

THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, A TESTING GROUND FOR AUR'S NEW INFLUENCE NETWORKS

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As the Republic of Moldova approaches a decisive electoral moment, one that will define the country's strategic direction, concerns regarding external interference are once again coming to the forefront. However, such interference is no longer limited to traditional sources in the East, namely the Russian Federation. Increasingly, disruptive influences are emerging from the West as well, particularly through extremist political forces in neighboring Romania. The aim of these interventions is clear: to undermine the Republic of Moldova's European path by promoting pro-Russian political forces. A relevant example is the AUR party in Romania, which seems to have extended its activities and rhetoric into the Moldovan space. On the eve of the parliamentary elections, AUR's involvement in politics in the Republic of Moldova was felt in an aggressive way, with the creation of a network of websites generating and distributing manipulative content, which was picked up and promoted intensively on social networks. However, the activity of AUR was not limited to online propaganda. The party has also been actively involved in organizing conferences and providing political support to actors in Chișinău. Ultimately, the thread of these influences leads, once again, to the Kremlin.

How George Simion's propaganda machinery crossed the Prut

The AUR Party, known for its extremist positions in Romania, controls a complex network of ghost websites. Although they appear independent, these platforms consistently disseminate party-aligned propaganda. In many cases, this propaganda has numerous points of convergence with Kremlin discourse. Recently, mirrored sites within this network have also started to operate in Moldova. An investigation carried out by the [Context.ro](#) has revealed how this ecosystem, linked to AUR, has migrated into Moldova's political sphere and the implications of this development.

The network became visible following statements made by George Simion. The AUR leader accused Maia Sandu of illegal involvement in the Romanian presidential elections, which he lost to Nicușor Dan. In a [public appeal](#), Simion made a clear call to Moldovan voters to "tax" Maia Sandu. The statements should not be considered mere comments. They are a clear and direct appeal to the citizens of the Republic of Moldova to support pro-Russian parties in the parliamentary elections on September 28.

The central role in George Simion's strategy lies with the propaganda network created by AUR in Moldova. The "WatchDog.MD" community has identified at least eight websites involved in this network: [60m.md](#), [Timpul.md](#), [Politica24.tv](#), [Criticii.net](#), [Zece.tv](#), [GazetaMoldovei.com](#), [Moldopres.info](#) and [Anchetatorii.md](#). The aim of the given platforms is to promote disinformation, spread conspiracy theories and in particular launch concerted attacks on Maia Sandu and the ruling party. All this has been intensified in the context of the upcoming parliamentary elections. Even though some of these websites publish material that appears to combat Russian propaganda, this tactic is designed to mislead readers and give them a semblance of credibility.

The propaganda network is distinguished by several key features. The website 60m.md functions as the "heavy artillery" of this structure, characterized by content dominated by manipulative headlines. At the same time, the Investitatorii.md platform contains a single article, specifically created to be distributed on social networks. In order to amplify its impact and extend its reach, the entire network resorts to paid advertising campaigns on Facebook. Frequently promoted messages include headlines and tags such as "[Moldova, Soros Republic](#)", "[How Maia Sandu became president with the help of the Kremlin](#)", "[NGO state: Moldova in the hands of pseudo-civic networks](#)" or "[What the communists failed to achieve, the 'pro-Europeans' could achieve](#)". These formulations are clearly inspired by the speeches of pro-Russian propagandists such as



Bogdan Tardea. The politician Vasile Costiuc also plays a significant role in this network, being intensively promoted and recognized for his close ties with the AUR party and George Simion.

AUR's forgery laboratory, funded indirectly by the Romania state budget

Several journalistic investigations have highlighted the central role of Marius Lulea, AUR's first vice-president, in coordinating the party's digital propaganda ecosystem. Lulea was directly involved in managing the party's online communications department and reportedly provided login credentials for several so-called "independent" websites to a member of that department. These platforms include Timpul.md, controlled by Silviu Tănase, an AUR member from Moldova.

An investigation launched by [Rise Project](#) shows Silviu Tănase's connections to AUR and how the site he controls is funded. According to the investigation, AUR leaders George Simion and Marius Lulea directed public subsidies to Tănase. Through three companies controlled by Tănase, AUR received eight million lei, all of which was paid by the state. The money comes from Romania's state budget, although AUR officially claims that it has "voluntarily" renounced state funding.

This mechanism exposes a well-developed "laboratory" of falsehoods and manipulations, funded indirectly from Romania's state budget. It serves as a pillar in spreading the propaganda of the extremist AUR, affecting both the Romanian and Moldovan political space.

The MEGA Conference in Chișinău - another tool in AUR's laboratory of influence

The AUR party's involvement in the Moldovan elections goes beyond online rhetoric. The extremist party from Romania was directly involved in the organization of the "Make Europe Great Again" (MEGA) conference, an event that brought together European conservatives and sovereignists in Chișinău. Under the umbrella of this vaguely Euro-conservative political brand, the conference brought together not only AUR members, but also Moldovan politicians from seemingly divergent camps. They include unionists such as Vasile Costiuc (PDA), pro-Europeans like Igor Munteanu (CUB), Gaik Vartanean (MAN), figures affiliated to oligarch Ilan Shor, such as Victoria Furtună, and former prime minister Vlad Filat. Brian Brown, president of the International Organization for the Family, who later met with both the capital's mayor Ion Ceban and Socialist leader Igor Dodon, was also invited to the event.

Among the participants was AUR's Member of the European Parliament Adrian Axinia, who claimed that his party was responsible for both the organization and financing of the event, promising transparency in financial reporting. However, his statements were quickly challenged by his colleague Valeriu Munteanu, who pointed to another organization as responsible for the funding. The confusion was further deepened by claims by Moldovan politician Vasile Costiuc, who said the funds allegedly came from two associations - one in the United States and one affiliated to the European Parliament.

This lack of coherence and clarity raises serious questions about the transparency and the real nature of the networks of influence revolving around the AUR. The Chișinău event appears to be yet another 'laboratory' of this expansion strategy, with implications that go beyond the political sphere and touch sensitive areas of information security.

The political implications of AUR go beyond online propaganda and events with an explicit ideological agenda. The Moldovan branch, led by [Boris Volosatyi](#), has announced its intention to participate in the parliamentary elections in the fall. While displaying a unionist rhetoric, the



party masks the influence not only of the AUR party in Romania, but also connections with Russian interests.

The expansion of AUR's influence in the Republic of Moldova can no longer be seen as a mere coincidence or an isolated drift. From networks of fake websites fueled with Romanian public funds, to pseudo-European events such as the MEGA conference and direct participation in elections, AUR is consolidating its presence in Moldova. This is happening through a combination of disinformation, populism and opaque partnerships with controversial figures in the local political space. This is a well-articulated strategy with political, financial and ideological ramifications, which aims to hijack the country's democratic and European course and keep the Republic of Moldova within the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation.