

2025 ROMANIA ELECTIONS

Express Analysis of Russian Interference

Comprehensive AI-powered media analysis



ikar

The Institute for Conflict Studies and Analysis of Russia

Introduction

The current electoral cycle in Europe is very important for the security of both Ukraine and the entire European Union. The presidential elections in Romania and Poland, the parliamentary elections in Moldova and Hungary, should provide an answer to whether the right-wing populist axis in Europe, which is used to one degree or another by Russia for its malign activities, will strengthen. The discussion also concerns attempts to reduce support for Ukraine, and whether the EU should continue or even renew economic ties with Moscow, thereby financing its ability to wage war.

The result of the presidential elections in Romania has strengthened the security of Romania itself, Moldova, Ukraine and the entire EU. However, it is worth highlighting the main narratives used by Russian propaganda and its proxies to influence the electoral process. These lessons are important for countering future attempts by the Kremlin to interfere in elections in European countries and bring to power those politicians and political forces that could be used to first undermine European solidarity and, then – security.

One of the main approaches of Russian propaganda to influence the electoral process in European countries is to support right-wing populist politicians and political forces. It was precisely at the strengthening of such sentiments that the Russian operations of influence during the EU elections were aimed. These attempts were closely linked to the strengthening of anti-elite sentiments among European citizens and the growing skepticism towards the supranational institutions of the European Union. Russian propaganda intensified the agitation of right-wing populists about the establishment being out of touch with voters and the EU institutions being ineffective. In addition, Russian propaganda has been intensifying the promotion of the narrative about the need to protect national interests in the economy and security, exploiting the fear of war and justifying that the Russian-Ukrainian war in no way concerns the residents of other European countries.

The exploitation of conspiracy thinking and the active use of social media were fully evident in the 2024 elections in Romania. However, they were used no less actively during the current presidential campaign in Romania.

A new trend can be considered the appeal to the support of the United States and the portrayal of the right-wing populist candidate as a “Trumpist.”

A certain limitation for Russian propaganda, compared to, for example, the elections in Moldova and Georgia in 2024, was the small share of Russian-speaking voters in Romania, but there were attempts to influence this category as well.

Overall, Russia's strategy at this stage remains unchanged: to deepen the division of the EU from within on security and trade issues. To achieve this, the Orban-Fico axis must be strengthened or preserved (in the case of Hungary). Particular attention is also being paid to Moldova in an attempt to accelerate this country along the "Georgian scenario" and significantly slow down, if not completely stop, its European integration.

Research Methodology

This express analysis is dedicated to identifying key narratives used or amplified by Russian propaganda in April-May 2025 during its attempts to influence the results of the first and second rounds of the presidential elections in Romania.

Data is collected from the Romanian and Russian social media and news, using AI-powered tools and manual sampling.

Propaganda narratives are extracted and categorized through keyword clustering and validation.

Trending topics are identified based on frequency and engagement levels.

Key actors*, including state-linked accounts, influencers, and coordinated networks, are profiled through continuous monitoring and propaganda reporting.

Audience metrics are assessed using platform analytics of engagement indicators such as views, shares, and comments.

***Compromised Actors** are profiled based on Indicators of Risk (IoR) and institutional reports. They include:

- *Influential* – High-reach accounts that shape public discourse.
- *State-affiliated* – Linked to or controlled by a government.
- *Manipulative* – Use deception to influence opinions.

Inauthentic accounts are fake or misleading identities used in coordination.

Search terms:

România Alegeri, George Simion, Crin Antonescu, Sebastian Popescu, Nicușor Dan

Key Findings

During the first round of the presidential elections in Romania, Russian propaganda actively used Telegram to promote and support its narratives. The strategic narrative was to present the Romanian elite as part of the pan-European elite that has usurped power and does not respond to the needs of its voters. Overall, the narrative that Brussels dictates foreign policy to independent states, which includes Romania, was one of the closely related narratives criticizing the current Romanian government and mainstream candidates.

