



# INFOPOLITIC

## Romanian Politics

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### IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

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## VICTOR PONTA: WE DID EVERYTHING THEY COULD TO CONTINUE THE PROJECT OF THE SOCIAL LIBERAL UNION

**It is clear that Mr. Antonescu wanted the PNL out of the Government and made, in his turn, everything possible for this to happen, stressed PSD leaders.** They showed that even when the Prime Minister made a final appeal to the PNL, the reactions of the Liberals surrounding Mr. Antonescu were aggressive to the PSD, as in outright joy that USL has broken. Unfortunately, only PSD leaders wanted this partnership to the very end, said the Social Democrats.

**They warned that there is nothing the PSD can be blamed for in the relation with PNL, during the existence of the USL:** it accepted parity within USL, although this did not necessarily reflect the political reality; it accepted parity in the Government, although this did not necessarily reflect the proportion in Parliament; it accepted constant personal attacks launched against the Prime Minister and PSD, because PSD considered that the function of USL is more important.

**Social Democrat leaders emphasized that USL had a mission that it assumed in 2012, which the PSD wants to take further.** Only in the press conference that announced the USL breaking Mr. Crin Antonescu had 22 attacks against Prime Minister Ponta and only 2 references to Traian Basescu, reiterated the Social Democrats.

**The Social Democrats also criticized the contradictions in the liberal leader's speech.** Thus, for the Social Democrats,



Crin Antonescu speaks of breaches of the USL objectives and violations of protocol – but he did not explain what this was all about. Requesting the resignation of Victor Ponta - represents also for the PSD a disallowed rapprochement to Traian Basescu, because the discussion about resignation has only one role - to give a clearly new instrument to Traian Basescu. The Social Democrats have held also that the PNL President's speech is not anymore about the fight against Traian Basescu, but about fighting PSD.

**PSD leaders also decried that the Liberal leader, Crin Antonescu, has announced that he will change local majorities** – probably with PDL. The Social Democrats emphasized that it is difficult to understand how will the Liberals be in Government again, until the end of the year, as the Liberal leader announced, in the absence of a compromise with Basescu's aides (perhaps, by compromises with Basescu's people and directly with Traian Basescu).

## USL VOTERS BLAME ANTONESCU FOR USL SPLIT

**Asked who supports best the objectives of USL, the Romanians point to Victor Ponta and PSD (41%),** Crin Antonescu and PNL (14%), Daniel Constantin and PC (3%), Gabriel Oprea and UNPR (1%), all USL partners (6%). Asked who is responsible for the perpetuation of the current crisis in the USL, the Romanians point to Crin Antonescu (35%), Victor Ponta (14%), Daniel Constantin (4%), Gabriel Oprea (1%), Traian Basescu (spontaneous - 13%) , all - 8%.

Regarding the European elections, 42% of Romanians would vote for USD candidates, followed by the PNL (16%), PDL (13%), UDMR (7%), PMP (6%), PPDD (5%).



It is also important to observe the vote of the public who trusts, at the same time, the PSD leaders, and the PNL leaders; it is a public who supported the USL project with an important opening for both parties. **This public has an important share in the population, representing at least 15% of Romanians** (to understand the proportions, USL was voted in elections by about 30% of Romanians; thus, about half of the USL electorate trusts both social-democratic leaders, and in the liberal ones; the other half is made up of the public of tough nuclei supporters of PSD and PNL, respectively). **Thus, the votes for the USL group, according to several polls, would go primarily in the PSD camp** (almost 40%), although a significant proportion (30-40%) are undecided. Just over 10% would be taken by the PNL.

Some of the undecided have passed, in recent months, in the PSD camp. **The voting intention of this group for PSD is growing since November.** This shows that the USL public perceives Crin Antonescu and PNL guilty of breaking the USL and either flees to PSD or abandons politics altogether.

