expert, former director in the Romanian Ministry of Justice, international expert on rule of law with the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Laura graduated from the Bucharest School of Law and the Master program of the Cambridge University.



### **ANA OTILIA NUȚU**

Expert in energy and transport infrastructure policies, SOEs reform, consultant with the World Bank. Otilia studied at the Bucharest School of Economics (ASE) and has a Master from Central European University (CEU), Budapest.



### **SEPTIMIUS PÂRVU**

Expert in good governance and elections, Septimius has experience in working both on public policies and directly with the communities on public participation, transparency and integrity. He coordinates electoral monitoring missions in Romania and abroad and is frequently working as consultant on electoral processes. He graduated from Bucharest University.



### **CEZARA GRAMA**

Cezara graduated from Law School at the University of Bucharest in 2013 and holds an LLM in Public International Law. She has previous experience volunteering with NGOs and has graduated the Leaders for Justice Program (funded by Konrad Adenauer Foundation). Cezara works as a project assistant mainly on rule of law projects and anticorruption.



### **NICOLETA POPESCU**

Nicoleta graduated from the Faculty of Commerce, Marketing Department, Bucharest University of Economic Studies. She has more than 10 year experience in an external commerce company and three years with public procurement and logistics. Since 2014 she is a financial manager at EFOR.

MEDIA ABOUT US

Cine este Laura Stefan, castigatoarea premiului "Femeia curajoasa" decernat de Ambasada SUA?

de Red. Stiri HotNews.ro  
Joi, 16 aprilie 2015, 19:02 Actualitate | Esential

Intr-o perioada in care institutiile din Justitie au fost supuse unei presiuni constante din partea politicianilor, o mica parte a societatii civile a sustinut eforturile anticoruptie. Una dintre vocile cele mai credibile din societatea civila a fost Laura Stefan, in prezent coordonatorul activitatilor anticoruptie pentru ONG-ul Expert Forum. Laura Stefan este castigatoarea premiului "Femeia curajoasa" a anului 2015 si nominalizarea Ambasadei SUA la Bucuresti pentru premiul "Femei curajoase din intreaga lume", acordat de Secretarul de Stat al SUA.



Laura Stefan, Expert Forum  
Foto: Hotnews



“In the early days there was a reluctance to pass decisions against powerful people,” says Laura Stefan, an analyst at Expert Forum, a Bucharest think-tank. “Romania didn’t have a strong tradition of the rule of law, so it took time for judges to feel independent enough to come to decisions on the merits of the cases and not based on the person before them.”

ft.com/frontpage UK All times are London time  
**FINANCIAL TIMES**

For a decade, one of the central political battles in Romania has been over the establishment of independent prosecutors capable of uprooting corruption, said Sorin Ionita, chairman of the Expert Forum, a public policy research group in Bucharest. More than 1,000 public officials, including former Prime Minister Adrian Nastase, one of Mr. Ponta’s mentors, have been convicted of corruption in recent years.

# The New York Times

Romania’s cut in imports and consumption isn’t just because of a desire to lessen its reliance on natural gas it also has to do with the adoption of regulations more favorable to domestic production and warmer weather, Ana Otilia Nutu of the Expert Forum in Bucharest told Interfax Energy. Romania sought to step up its own export business last year by [opening a pipeline to neighboring Moldova in August](#). Moldova also relies entirely on Gazprom gas and the option to import from Romania was desirable to the Moldovan government because it could ease its vulnerability to Russian pressure over a pro-Russian separatist contingency in the self-declared autonomous state of Transistria.

**International Business Times**

## Our initiatives are mentioned in the 2016 CVM report

As in the past, this year, the European Commission's technical report on the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism mentions some of Expert Forum's projects as good practice in the field of anti-corruption.

This year's CVM Report acknowledges the progress made by Romania towards consolidating the fight against corruption and respect for rule of law, through the efforts of key institutions, but also due to the involvement of actors in the civil society, such as Expert Forum. In this context, the Report mentions some of the projects in which Expert Forum was involved, in the field of public administration and public procurement.

Thus, the project **Fighting Public Procurement Criminality** is mentioned in the Technical report, especially regarding the guide for practitioners in the field of public procurement. This was an international and ample project, developed in partnership with Freedom House Romania and other 17 public institutions and non-governmental organizations, financed by the European Commission and by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung – Rule of Law program South East Europe, the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Romania and the British Embassy in Bucharest.

