

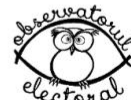


# **Preliminary report on the observation of the 2025 presidential elections**

## **Second round**

This report reflects only findings of Vot Corect on the organization and conduct of the second round; the report on the first round, which contains more detailed information on some procedures, can be accessed [here](https://votcorect.ro/prezidentiale-2025/raport-preliminar-2025-tur1/).<sup>1</sup>

Vot Corect is a civil society coalition formed by Expert Forum, the Civic Resource Centre, Civica, the Center for the Study of Democracy, the Civic Rădăuți Association, the Federation of Law Students' Associations of Romania and the Electoral Observatory. Code for Romania developed the Vote Monitor smartphone app, which observers use to report on election day.



## Summary

*The second round of the presidential election was contested by two candidates with very diverse political positions in a highly polarized atmosphere. The organization of the technical aspects of the process was effective, but the release of deliberate misinformation and alarmist rumors of possible election fraud by the AUR party created tension, put pressure on the election administration and undermined public confidence in the process. The aggressive rhetoric of the AUR candidate towards the media and part of the electorate dominated the last days of the campaign.*

*The results of the first round were validated by the Constitutional Court on 9 May. The two candidates who obtained the most votes, George Simion and Nicușor Dan, remained in the race; of the parties that nominated the other candidates, three declared their support for Nicușor Dan (USR, PNL, UDMR) and one did not declare its support for any of the candidates (PSD).*

*The election administration followed the electoral calendar and efficiently organized the technical aspects of the elections. The fact that Central Electoral Bureau (CEB) meetings were not public reduced the transparency of the process. The very high number of online*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://votcorect.ro/prezidentiale-2025/raport-preliminar-2025-tur1/>

*campaign complaints received by the CEB created a considerable workload, and in some cases, the filing of complaints indicated a coordinated effort to load the CEB's agenda.*

*In the electoral campaign, the right to association was respected and candidates were able to organize their campaign activities generally without restrictions. The right to freedom of expression, although generally respected, was affected in several cases by decisions of electoral bureaus to remove unlabeled political advertising, even when it expressed the political views of journalists or ordinary citizens. Candidates presented the choices the citizens have to make differently: George Simion urged them to choose between the system and the anti-system, and Nicușor Dan between the pro-EU, pro-Western orientation and alignment with the Russian Federation's policy. Both candidates took part in a televised debate; George Simion's non-participation in the ensuing debates limited voters' access to information about his political program. Alarmist rumors and speculation increased in the run-off campaign; the authorities published denials of several intentional misinformation by the AUR to maintain calm and restore confidence in the electoral process. Regrettably, the campaign was marked by verbal violence and discriminatory attacks.*

*In the second round of elections, several online monitoring initiatives warned of coordinated inauthentic content. As for the online campaign, Expert Forum monitored more than 1,000 public Facebook groups, identifying 194 pages with potentially coordinated behavior. EFOR also identified a network of inauthentic accounts promoted with the hashtag #ankaversace on Tik Tok, which was only partially removed by the platform. A disinformation campaign via Telegram aimed at swaying the vote in favor of a candidate was labeled by the MFA as Russian interference. Monitoring by a civic group, detailed in the Cheile Împărăției report, confirmed the existence of well-organized networks operating with significant influence capacity, on a hub-and-spoke model, with several dozen key accounts and thousands of satellite accounts.*

*The first round of the presidential elections recorded the highest costs for a presidential election: income of 172 million lei and expenses of 165 lei, and the overall limits for income and expenditure remain very high. Positively, the PEA published datasets with income and expenditure for the second round on 16 and 17 May on the [finantarepartide.ro](https://finantarepartide.ro) portal. Nicușor Dan has declared income of 40.4 million lei and expenditure of 31.5 million lei as of 16 May, much of the income originating from loans. George Simion has so far not declared any income or expenditure for the second round. Although the candidate would still have had time to declare these funds, the failure to do so significantly reduced the transparency of the electoral process and goes against the spirit of the law. The fact that the identity of several Facebook accounts that are not attributable to a candidate, which promoted negative campaigning prior to the first round, has not been identified so far, despite complaints lodged to the PEA, is a limitation of the transparency and integrity of the process.*

*The number of observers accredited by Vot Corect in the country and abroad increased after the first round to 1276. They submitted information from around 1,850 polling stations during the three days of observation through the Vote Monitor app. After the first round, voters submitted over 3,500 complaints about the electoral process via the votcorect.ro portal, most of them related to voters who posted their stamped ballot papers online in violation of the law.*

*The CEB has adopted numerous decisions regarding complaints about online political advertising. Meta has challenged some of the CEB decisions at the Bucharest Court of Appeal, but these have been rejected and some are currently under appeal. Rădăuțiul Civic and Expert Forum have submitted a request to the Bucharest Court of Appeal to demand that the CEB allow the observation of voting with a special ballot box.*

*Election day was generally orderly, despite some attempts to disrupt the process and manipulate voters. The opening and voting procedures were positively assessed in more than 98% of observed polling stations. During voting, observers reported cases of voter influence, including pressure and vote buying. Vote counting was positively assessed in 95.7% of polling stations. Observers reported no attempts to compromise the fairness of the results, with one exception, but noted a number of procedural omissions.*

## **Background**

During the first round, held on 4 May, with a turnout of 53.19%,<sup>2</sup> none of the 11 candidates obtained more than half of the votes of all eligible citizens, the condition for being elected in the first round. The electoral law stipulates that if the president is not elected in the first round, a second round is organized after two weeks with the candidates who obtained the highest number of votes. The CEB announced on 6 May the results of the first round, and on 9 May the Constitutional Court validated the results and announced the participants in the second round - George Simion, who obtained 3,862,761 votes, representing 40.96% of the total valid votes cast, and Nicușor Dan, who obtained 1,979,767 votes, representing 20.99% of the total valid votes cast.

Of the parties that have nominated candidates who did not advance to the second round, three have declared their support for Nicușor Dan (USR, PNL, UDMR) and one has not declared its support for any of the candidates (PSD).

## **Electoral administration**

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<sup>2</sup> This represents the turnout announced by the CEB after centralizing the protocols (9,571,899 voters). The turnout announced by the PEA on the webpage dedicated to the publication of the preliminary results is 53.21% (9,571,740 voters present at the polls).

The second round of the presidential elections was administered by the PEA and the same structure of electoral bureaus as in the first round; the number of PB chairs and vice-chairs and tablet operators replaced between rounds was reduced.<sup>3</sup>

The Central Electoral Bureau held 23 meetings between May 5-17. Most decisions taken were related to the online campaign. As before the first round, the very high number of submissions received on this topic created a considerable workload, and in some cases, the submissions indicated a coordinated effort to load the CEB agenda.<sup>4</sup>

Regrettably, the CEB meetings were not public, contrary to the recommendations of the Venice Commission and international good practice<sup>5</sup>. Minutes were not published and decisions were still only published in scanned PDF format, which further reduced the transparency of the electoral process.

Preparations for the second round were handled efficiently and free of significant logistical issues, and the electoral timetable was followed. With very few exceptions, polling stations were organized in the same locations as in the first round.<sup>6</sup> Positively, the PEA organized online training sessions between rounds for PB chairs and vice-chairs, even if they participated in the training for the first round. Vot Corect participated in one of these online training sessions. The voter information campaign remained limited.

The permanent lists were drawn from the electoral register, which was updated by the Monday before the election; voters who had reached the age of 18 between rounds were able to vote. Applications for the special ballot box were submitted separately for each round, so those submitted for the first round were not valid for the second round.

Voters who opted for postal voting in the first round were able to vote by post in the second round.<sup>7</sup> The number of complaints about postal voting received by the authorities and Vot Corect was limited. Some of the irregularities reported were related to misunderstandings or the refusal of some postal administrations to return envelopes free of charge; such situations were noted in the Netherlands, Germany or Belgium.

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<sup>3</sup> According to PEA, in the first week after the first round, 263 operators and 263 BESV chairs and deputy chairs were replaced. In total, between 4 April and 12 May, 3659 chairpersons, 2661 deputy chairpersons and 6269 tablet operators were replaced.

<sup>4</sup> See also "Complaints and dispute resolution in electoral matters".