**Currently, if we ignore the undecided, the USL vote would split into 75% to PSD and 25% to PNL that would be a 3:1 ratio, which is higher than the 2.5:1 ratio of total voters** (usually indicated by opinion polls). In other words, the joint USL public, as they decide whether it remains interested in politics and wants to vote, increases the distance between the PSD and PNL, in favor of the Social Democrats.

**It remains to be seen whether future developments will confirm or deny these calculations.** They are disturbing for the Liberals (had anyone ever showed them these figures?), which may find that, apart from the USL, they would get much, much less than they would have obtained within the USL.

**The first exam will be in the European elections, where PNL led by Crin Antonescu must prove whether it managed to surpass the score in 2009 or not, when the Liberals won**



**15%**, nearly PNL's current score, according to most polling institutes. In other words – PNL also risks coming back to the score which it achieved last time alone, in 2009.

## **VICTOR PONTA: THE MOST IMPORTANT EASTERN PARTNER IS THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA; WE CONCUR WITH EU POSITIONS ON UKRAINE**

Prime Minister Victor Ponta, PSD President, said on Friday, February 21, 2014, that the most important Eastern partner for Romania is the Republic of Moldova, and that Bucharest adheres to the EU positions regarding the situation in Ukraine.

**'Strictly strategically, for Romania the most important Eastern partner of the European Union is and remains the Republic of Moldova**, so that our limited powers must be all used all in developing the partnership between Moldova and the European Union. I want Romania to use all its diplomatic, political resources in the European Union to support the Republic of Moldova. Otherwise, we concur with the EU position regarding Ukraine or other countries in the region', said Victor Ponta.

**The Prime Minister said that the Romanian Government has 'fully' supported the EU and U.S. partners' position to find a quick solution to cease the violence in Ukraine** and to have a democratic program for the country. 'Romania, like all countries in the European Union, will support the democratic and peaceful course of development for Ukraine', added Victor Ponta.

**PM Victor Ponta also said in Chişinău that Romania has the obligation to do for the Republic of Moldova more than any other European Union countries.**



'I hope that you will be in the EU as soon as possible and then we will seek together a new project. I think that Romania has the obligation and the desire to do more for you and much faster than any other countries in the European Union', said the Prime Minister during the Moldovan-Romanian Forum 'Promoting Joint Participation in the European Programs in Science and Education'.

**The Head of the Romanian Government emphasized the importance of 2014, as an election year for the two countries.** '2014 is an election year in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova. In Romania we choose people, in Moldova you choose a direction for the country and I can only wish you good luck. And if the elites are going in the right direction, then also us, as politicians and people will follow you', said the PM.

At the event, the Minister for Higher Education, Mihnea Costoiu, reiterated that Romania will continue to provide scholarships to young Moldovans. **'Romania will continue its policy of providing support, grants and (.. ) for joint projects under the Horizon 2020 Program'**, said Mihnea Costoiu.

## **VICTOR PONTA: EXACTLY 4 YEARS AGO, MY COLLEAGUES HAD THE COURAGE TO ELECT ME AS PSD LEADER AT ONLY 37!**

On his Facebook page, PSD President, Prime Minister Victor Ponta, thanked his party colleagues, Thursday, February 20, 2014, through a post, for trusting him by voting him as President.

**'Exactly four years ago my colleagues had the courage to elect me as leader of the PSD, at just 37 years old! I thank those who voted for me then, those who since then up**



until today have been with me and those who trust me that we will win in 2014! The best is yet to come!', writes Victor Ponta.

**Prime Minister Victor Ponta was elected President of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) during the 20-21 February 2010 Congress, with 856 votes, while his opponent, Mircea Geoana, obtained 781 votes.**

## **MEF: ROMANIA HAS RECEIVED MORE THAN 300 MILLION EUROS OF EU FUNDS IN ONE DAY!**

**Romania has received another 304.6 million euros in European funds in one day**, after February 20, when it has collected more than 830 million euros, which represents 'a new performance', a release of the Ministry of European Funds, remitted Monday, February 24, 2014, has informed.