During the second round of elections, Russian propaganda also actively used Telegram and continued to promote the strategic narrative about the usurpation of power by European elites and their detachment from voters. At the same time, narratives about attempts by “old Europe” to interfere in the elections in Romania and violate the principles of democracy began to be promoted more frequently. Narratives about the violation or restriction of the right to freedom of speech and manipulation of social networks were used as evidence.

Romania's exclusion from the US visa-free program was presented on X and Facebook as a response to the Romanian authorities' actions to violate democratic procedures. During the first round, George Simion said that the previous visa regime could be restored once Romania returned to democracy, referring to his victory in the elections.

In the second round, the narrative of the usurpation of power by European elites and their detachment from their voters was actively promoted on the X and Facebook platforms. On these platforms, as well as on Telegram, the narrative of European countries' interference in the electoral process in Romania was actively disseminated. The narrative of Moldova's interference and Maia Sandu's personal interference was promoted separately.

TikTok has traditionally been used in Romania to advance narratives and boost the chances of individual candidates. George Simion was promoted on the platform during both rounds of the presidential election as the true voice of Romanian voters and as part of a broader European struggle to return to democratic principles. TikTok also promoted a narrative about the need to end Romania's limited sovereignty and the need to solve its economic problems, which the current establishment is unable to do.

Discussions on Russian Telegram – 1 Round (28.04-4.05)

SCOPE

Actors	Publications	Views	Reactions	Compromised	Inauthentic
1.25k	2.27k	36.9M	428k	286*	106

*Including Russian state-affiliated – 95 actors.

TOP STORIES (by number of posts)

1. Romania Has a Backup Trumpist — He's Ahead of Everyone. (326 posts)
2. RT correspondent Chay Bose was detained at Bucharest airport. According to him, police took him off the plane immediately after landing. (217 posts)
3. Last week, the Alternative for Germany party became the country's most popular party for the first time in polls. This week, the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution officially declared the party an extremist organization...The same was done with the most popular candidate for the presidency of Romania, Georgescu. (113 posts)

Most viewed: Story #3

Main Narrative: The Romanian elite, like most current European elites, has usurped power and does not respond to the needs of the majority of its voters.

Related narratives:

- ❑ Brussels dictates the foreign policy of independent states, indicating with whom it is possible to build relations and with whom it is prohibited. Including for political reasons, it prohibits mutually beneficial cooperation with the Russian Federation.
- ❑ The Romanian authorities are ready for any violations to maintain their position, including violations of the right to freedom of speech.

TOP ACTORS (by number of posts with audience > 1000)

- [Зеркало](#) – 18
- [RT - Новости](#) – 10
- [RT на русском](#) – 10
- [PEOPLE LIVE](#) – 8
- [Lomovka](#) – 8

Discussions on Russian Telegram – 2 Round (12-19.05)

SCOPE

Actors	Publications	Views	Reactions	Compromised	Inauthentic
1.77k	4.21k	20M	375k	373*	115

*Including Russian state-affiliated – 122 actors.

TOP STORIES (by number of posts)

1. Durov: “A Western European government has asked Telegram to silence conservative voices in Romania ahead of today's presidential election.” (653 posts)
2. The gap between the two rivals in the presidential race in Romania has narrowed, Mirel Palade, head of the research company SocioPol, said in an interview with România TV. (380 posts)
3. Romanian presidential candidate accuses France of election interference. (259 posts)

Most viewed: Story #1

Main Narrative: The current European elites have usurped power and do not respond to the needs of the majority of their voters.

Related narratives:

- ❑ The countries of “Old Europe” actively interfere in elections in other countries and violate democratic principles.
- ❑ European elites restrict the right to freedom of speech and attempt to manipulate social media.