<sup>5</sup> Paragraph II.3.1.81 of the Venice Commission's Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters states that "Meetings of the central electoral commission should be open to all, including the press [...]". The Report on Election Observers as Human Rights Defenders, published by the Venice Commission in December 2024, states that "Election observers have the right to participate in election administration meetings. Observers should be able to follow the meetings of election administration bodies at all levels [...]"

<sup>6</sup> By May 14, according to PEA, only four polling stations had been moved.

<sup>7</sup> Voters who opted for postal voting voted with ballot papers which, in the case of a second round, had already been sent to them before the first round and which contained a list of all 11 candidates.

## Election campaign

The campaign for the second round started on 9 May, immediately after the CCR validated the results of the first round, and ended on 17 May at 7:00.

The right of association was respected and candidates were able to organize their campaign activities generally without restrictions. The right to free expression, although generally respected, was affected in several cases by the decisions of the CEB to apply GEO 1/2025, which ordered the removal of some postings not marked as political advertising even when they expressed the political opinions of journalists or ordinary citizens.<sup>8</sup> The lack of a clear definition of a political actor and the inconsistent application of practice-based criteria by the CEB could inhibit civic and political participation and discourage the expression of political opinions.

The two remaining candidates campaigned mostly online and on television, in the country and abroad; as in the first round, the visibility of the outdoor campaign was very limited due to restrictive regulations. Although the candidates attacked each other as before the first round, the discourse of this campaign touched on several topics of public interest, and voters had the opportunity to better inform themselves about the positions of the electoral competitors on issues such as education, health, the war in Ukraine, fiscal policy, defense and foreign policy. Not only did the candidates have very different political positions, but they also presented the choice they have to make to citizens differently: George Simion urged them to choose between the "system" and the "anti-system", and Nicușor Dan between pro-EU, pro-Western orientation and alignment with the views of the Russian Federation.

At the beginning of the campaign, it was announced that electoral debates would be organized on several TV channels. Both candidates took part in the first of these debates (at Euronews), and the organizers announced that both would have accepted the invitations for the others, but in the following ones Nicușor Dan answered journalists' questions alone, while George Simion spent the last week of the campaign on a tour of several European countries.<sup>9</sup> Instead of the debate scheduled for Thursday, the public television considered organizing separate broadcasts with each of the candidates on Thursday and Friday. Although this project was abandoned when George Simion did not confirm his participation and Friday's show did not take place, it is important to note that such a format is not a substitute for a real debate and it favors the one candidate who participates in the last show, especially when it is scheduled on Friday, when voting

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<sup>8</sup> The decisions to remove some of the materials posted online, including a press article, were publicly criticized by several civil society organizations; the CEB's response of 16 May does not recognize the right of journalists to express opinions in the electoral campaign, but only to inform the public.

<sup>9</sup> Both candidates participated in a debate organized by Euronews. In the last week before the elections, Nicușor Dan participated alone in debates organized by Digi24, Antena 3, RTV, MCN Podcast, TVR, Antena 1, while George Simion visited the United Kingdom, Poland, Italy, Belgium and France.

abroad has already started. George Simion's non-participation in most debates has limited voters' access to information about his political program.

Regrettably, both candidates were the target of discriminatory attacks during the campaign; those against George Simion were posted by some citizens on social networks, and those against Nicușor Dan were repeated even by George Simion and the president of POT, who supported him in the campaign. During the campaign, there were several worrying episodes of verbal violence against voters and the media.

Alarmist rumors and speculation, which were present in the public space even before the first round, intensified in the run-off campaign; the authorities published denials of several intentional disinformation by the AUR to maintain calm and restore confidence in the electoral process. The subjects of the disinformation included irregularities in the voting procedure, electoral fraud in the Republic of Moldova and an assassination attempt.

In Constanta County, the electoral campaign for the candidate George Simion benefited from the considerable contribution of the representative of the Romanian Orthodox Church - Teodosie, Archbishop of Tomis.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, the leadership of the Church issued a press release in which it distanced itself from the action.