Secondly the Report mentions the **Initiative for Clean Justice (justitiecurata.ro)**, a project in which Expert Forum partnered with Freedom House and Romanian Centre for European Policies (CRPE). The platform offers articles written by local journalists monitoring public procurement and investments in the local administration, as well as the activity of NGOs in areas such as justice, good governance or public procurement; for example monitoring and advocating for clear and transparent criteria of selection for the chief-prosecutor of the Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT), clientelism in public funding or the sustainability of anticorruption institutions.

## **Rule of law & extended confiscation | Supporting the confiscation and recovery of proceeds of crime in Romania**

In the context of assessed deficiencies regarding the procedures and mechanisms for the implementation of extended confiscations at a national level, due to a delayed Romanian legislative alignment (i.e. Law 63 2012) to EU directive norms, the project served as a necessary initiative which facilitated the implementation of this new judicial framework through the assimilation of EU best practices and experience in implementing EC directives concerning this legal instrument.

The project was implemented by Expert Forum and Freedom House, over a period of 24 months, starting with 2013. It brought together partners from the public sector, such as the Ministry of Justice, the Superior Council of Magistracy, the Prosecutor's Office Attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice Romania or the Fraud Investigation Directorate within the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police, as well as Magistrats européens pour la démocratie et les libertés and the Division of Criminal Affairs and Pardons, French Ministry of Justice.

In 2015 two main events that took place. The first was a debate focused on the issue of extended confiscation and recovery of criminal proceeds, with law enforcers, judicial practitioners, NGOs and media representatives, with a special focus on the draft law establishing an agency in charge of confiscation and recovery of criminal proceeds. The event took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2015 and was joined by speakers such as Laura Ștefan (anticorruption expert, Expert Forum), Cornel Călinescu (Romanian Ministry of Justice, head of National Office for Crime Prevention and Cooperation with Assets Recovery Offices) or Charles Duchaine (director general of the Agency for the Recovery and Management of Seized and Confiscated Assets).

Lastly, the closing conference for the project took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2015 in Bucharest. The conference brought together 54 participants, including judges, prosecutors, journalists, police officers and lawyers and 10 judges from Moldova, whose presence was supported by the Dutch Embassy in Romania.

During the conference, the report **Perspectives on asset recovery and confiscation - theory and jurisprudence** was released. It contains 10 articles based on the presentations that were held in the four seminars, two debates and opening conference of the project. Among the speakers: **Monica Macovei** (European MP), **Laura Ștefan** (Anticorruption expert, Expert Forum), **Cristina Guseth** (Director, Freedom House Romania), **Alina Ghica** (Superior Council for Magistracy), **Liviu Stancu** (State Secretary, Ministry of Justice), **Cornel Călinescu** and **Charles Duchaine**.

The project was funded by the European Commission through DG Home and co-funded by Expert Forum, Embassy of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Royal Netherlands Embassy.

## Rule of law & clientelism | SCOPE

In a consortium of 6 NGOs, the project provides a detailed analysis and strategic on the phenomenon of clientelism in state-owned companies (SOEs) in four EU Member States (3 new Member States, Romania, Bulgaria and Czech Republic and an old member state, Italy), characterized by significant state interference in the economy. The project designs common indicators, in a cross-country comparative approach, proposes new data visualization tools and policy recommendations at national and European level.



The project is an innovative one. We will do for the first time an “objective” evaluation framework through concrete indicators to measure corruption and poor governance in state-owned companies in the 4 countries, to measure the evolution of corruption over time and in comparison between countries, in order to scale up at EU level. Companies will be analyzed are centrally-owned (in Romania, for

example, companies such CNADNR, CFR, Hidroelectrica, Romanian Post Kerslake, CEC, RAAPPS etc) and local utilities (and regional operators of water utilities, RADET, urban transport etc.)

The first event from the project took place in February 2016 and comprised:

- an official launch of the project with major stakeholders from ministries (PM Chancellery, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Justice), NGOs and experts, in which we ensured support from the Romanian government for the transparentization of SOEs in Romania and announced the content of the project and our intentions to collaborate with the public administration to support the reform of SOEs
- a working, kick-off session with the project partners (6 NGOs), in which we brainstormed about the selection criteria of projects.

The project is financed by the European Commission and Open Society Institute

**Link:** <http://expertforum.ro/en/scope/>

**Public procurement | LECA - Law, Economy, Competition and Administration –  
Developing a multidisciplinary approach in fighting fraud in public procurement**

The project continues our previous work on public procurement and focuses on infrastructure works. We aim to work with magistrates, public servants from county councils and municipalities, as well as the general audience. The project includes an important component meant to underline the crucial role of the real competition in the public procurement process.