TOP ACTORS (by number of posts with audience > 1000)

- [ЕЖ](#) – 23
- [Scanos Новости](#) – 22
- [СИЛА В ПРАВДЕ!](#) – 20
- [Глобальная Авантюра](#) – 19
- [МИРОВЫЕ НОВОСТИ • РОССИЯ • 24/7 #ВместеПобедим](#) – 17

Discussions in Romanian Digital Media* – 1 Round (28.04-4.05)

*Platforms: X, Telegram, Facebook, and web resources. (Romanian language domain)

SCOPE

Actors	Publications	Views	Reactions	Influential	Inauthentic
9.45k	22.7k	2.94M	1.07M	175	568

TOP STORIES (by number of posts)

1. Crin Antonescu, the candidate of the Romania Forward Electoral Alliance in the presidential elections. (145 posts)
2. How Romanians who are on vacation abroad vote in the 2025 presidential elections. (81 posts)
3. The administration of US President Donald Trump announced on Friday that it is withdrawing Romania from the American Visa Waiver program, which allows visa-free travel to the United States. Shortly after the announcement, AUR President George Simion stated that "visas for the US will be issued in the coming period, as soon as we return to democracy." (72 posts)

Most viewed: "On May 4th, come vote and defend Romania from chaos and crisis! Vote for Crin Antonescu ! He is the only one who will lead Romania forward!"

Main Narrative: In a battle between order and chaos, Crin Antonescu is the sole savior capable of protecting and advancing Romania.

TOP ACTORS (by number of posts with audience > 1000)

- agerpres.ro – 618
- stirileprotv.ro – 499
- libertatea.ro – 357
- stiripesurse.ro – 305
- [Stiri România Info - Mass-Media](#) – 304

Discussions in Romanian Digital Media* – 2 Round (12-18.05)

*Platforms: X, Telegram, Facebook, and web resources. (Romanian language domain)

SCOPE

Actors	Publications	Views	Reactions	Influential	Inauthentic
20.4k	46.2k	11.8M	2.09M	187	522

TOP STORIES (by number of posts)

1. The Moldova Mare Party is requesting a criminal case against Maia Sandu for interfering the Romanian elections. (234 posts)
2. Nicușor Dan reacted after George Simion attacked him, claiming that he suffers from autism. (124 posts)
3. The independent presidential candidate announced on social media that he had discussed with the French president the importance of the Romanian elections for the future of all of Europe. Nicușor Dan also posted a four-minute video of the dialogue between the two, which took place in French. (121 posts)

Most viewed: Durov: “A Western European government (guess which one) contacted Telegram, asking us to silence conservative voices in Romania ahead of today's presidential election.”

Main Narrative: The current European elites have usurped power and do not respond to the needs of the majority of their voters.

Related narratives:

- ❑ The countries of “Old Europe” actively interfere in elections in other countries and violate democratic principles.
- ❑ European elites restrict the right to freedom of speech and attempt to manipulate social media.

TOP ACTORS (by number of posts with audience > 1000)

- stirileprotv.ro – 650
- agerpres.ro – 603
- [Știri România Info - Mass-Media](https://stiri-romania.info) – 403
- stiripesurse.ro – 399
- hotnews.ro – 275

Romanian Elections: TikTok | ROM | 28.04-18.05

SCOPE

Actors	Publications	Views	Comments	Reposts	Likes
3.26k	11.4k	103M	728k	778k	7.43M

TOP STORIES (by number of posts)

1. [@georgesimionoficial](#) – George Simion accused journalists of bias, manipulation, and collusion with political opponents to discredit the speaker during an electoral debate. (6.2M views)
2. [@rottweilerchop1](#) – Satirical Romanian post about voting. (2.8M views)
3. [@observatorantena1](#) – Publication by a source supporting AUR (Alliance for the Union of Romanians), claiming Simion's victory. (900k views)
4. [@observatorantena1](#) – Publication by a source supporting the AUR (Alliance for the Union of Romanians), reporting the results of exit polls showing Nicusor Dan leading George Simion. (895k views)
5. [@nicu_ciocan](#) – A post about an alleged high-level discussion suggesting that a planned or coincidental energy blackout could influence the election outcome, possibly to disadvantage a candidate and even suspend or invalidate the first round of voting. (740k views)

Main Narrative: George Simion is the true voice of Romanian voters and part of the greater battle of citizens of European countries to return democratic principles to their countries.

Related narratives:

- ❑ The European establishment is doing everything to prevent a representative of the majority of the population from coming to power in Romania, using various tools such as legislation, media manipulation, and interference in social networks.
- ❑ Romania's previous course led it to limited sovereignty and economic problems.