## Online campaign

Before the second round of the elections, several online space monitoring initiatives warned about inauthentic coordinated content. Before the second round, Expert Forum monitored over 1,000 public Facebook groups, identifying 194 pages with potentially coordinated behavior<sup>11</sup>. Many of these pages apply a marketing logic centered on sensationalism, generating clickbait that amplifies the visibility of issues or candidates without transparency in the provenance of funds or accountability of content. At the same time, astroturfing tactics, coordinated comments, networks of fake accounts, and political memes embedded in entertainment content erode the boundary between disguised political advertising and simple clickbait content.

On TikTok, EFOR identified and started tracking since February 2025 a network coordinated under the hashtag #ankaversace, responsible for 1,119 videos promoting globalist conspiracy theories and "anti-system" messages<sup>12</sup>. After the platform deleted some of the videos in March (or they were deleted by their authors), activity resumed in

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<sup>10</sup> Archbishop Teodosie performed a consecration mass at the Constanta headquarters of the AUR party on May 11, between the first and second rounds of the presidential elections

<sup>11</sup> <https://expertforum.ro/tabloidizare-comerciala-sau-campanie-politica/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://expertforum.ro/operatiune-inautentica-anka-versace/>



April, just weeks before the vote, with 2,495 new videos totaling more than 40 million views. By this time, the network was only partially blocked by TikTok.

On election day, several hundred cases of voters posting videos of ballots were reported on TikTok. Vot Corect received several complaints about messages received via Telegram. A disinformation campaign via the Telegram app aimed at swaying the vote in favor of a candidate was labeled by the MFA as Russian interference; Pavel Durov, the founder of Telegram, accused the French government of asking him to "silence conservative voices". The authorities in Bucharest and Paris strongly rejected these disinformation campaigns and called for accountability to ensure a fair and transparent electoral process.<sup>13</sup>

Monitoring conducted by a civic group<sup>14</sup> confirmed the existence of well-organized online networks operating with significant influence capacity in a hub-and-spoke model, with dozens of key accounts and thousands of satellite accounts. The publication of the Cheile Împărăției report<sup>15</sup> had several effects: a significant proportion of the accounts flagged, including pages with a cumulative reach of over 2.6 million, were subsequently closed or suspended.

## Campaign finance

Campaign finance is regulated by Law 334/2006, GEO 1/2025, as well as secondary legislation, including Government Decision 10/2016 and PEA decision 9/2025. The first round of the elections was the most expensive presidential election so far. Thus, by May 12, revenues of 172 million lei and expenses of 165 lei were declared.

The law states that the limits for income and expenditure for the second round of elections are halved compared to the first round, i.e. 40.5 million lei/candidate<sup>16</sup>. Only private funds were used for the second round of elections, without subsidies, according to the data available at the moment.

Candidates' contributions for the electoral campaign shall be declared to the P by the coordinating financial agent no later than 3 working days from the date of receipt into

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<https://www.facebook.com/100064515556781/posts/1079485277545314/?mibextid=wwXIfr&rdid=VRm3bwTVkquKxpoo#>

<sup>14</sup> Cheile Împărăției report involves an extensive analysis of the digital networks involved in spreading misinformation, including the identification of key nodes and recurring narratives. In May 2025, the \*Antidisinfo\* initiative was launched, a coordinated effort that combines automated monitoring of influential accounts with surgical interventions in the digital space: short, documented responses distributed directly in the comments of problematic posts. A task force has also been set up to facilitate rapid sharing of trends to NGOs, press and authorities.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.cheile.ro/>

<sup>16</sup> Income can come from candidate contributions (donations, loans or own income) and party transfers, which can come from private funding, or from grants.



the notified bank account. Election expenses must be incurred only during the election campaign period for each round of elections. The election campaign for the second ballot shall start from the date on which the polling day after the validation of the results - 9 May - is made public.

On a positive note, PEA published data sets with income and expenses for the 2nd round on May 16 and 17 on the [finantarepartide.ro](http://finantarepartide.ro) portal. According to these data, Nicușor Dan declared revenues of 40.4 million lei and expenses of 31.5 million lei by 16 May. George Simion has not declared any amount so far. Under these circumstances, citizens were not able to find out how the electoral competitor financed his campaign in the second round and how he spent the money before election day. Although the candidate George Simion would still have had time to declare these funds, not publishing them significantly reduced the transparency of the electoral process and was against the spirit of the law. Given that Romania went through a shock in November with a candidate declaring implausibly zero income and expenses, which significantly affected citizens' trust in the electoral process, the lack of transparency maintained the same feeling.

92% of the income came from loans (37 million lei) and the rest from donations (3.2 million lei). The donations were collected transparently through a portal provided by the candidate Nicușor Dan, but were declared late, at the end of the campaign.

Several unassigned Facebook pages, which spent more than 900 thousand lei since the beginning of the campaign, stopped spending after the first round, which may indicate that these pages were supported by a candidate who did not enter the second round<sup>17</sup>. The only page that continued to pay is Mircea Lupu. This may lead us to think that they were supporting one of the candidates entered in the competition who was not elected in the 2nd round. Although Expert Forum has filed several complaints to PEA about the illegal financing of the campaign, the identity of those who paid for the campaign has not been revealed so far, although PEA has also filed complaints to MAI and Meta. Delays in sanctioning these violations of the law reduce the transparency of the process.

As in the first round, information on the amount of income was published by type of source, the transparency of the process is limited by not publishing the donor or the person/entity that provided a loan to the candidate or party. Reporting during the campaign should nominally include the source of the income - the name of the donor or the person/entity that provided a loan - above certain amounts to ensure transparency of the process.

In addition, the audit of the origin of funds, beyond the formal declaration of the source, remains limited and is not within the PEA's attributions. This limits transparency and may create the context for the possibility of generating circuits for the settlement of funds

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<sup>17</sup> See the data displayed by WhoTargetsMe.

obtained by illegal means from public money. Before the second round of the elections, Libra Bank blocked the accounts of three companies with which the party's first vice-president, Marius Lulea, is associated, as he had not declared the source of his wealth. The bank notified the National Office for the Prevention of Money Laundering about "suspicious transactions" carried out by the party.<sup>18</sup>

## **Election observation**

Prior to the second round, CSOs accredited by the PEA to observe the first round could continue recruiting observers. The individual observer accreditations issued by CSOs for observers before the first round were also valid for the second round.

The number of observers accredited by Vot Corect member organizations in-country and abroad reached 1276 before the second round, and they covered around 1,850 polling stations, including during advance voting abroad, and submitted reports through the Vote Monitor app. For observation in the Republic of Moldova, the coalition co-operated with Promo-Lex as during the first round. Out of the total, 50.7% of the observers were women, 47.6% were men, and the rest either another gender or did not answer. 20% of observers were abroad.

Observer deployment was decided by the observers' choices; therefore, the statistical relevance of the sample of observed PSs may be affected by the fact that in some counties the number of observers was higher than in others. Most observers worked in Bucharest, Iași, Cluj, Timiș, Prahova, Constanța, Ilfov and Brașov. Abroad, most observers were in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Republic of Moldova.

On 17 and 18 May, Expert Forum organized an electoral assistance center in Bucharest, including the helpline 0800 460 002, to which more than 400 complaints and questions related to electoral procedures were registered. The Coalition issued four press releases on election day and submitted written complaints to election commissions, police and the PEA. The Vote Monitor app included, in addition to the observation forms for accredited observers, a version for the general public, for reporting election-related irregularities, and a form where voters could rate the general atmosphere and compliance with the rules at the polling station where they voted.

Regrettably, although the election law explicitly states that observers may follow all polling board activities, PB chairpersons and deputies were instructed through the Polling Board Guide published by the PEA that accredited persons may not accompany the mobile ballot box, invoking CEB Decision no. 8D/04.03.2025, which referred only to delegates of political parties and specified that the accreditation alone does not give political party

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/politica/conturile-aur-au-fost-blocate-de-libra-bank-acuzatii-de-tranzactii-suspecte-a-fost-sesizat-oficiul-pentru-spalarea-banilor-3243745>

delegates the right to enter residences and prisons or to use police escort to travel to those locations. Given that in all previous elections observers were always allowed to observe mobile voting and have always needed the express permission of the residents and of prison administrations respectively to enter homes and prisons, this prohibition is unjustified and further limits the transparency of the electoral process. (see also the section on "Complaints and Election Dispute Resolution").

During voting, observers were generally well received and the requested information was provided, but, as during the first round, there were numerous cases of unjustified ID checks by the police. Vot Corect observers met observers accredited by other organizations in 30.3% of the polling stations visited during voting and in 39.1% of the polling stations where they observed the count.

The Vot Corect Coalition did not organize systematic observation of the centralization of results at the mid-level electoral bureaus and the CEB, as the electoral legislation explicitly allows only observation at polling stations.

We again thank the PEA for participating in a meeting with representatives of Vot Corect between rounds and we also thank all polling stations visited by the observers for their openness and the information provided.

### **Complaints and Election Dispute Resolution**

CEB adopted between May 5 and May 18 a total of 46 decisions in settling complaints and appeals. The majority are related to the campaign and the performance of the electoral administration. Several decisions concern the activity of dexonline.ro platform.

Numerous complaints were based on the GEO 1/2025 provisions on political advertising: by the end of May 18, the CEB had issued 5.868 decisions. During election day and the two advance voting days, 1.845 decisions were taken. After 27 April, the CEB no longer published weekly statistics on decisions or on court appeals. Meta challenged numerous CEB decisions in 22 cases registered at the Bucharest Court of Appeal in May, which have. All have been rejected by the court, while some are at the appeal stage.

On 12 May, AUR Brasov submitted to the CEB almost 400 complaints regarding political advertising on VLOPs. Although we consider legitimate the right of any petitioner to file complaints, we believe that this type of activity can be seen as an abuse and can have a significant impact on the functioning of the institution. In addition, the systematic filing of complaints can be a means of reducing public debate and limiting the possibility, including through intimidation, for individuals to express their political views.

Rădăuțiul Civic and Expert Forum submitted a request to the Bucharest Court of Appeal to order the CEB to allow the participation of independent observers, accredited by the

associations provided by law, together with the polling station office team, in case the voting is carried out with a special ballot box. The action takes place in the context of the CEB's interpretation that the accredited persons cannot observe the voting with the special ballot box, which is contrary to the principles of the legislation in force and the standards of transparency.

## Election Day

Election day was generally orderly, despite some attempts to disrupt the process and to manipulate voters. The turnout announced by the PEA was 64.72%; a total of 11,641,866 voters turned out to vote, of which 8,416,686 on permanent lists, 3,127,125 on supplementary lists, 94,916 with the mobile ballot box<sup>19</sup> and 3,139 by mail (2,691 envelopes were sent out in the country). The partial results were published on the PEA website shortly after the polls closed.

The votcorect.ro platform registered some 3.500 complaints after the first round. The majority (more than 2.600) were related to posted images of marked ballots or with voters expressing their vote.<sup>20</sup> These were forwarded to the General Police Inspectorate. Several hundred such posts were also reported to the Tik Tok network. All of them were of votes for George Simion and, in addition to the obvious violation of the ban on photographing or filming the ballot, their large number raises serious suspicions of a coordinated campaign, including vote buying. At least two cases of vote buying were confirmed directly to a Vot Corect observer by voters involved in this practice in Dublin.

Suspicious of electoral bribery were also reported by voters at polling stations in Iasi, Popesti Leordeni and Ștefăneștii de Jos, where voters claimed that organized groups offered 500 lei for a vote for George Simion, on condition that they would film the moment when the ballot paper was marked. Expert Forum reported these practices to the General Police Inspectorate.

Vot Corect has received several complaints about [diasporade.eu](https://diasporade.eu), a website that collected information from voters in order to provide them transport them to the polls. According to [Context.ro](https://context.ro), it is coordinated by Constantin Troncotă, adviser to AUR MEP Georgiana Teodorescu. We believe this practice raises questions about the way personal data is collected - no policy is published on the website - and the potential influence of voters.

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<sup>19</sup> Most voters voted by special (mobile) ballot box in Bucharest (7217), Dolj (4,492) and Cluj (4,167).

<sup>20</sup> The complaints can be found [here](#) and [here](#). Some of these referrals contain links to numerous posts.