The opening event took place in Bucharest, in December 2014. With the support of the Embassy of Netherlands, ten magistrates from the Republic of Moldova participated to the event. The conference was moderated by Laura Ștefan, anticorruption expert, Expert Forum.

Two workshops were included in the project, in January and March 2015. The workshops enabled the exchange of good practices between specialists inside public institutions responsible for public procurement and investments, magistrates, judicial police officers, public servants and foreign experts. During these workshops, the participant worked on finalizing the curriculum for the 6 training sessions.

Thus, during May 2015 – May 2016, there will be 6 training sessions organized, based on the curriculum developed in the earlier stages of the project. These training sessions will have a multidisciplinary approach in the sense that it will deal with relevant aspects for public procurement procedures. There will also be a special focus on public procurement in infrastructure, for example the General Master Plan for Transportation or Harbour Infrastructure at the national level, or the communal and country roads. Judges, prosecutors, police officers from Romania and Bulgaria will participate to the training sessions, as well as Romanian public servants from the investments and public procurement departments inside the County councils and local administration.

Last, but not least a closing event will take place during which the results of the project, together with a written papers will be discussed and debated.

Thanks to the support of the Netherlands Embassy in Bucharest, magistrates from the Republic of Moldova will join the training sessions. The project is co-funded by the European Commission, DG Home Affairs, through the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Program.

Expert Forum is part of a partnership with the Ministry of Justice, National Agency of Civil Servants, the Competition Council, National Association of Procurement Specialists and the Centre for the Study of Democracy in Sofia.

The project is supported by the National Institute of Magistracy, the National Integrity Agency and Ministry of Transport.

## Rule of law | Stronger judiciary in Eastern Europe

The project's focus was to bring together approximately 50 representatives of the judiciary systems of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia in order to identify and discuss concrete directions of reform in the field of anti-corruption, building on the Romanian experience.

Thus, the first component of the project consisted in 3 needs assessment meetings that took place in the 3 partner countries. During these meetings, EFOR's representatives met with various stakeholders in order to identify reform directions appropriate for each country.

Between 11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> of May 2015, EFOR then organized a 5 day conference and study visit for almost 50 judges, prosecutors, civil society representatives and public officials from Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova in Bucharest. The trainings and discussions that took place in Bucharest helped identify the transferable practices and reform priorities on particular sectors (self-governing of the judiciary, evaluations of judges, recruitment of prosecutors in specialized anticorruption institutions etc.). Furthermore, there were intense discussions on the challenges that might arise and how to surpass them, building on Romania's experience.

Thus, the participants met with key institutions in the fight against corruption in Romania and the reform of the judiciary such as The National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA), the National Integrity Agency (ANI), the Superior Council of Magistracy, the General Anticorruption Direction (DGA), as well as judges from the High Court of Cassation and Justice or the Tribunal of Bucharest. Important officials such as Mrs. Laura Codruța Kovesi, Chief prosecutor of the DNA or Mr. Daniel Morar, judge for the Constitutional Court of Romania joined the discussions. Foreign officials from the French, British, U.S. and Netherlands Embassy honoured the guests with their presence.

The 5 days spent in Bucharest have created a direct connection between corresponding bodies in the 3 countries. This, in turn, enhances the possibility of sustainable and continuous support in the future.

The activities of the project also focused on empowering NGOs in the region to cooperate and continue to advocate for changes, with EFOR's support. At the same time, discussions revealed the necessity to offer support to governmental efforts in building strong and independent institutions that can fight and prevent corruption. The meetings with Romanian journalists and NGOs further enhanced this effort.

Lastly, EFOR followed-up on the discussions started in Bucharest, in June-July 2015, by organizing meetings in each of the partner countries with the civil society and donor community in order to present our conclusions on the main directions of reform as we had identified.

EFOR and the partner organisations then published a written report focusing on the best practices identified in Romania and recommendations for reform in each of the partner

countries: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The report can be accessed at [www.expertforum.ro](http://www.expertforum.ro)

Financed by the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation

Partners: Anticorruption Action Centre (Ukraine), Legal Resources Centre Moldova (Moldova), Transparency International Georgia, USAID Ukraine.

### **Rule of law | Stronger judiciary in Eastern Europe, Ukraine and Moldova**

The project consisted of 2 components: a study visit organized in Romania for official representatives of National Anticorruption Bureau in Ukraine, as well as civil society representatives. Their interest was mainly on consolidating the capacity of the newly-created institution, thus, meetings with the following institutions were arranged: the National Anticorruption Directorate, the National Integrity Agency, the General Anticorruption Directorate and the Romanian Intelligence Service.



Thus the project helped with building institutional capacity of the newly-created anticorruption institution, NABU, by organizing a professional study tour of the heads of the agency in Romania, Mr. Artem Sytnyk, Director of the National anti-corruption bureau of Ukraine and Mr. Anatoly Novak, Deputy Director of the National anti-corruption bureau of Ukraine.

Apart from capacity building for NABU, the visit offered the perfect opportunity for exploring mechanisms for corruption prevention through controls of declarations of assets, declarations of interest and incompatibilities. Ukrainian specialists had in depth discussions with the National Integrity Agency on these issues and were given not only the primary legislation, but also by-laws to use as a model for developing relevant Ukrainian regulations. Discussions continued after the study visit and are likely to generate further assistance requests in the future.

The second component of the project consisted in a visit of 3 Moldovan activists in Romania in February 2016. In the context of a major political crisis that has been taking place in Moldova in the past year, a round table was organized in Bucharest focusing on what steps need to be taken to surpass the crisis. Romanian civil society representatives were joined by Nadedja Hriptievschi, representative of LRCM, our partner NGO in Chisinau, together with Maia Sandu, a strong reformist in Moldova, and Igor Boțan, a strong civil society representative, as well as Ion Sturza, a former prime minister in Moldova.

The discussions set out the reform steps that need to be taken in the near future as to insure that Moldova no longer lingers in democratic and social uncertainty that favour serious financial crisis and grand scale theft.

The round table on Moldova was broadcasted live by the platform [www.privesc.eu](http://www.privesc.eu) and was accessed by over 111.000 users. Epoch Times also broadcasted the event and interviewed some of the speakers, interviews which can be accessed online.

The project is financed by the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation

Partners: Anticorruption Action Centre (Ukraine), Legal Resources Centre Moldova (Moldova), International Renaissance Fund (Ukraine)

**Link:** <http://expertforum.ro/stronger-judiciary-in-eastern-europe-ukraine/>



**Rule of law | De ce eu?/Why me? screenings in the Republic of Moldova**

In December 2015, Expert Forum together with the Legal Resource Centre in Moldova organized a short cinema tour of the film „De ce eu?” by Tudor Giurgiu.

Directed by Tudor Giurgiu, the film „De ce eu?” tells the story of the suspicious death of the prosecutor Cristian Panait (called Cristian Panduru in the movie) at the beginning of the 2000’s. Panduru investigates the case of a colleague suspected of bribery, forgery and use of forgery, and theft of documents. The investigation, however, has extremely high level implications and through the investigation shatter his confidence in the justice system. Trying to uncover the truth, the young prosecutor enters a danger zone and is exposed to painful and unexpected

revelations.

The screenings of the film took place in three cities in the Republic of Moldova: in Cahul, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December, at the State University „Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu”, in Chișinău, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, at „Odeon” Cinema and in Bălți, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, at the „Alecu Russo” State University.

The film in each of the locations was followed by a debate with Laura Ștefan (Expert Forum), Sorin Ioniță (Expert Forum) and the director, Tudor Giurgiu. Russian subtitles were provided as to attract Russian speaking citizens in the debate concerning a very delicate subject, corruption and the pressure an individual needs to deal with in a corrupt system.

The screenings were organized by Expert Forum, in partnership with the Legal Resources Centre in Moldova and financed by the Netherlands Embassy in Moldova.

**Link:** <http://expertforum.ro/en/three-screenings-and-debates-de-ce-eu-in-the-republic-of-moldova/>

### **Rule of law & active citizenship | Active citizenship – a powerful instrument to consolidate rule of law**

The project started in April 2015 and is implemented by Expert Forum, along with three other Romanian partners - the Romanian Center for European Policies, Freedom House, Liderjust and one Norwegian partner, Fylkesmannen I Sogn og Fjordane. Our objective is to raise awareness and empower the general public about the importance of rule of law and to strengthen the capacity of essential target groups (teachers, magistrates, journalists) for the stability of democratic mechanisms.

The project tackles with the lack of public interest in key elements of the rule of law, the alarming situation regarding the quality of teaching civic education, the opening to extremism and the lack of autonomy of the media in notifying the public derailments from the democratic rules.

We worked with 18 civic and history teacher, over 250 students, more than 750 people who attended the civic debates in cities such as București, Focșani, Reșița, Bocșa or Timișoara and 40 journalists and magistrates working on anticorruption.



We launched the project in May 2014, with a discussion with NGOs and journalists from Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine and Romania about the stability of democracy in the region. Representatives from the Moldovan Centre for Juridical Resources, Transparency International Georgia and Ukrainian Centre for Anticorruption Action and Romanian NGOs and journalist have discussed about the issues in their countries and solutions to fight bad governance. You can watch the recordings here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnBfK3-EjXA>

During School for Democracy project (Sinaia, August-September 2015), we trained 18 civics and history teachers in order to support them to teach active citizenship in a non-formal way, adapted to current and real needs of the citizens. We supported them in organizing sessions of replication with the information obtained in the School for Democracy. We organized eight events in which we brought together teachers, students and public officials. We talked about antidiscrimination, transparency for public institutions, methods that can enhance the participation of the communities to the public decisions or elections.

We organized five debates based on the movie *De ce eu? / Why me?*, directed by Tudor Giurgiu. We debated about the abusive system and methods through which citizens can fight back. The projections are part of the campaign *Alone against everybody* organized in partnership with the Tudor Giurgiu and Hotnews.ro (<http://expertforum.ro/campania-singur-impotriva-tutoror-oameni-care-se-impotrivesc-sistemului>). The campaign is an initiative to encourage fighting against all kinds of pressure exerted by heads of institutions, politicians and magistrates against the many who work in the system, whether public or private.

During the project we advocated to ensure the electoral rights through postal voting. We published three policy briefs about postal voting, we attended parliamentary election law meetings and we met with representatives of relevant public institutions. The final objective was to ensure the approval of a correct and inclusive law.

The Norwegian vice-governor of the Sogn og Fjordane County was present during the School for Democracy and some of the local events with teachers, including Timisoara and Bucharest. In January 2016 we organized in Bucharest a debate about the way the state should communicate with the citizens in Romania and Norway.



The project is financed by the EEA grants 2009–2014, through the NGO Fund in Romania.

**Link:** [www.expertforum.ro/cetatenie-activa](http://www.expertforum.ro/cetatenie-activa)

## Rule of law & active citizenship | Municipal utilities: we begin the monitoring of municipalities and local councils

Since in 2016 we have local elections and people are concerned about the quality of municipal services/utilities (water, sewerage, sanitation, heating, public lighting), we started a new project: a monitoring of eight cities with participatory citizens and investigative journalists from local media. On 3-4 December 2015 we held a first meeting in Bucharest, in order to find out together which are the municipal services that can be monitored, which indicators are relevant for this process, where to collect data, what can we do in investigative journalism. For example, when we investigate the quality of sanitation in a city and the local budgets for it, we will also look at contracts and how they and the local procurement were made.



The pilot-towns that we want to monitor are: Bucharest, Galati, Craiova, Iasi, Bacau, Piatra Neamt, Cluj and Timisoara. We will do reports on each of these cities in June, before the election, to draw an alarm signal where the new elected officials have to make changes; and year-end reports, plus a comparative report, to see what has happened and how these cities compare to each other.

The local monitors will use an evaluation grid with indicators for which we must collect data so that the analysis is as relevant and complete as possible. This evaluation grid can be used by anyone who wants to do the same in his/her city.

The project is financed through a grant of the Open Society Foundation.

**Link:** <http://expertforum.ro/en/municipal-utilities-we-begin-the-monitoring-of-municipalities-and-local-councils/>

**Rule of law & active citizenship | Good Governance Community: think tank open to the public**

Our objective is to analyse and monitor public policy areas of common interest to EFOR and stakeholders (citizens, business sector, decision makers, NGO sector etc) and to publish and communicate the results of monitoring and analysis through innovative tools. 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 the following topics: legislative instability and elections, fiscal matters, fiscal evasion and social policies/pensions. Taking into considerations these policy areas, we published two annual reports and four policy briefs, as well as two interactive maps about clientelism ([www.expertforum.ro/en/clientelism-map](http://www.expertforum.ro/en/clientelism-map)) and political migration of the mayors in 2014 ([www.expertforum.ro/primari-migratori](http://www.expertforum.ro/primari-migratori)).



We organized informal meetings with more than 100 young activists and two labyrinth theatre sessions for 50 people in Bucharest, in order to explain in an informal manner what rule of law is and why is important to fight authoritarian decisions. In August 2014 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.

We monitored the Presidential elections in November 2014 and offered juridical assistance to voters, together with Funky Citizens and took part of the electoral reform process. The Center for Civic Resource accredited more than 600 electoral observers; a part of them were trained by EFOR. On the 15-16 November we organized a call centre, where more than 450 citizens and observers called in order to get information or report fraud and irregularities. Together with our volunteer jurists we sued the county electoral bureaux for breaking the law and the Romanian Police for fining abusively the observers. Moreover, we provided legal tools to the citizens that decided to sue the public institutions responsible for blocking the vote in and outside Romania



**Some of our results, in a nutshell:**

- We coagulated other NGOs and pressured the Central Electoral Bureau to publish or change a few decisions. Among them was one that allowed the NGOs to accredit observers for the second round of elections – a decision was published in this matter; we asked for the elimination of the form that was abusively used during the elections – it was eliminated in the second round of elections
- We demanded the resignation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs due to abuse during the elections (low number of polling stations, limitative decisions etc) – due to the public pressure, Mr Corlatean resigned
- We asked the Foreign Affairs Ministry to provide with the documentation regarding the procedures followed to organize polling stations abroad. – MAE refused 2 times to answer due to a National Anticorruption Directorate investigation; we are currently researching if any abuse was committed when the number of polling station was established
- We contributed to the modification of the electoral legislation. Either together with other NGOs (Politica fara Bariere Coalition) or alone, we advocated for changes in the following laws: local elections, parliamentary elections, law of political financing, law on political parties, law on postal voting. We met with the President, the Prime minister, members of the Parliament, we monitored the works of the Parliamentary Commission for electoral legislation. Some of the requests can now be found in the law: a party founded by 3 people instead of 25.000, benefits for the independents, lower thresholds, elimination of the deposit for the candidates for the Parliament, elimination of the regulation that stated that a citizens can sign only for one candidate etc
- We brought to the public agenda the discussion on the Electoral Code and the postal or internet voting. [We observed the Estonian elections](#) and met with officials from Finland and Latvia in order to argue for and against the e-voting based on foreign experiences



- We are the first ones to have counted the dimension of the local elected officials migration based on GEO 55/2014 and have developed and on-line map ([www.expertforum.ro/en/migration-of-local-elected-officials](http://www.expertforum.ro/en/migration-of-local-elected-officials)) that proves the extension of the process.

To serve as evidence of our work, we published a report with all of our activities, figures, statistics and results, available here: [www.expertforum.ro/povestea-unui-proiect](http://www.expertforum.ro/povestea-unui-proiect) (RO only).

The project is financed by the EEA grants 2009–2014, through the NGO Fund in Romania.

**Link:** <http://expertforum.ro/cetatenia-activa>

## Active citizenship | School for Democracy 2015



EFOR, in partnership with Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Rule of Law Program South-East Europe and British Council organized between 31<sup>st</sup> August – 4<sup>th</sup> September 2015 a seminar for 18 civic education and history teachers, in Sinaia.

The five day seminar included topics such as leadership, non-formal education methods, problem solving and community building mechanisms, principles of democracy and good governance, project writing. We worked with professionals in these fields such as Cosmin Alexandru , Cristi Dănilă (judge), Alexandru Solomon (director, One World Romania film festival coordinator) or Alina Constantinescu (trainer, British Council)

During the seminar, each teacher had the opportunity to learn more about non-formal education and to share them with their colleagues. All the methods have been collected in a toolkit that has been distributed to the teachers, together with a set of materials provided by the trainers, British Council and by EFOR.

At the end of the seminar, each professor had the opportunity to propose a civic project



that should have aimed to replicate the sessions of the seminar in Sinaia. We implemented nine activities in eight cities. In some cities, we brought the students and teachers together with the public administration and organized events through which they managed to express their needs related to the communities they live in. In other localities we created public debates on topics related to transparency, health, education, workplaces

etc and received reactions from public authorities that will be monitored in the next months.

During the project we also managed to create an informal partnership with One World Association and we contributed to the involvement of the teachers in Luna Doc #2 initiative.