**The amount reimbursed by the European Commission to Romania in 2013 was 131% higher than the one returned for the entire period 2008-2012**, which places Romania in first place in the European Union in terms of the advances made of the sums collected from the Commission, informs a statement of the Ministry of European Funds (MEF), submitted Thursday, February 20, 2014.

On the following places in the ranking is Italy with an increase of over 83% and Bulgaria with about 50%. In the top of amounts reimbursed to member states in 2013 are also Cyprus, with 48.76 %, Greece - 48.75 %, the Netherlands - 47.96 %, France - 47.63 %, Malta - 47.23 %, Belgium - 47.18 %, Czech Republic - 46.68 %, Hungary - 45.12 %, Finland - 44.40 %.

At the end of the list is Spain, with an increase of 24.92 %, Denmark with 24.27 %, Ireland - 18.43 % and the UK - 13.31



%. 'Romania has received in 2013 more than 2.8 billion euros from the European Commission, in comparison to about 2.2 billion in all the years between 2007 and 2012. **The total amount repaid to Romania from the Structural and Cohesion Funds was approximately 5.09 billion euros at the end of 2013**', reads the MEF statement.

**At the same time, Romania has asked the Commission for reimbursement of over 3.56 billion euros**, an amount greater than that required for the entire period from 2007 to 2012. Thus, the total amount requested to be refunded to Romania was around 6.5 billion euros at the end of last year, the current absorption rate reaching 33.47 %.

**Romania has received more than 830 million euros from the European Commission**, from structural and cohesion funds, the amount requested for reimbursement in 2013, which represents an 'absolute record', according to a press release from the Ministry of European Funds, remitted Friday, February 21, 2014.

'Receiving more than 830 million euros in a single day is an absolute record in the history of attracting structural and cohesion funds by Romania. **This, considering that the amounts received in each of the years 2009, 2010 and 2011 were lower than that collected today**', said the Minister for EU Funds, Eugen Teodorovici.

According to some statistics regarding the amounts reimbursed by the Commission each year of the current programming period, the situation is as follows: in 2007 and 2008 there has not been received any money, in 2009 0.14 billion euros were collected, in 2010 - 0.22 billion euros, in 2011 - 0.70 billion euros, in 2012 - 1.13 billion euros, and in 2013 - 2.88 billion euros.

**Between January 1 – February 20, 2014 there have been repaid 0.90 billion euros by the European Commission**, says the MEF. For the Operational Programs there were





repaid 506.20 million euros, on February 20, for the Transport Sectorial Operational Program, 180.71 million euros for the Increase of Economic Competitiveness Operational Program, 123.76 million euros for the Environment Sectorial Operational Program, and 19.72 million euros for the Technical Assistance Operational Program.

**'This year, the Commission returned to our country over 900 million euros.** Thus, the total amount returned reached around 6 billion euros, and the repayment rate has exceeded 31%. The absorption rate is currently around 34%, the total amounts that Romania has asked the Commission for reimbursement being almost 6.5 billion euros', the release reads.

## VICTOR PONTA: WE WILL GIVE THE MONEY BACK TO THOSE WHO PAID THE CAR TAX INTRODUCED BY BOC

Prime Minister Victor Ponta, PSD President, announced on Wednesday, during the Government meeting that the money paid for the car tax by citizens in 2012 must be given back and asked the Minister for the Environment, Rovana Plumb, to analyze how and how much time this could be done.

'Madam Minister Plumb, following the decision of the Court of Justice of the European Union, which settled the tax introduced by the Boc Government on February 3, 2012 - I think it was a few days before Prime Minister Boc resigned - is non-European, we have to give the people their money back. **In light of all the restrictions and all budgetary possibilities, we will give the money back.** We will see how and in how much time we can do this', said Prime Minister Victor Ponta.