At the call center, the most frequent questions received from voters were related to the voting procedure, and the irregularities they reported were the continuation of the electoral campaign, including PB members prompting voters to vote for a certain candidate, and the tense atmosphere in the polling station. One voter reported pro-George Simion political propaganda sent to numerous e-mails from the education sector (parents' and students' associations).

Opening was positively assessed in more than 99% of the approximately 550 polling stations observed, including on Friday and Saturday abroad. The procedures were generally followed, but in four cases unauthorized persons were present during the opening and in two cases unauthorized persons interfered with the process. None of the observed polling stations opened late. The observers noted that in a few cases the ballot box had been sealed the evening before; although they were allowed to verify that it was empty before voting started, the correct procedure would have been to seal it in front of all those present at the opening.

Voting was assessed positively in more than 98% of the approximately 1850 polling stations observed. Vot Corect observers reported overcrowding at 16.4% of the polling stations visited, tension or commotion near polling stations in 4.2% of cases and a tense atmosphere inside the PS or attempts to intimidate voters or BESV members in 4.1% of cases.

Observers also reported cases in which AUR supporters put pressure on voters and cases in which observers accredited by the Junii Association intervened in the process and were biased towards the AUR party; in some cases they allegedly admitted to being AUR members, although according to the law party members cannot be observers. At two polling stations in Giurgiu, the local mayor and deputy mayor claimed to have been accredited by a NGO. A Vot Corect observer reported to the Teleorman county commission and to the police the organized transportation of voters to the polling station by persons close to the mayor of the commune.

Numerous cases were also reported where the model of the canceled ballot paper displayed at the entrance to the polling stations was marked for George Simion with the control stamp of the polling station. Vot Corect has asked the CEB to issue an instruction asking PBs to remove this type of material.

Other problems noted during voting were: improperly sealed ballot boxes (1.3%), cases where those present in the polling station could not follow the process without restrictions (1.9%), unauthorized persons in the polling station (1.5%), campaign activities, especially slogans or messages in favor of a candidate around polling stations (1.5%). Observers also noted isolated cases where voters were assisted in the polling booth by persons who did not have the right to do so, or where some signatures on the voter lists appeared identical. The secrecy of the vote was respected, with few exceptions, and the

SIMPV was operational during the observation in about 99% of the polling stations. 23.3% of the polling stations observed were not accessible to people with disabilities.

The vote count was positively assessed in 95.7% of the approximately 475 polling stations observed, and observers noted the same procedural errors and omissions as during the first round: before opening the ballot box the PB chairperson did not cancel unused ballots (2.6% of the observed polling stations), voting stamps were not sealed separately in an envelope (1%), the number of voters who voted was not established by counting all signatures (1.2%). The PB chairperson did not show and announce aloud each vote in 18.1% of the cases, and PB members did not have the opportunity to examine the ballots (3.3%). Persons from outside the PB were involved in the vote count in 1.8% of the observed polling stations.

The order of the tasks was not strictly respected in 12.1% of cases, the count was conducted in a tense atmosphere in 12.9% of cases, and in 8.6% of cases the PB chairperson had difficulties in filling in result protocols. In a worrying 33.4% of the observed precincts, the PB members signed the blank result protocols before the count. In 1% of cases, the validity of the votes was not consistently established and in another 1% it was not established according to reasonable criteria. In seven of the observed precincts (1.4%) when the ballot box was opened, observers saw several ballot papers of the same type folded together. Indications of falsification of results were reported at only one of the polling stations observed during the count.

An allegation published by the press the day before the elections, according to which PB members were instructed by some parties to file complaints contesting the accuracy of the results not on the basis of any observed irregularities but wherever the difference in favour of Nicușor Dan was considerable, seems to have been confirmed by the fact that at one of the observed polling stations in the country the POT representative filed a request for recount in the morning, during voting, and during the count the AUR representatives in two other polling stations explicitly stated to the observers and to the other PB members that the party had put pressure on them to insist on a recount.

Voting abroad was organized efficiently, with the same number of polling stations and the same multiple voting options as in the first round. Vot Corect received a few complaints about tension or continued campaigning around or inside polling stations, in some cases with an intimidating effect on voters or polling station staff.