The project is financed by Rule of Law Program South East Europe of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

**Link:** <http://expertforum.ro/scoala-2015/>

## Rule of law | Developing the „Initiative for a Clean Justice” Coalition

The purpose of the coalition is to develop the already existing alliance between Expert Forum, Freedom House and Romanian Center for European Policy as an autonomous coalition, meant to efficiently tackle new issues using the three organizations’ cumulative expertise. The project addresses new issues such as: recovering the proceeds of crime in Romania, extended confiscation, the National Anticorruption Directorate’s sustainability, public acquisitions’ monitoring.

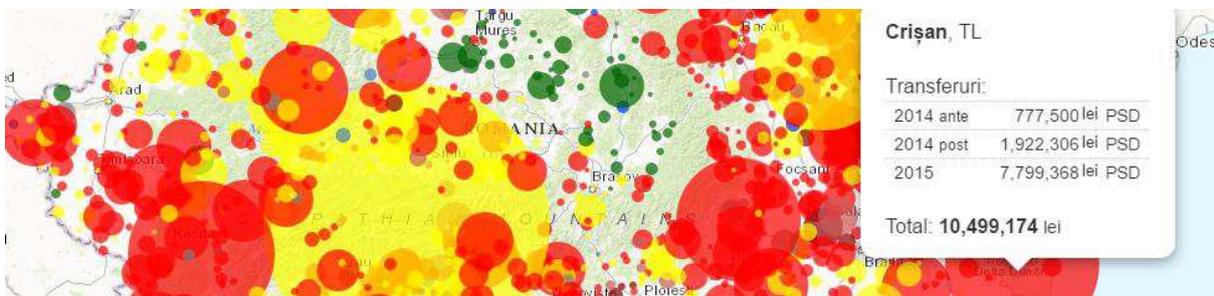


Through this project we aim to develop the reaction capacities of the organizations, but producing early warning instruments. Furthermore, the development of three monitoring and reporting instruments will strengthen the monitoring capacity. We have already launched a portal – [www.justitiecurata.ro](http://www.justitiecurata.ro) – that has the purpose to centralize and promote the activities of the three NGOs and to get citizens and public institutions involved in our work.



During the project, the members of our team participated to several international conferences, where they presented the activity of the organization and our research products. Expert Forum participated to the following conference: Good and Bad Governance – institutions in Romania and the rule of law (Oxford), Watchdog Forum (Warsaw), Personal Democracy Forum (Gdansk) and Warning on

Crime Final Conference (Torino).



Our main research was oriented on political clientelism (<http://expertforum.ro/en/primari-clientelari/>), a topic that we are already covering since 2011. EFOR has launched Map of clientelistic mayors, a study showing how mayors migrated in the last four years, either through parties’ mergers or by OUG 55/2014, regarding the political migration. The Map of mayors who changed parties includes

political affiliation of mayors in Romania in the 2012-2016 mandate and the problems they had and still have with ANI or DNA. We have also published the Map of political clientelism 2012-2016 (<http://expertforum.ro/clientelism-2016>), an interactive platform that shows how the national money from the Reserve Fund and other funds for local administrations were granted in a clientelistic manner.

The project is financed by the EEA grants 2009–2014, through the NGO Fund in Romania and is implemented in partnership with Freedom House Romania and Romania Center for European Policies.

**Link:** <http://expertforum.ro/initiativa-pentru-o-justitie-curata/>, [www.justitiecurata.ro](http://www.justitiecurata.ro)

### **Good governance & energy | How they steal from YOUR bill - advocacy and public debate project**

In compliance with the European Union directives, Romania has to liberalize the prices by 2017, for electric energy and 2018, for gas. This will lead to a significant rise in price, with approximately 40% for gas (according to a World Bank projection). Consequently, price liberalisation without social protection, in the energy sector might have a major impact on the civil society.

Under these circumstances, our aim is to inform correctly and fully understandably a large number of affected consumers about the social protection alternatives the state dispose of, against price rate growth. We will put pressure on political decision-makers by asking them publicly, through an advertised petition, to redirect subsidies from big consumers, so called “smart guys”, to households, thus making liberalisation bearable.

In fact, instead of alleviating the impact of liberalisation on low-income groups (the beneficiaries of the project), large industrial consumers who have preferential relations with the state (called by the media “smart guys from energy”) benefit now from the subsidies hidden in the energy prices, making everything very difficult to understand for ordinary people. In other words, regulated energy prices have been so far rather pretexts for giving cheap energy to the richest and most influential businessmen at the expense of state companies (i.e. the taxpayer) and other consumers.

Until now, by delaying liberalisation, subsidies were given only to the wealthiest in Romania (intensive industries - aluminium, steel, fertilizer, cement) at the expense of domestic consumers and ordinary taxpayers. Some of these grants are the subject of some investigations at the level of Prosecutors (for criminal matters) and European Union (for possible breaches of competition law). The losses of state companies that sold energy too cheap, subsidized by these consumers, are actually losses in the state budget (unearned profits). If national producers sold energy to these industrial consumers at market prices, state budget revenues from extra profits of these companies could cover completely an efficient support scheme for disadvantaged categories.

Citizens, who are ultimately the shareholders of state companies, were poorly represented in the management board of these firms. Actually, budget losses affect us

all. Only through proper understanding of the situation, the general audience will be informed and prerequisites will be created for pressuring the Government to develop fair support schemes, in accordance with the European standards that will ensure adequate protection of domestic consumers and taxpayers. Therefore, the project's goal is to change public policies for energy subventions so that the liberalisation of energy price (especially gas) will assure a desired competitive market WITHOUT affecting vulnerable groups, such as households with low income or people dramatically influenced by the rise in gas prices.



**During the project, we:**

1. **Promoted** a solution for public policy to decision-makers, formulated and discussed **publicly** in pilot-debates in four municipalities, concerning **energy subventions** (including the identification of financing sources) that will effectively protect the consumers with low-incomes, who are strongly affected by the projected rise in gas prices;
2. **Informed** over 735,200 people about the subventions and costs of electricity;
3. **Mobilized** publicly, by the end of the project at least 4,000 people for supporting new subventions policies;
4. Conducted an **impact assessment** on the public communication channels for the project, an analysis necessary for our organization, in order to plan better the future public communication activities (in terms of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, expected impact of various channels, lessons learned).

**Link:** <http://tefuralafactura.ro/factura-ta/>

The project is financed by the EEA grants 2009–2014, through the NGO Fund in Romania.

## Infrastructure & smart cities | Dâmbovița – Smart River

The concept of the project is to put into public debate proposals of project that can merge for a coherent development around Dâmbovița river. Through an intelligent project, Dâmbovița can become a hub of innovative ideas, a model of durable development, a space for ecology, urbanism and memory for the inhabitants of Bucharest. It has a great potential to combine creativity with ecology and cultural patrimony.

Along the river that has been neglected by the citizens and the authorities there is an enormous potential of cultural, ecological and entrepreneurial resources that are currently not used and should be put to the common use of the authorities, through the common contribution of the civil society and the business sector. For example, Morii Lake can be used for entertainments we have research institutes and the university that can be used for high level research; the Botanical Garden and Văcărești natural reservation as spaces for ecological projects; CET Grozavesti produces energy, but can be cleaned and recovered as industrial patrimony etc.

A first step was to publish a policy brief on the re-technologisation in order to increase efficiency, lower the emissions and free 60-70% of the 7 ha that are not being used properly in the center of the town. The free space and the new CET, with 21<sup>st</sup> century technology must be invaded by the Botanical Garden, a museum of the industrial patrimony and incubators for creative industries; in the Scandinavian-style.

In June 2015, we presented within Urban Fest the project *Smart River – Bucharest 2020*, together with our partners, at the National Library and we organized a tent where we offered information to the citizens interested about this topic.

Link <http://expertforum.ro/smart-river/>



## Media & clientelism | Civil Response to Clientelism in Media – MEDIA CIRCLE

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.

Starting from the issue of media clientelism and lack of independence in the Balkans and South-Eastern Europe, the partners aim:

- To establish 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;
- To improve 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;
- To increase capacity of media and civil society organizations in the field of policy monitoring and advocacy in relation to Suppression of Media Politicization and Clientelism;
- To establish sustainable cross country civil media advocacy and emergency response network;
- To design cross country investigative journalist support group;
- To enhance cross-sector cooperation between journalists, public institutions and NGOs.

In 2015 the project completed the first part of its list of activities and edited the final assessment *Media clientelism index 2015: measuring media realities* in English, with summaries in the national languages of project partners.

The assessment and county rankings using the Index were launched simultaneously in all six Balkan countries taking part in the exercise (BiH, MK, MNG, HR, SRB, RO), on Dec 14th 2015.

The event was discussed and prepared in advance during a meeting of the partners in Novi Sad, where dissemination plans were also drafted. These will form the basis of activity in the project in 2016 and subsequently.

**Link:** <http://expertforum.ro/en/civil-response-to-clientelism-in-media-media-circle/>,  
<http://www.fairpress.eu/>



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