



THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONTROL AND INTEGRITY OF THE PROCESS OF FINANCING POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS IN ROMANIA

Mr. Constantin-Florin MITULEȚU-BUICĂ

President of the Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania



THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONTROL AND INTEGRITY OF THE PROCESS OF FINANCING POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS IN ROMANIA

- The financing of political activities has been regulated since the '90s, on both levels of funding: public and private.
- Political financing refers to both the current activity of the political parties and the management of the electoral campaigns.



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- Things have continuously evolved and changed. The control and monitoring of the financing of political activities were initially attributions assigned to the Government and to the Court of Accounts of Romania.
- Nevertheless, in 2006, the Permanent Electoral Authority was designated to handle these activities.



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- In 2006 changes were implemented on the basis of external evaluations and recommendations, including the ones of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) - chapters which the PEA was able to successfully conclude. ✓



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- Each year represented a new challenge, especially considering the background of the increase in both the number of political parties in Romania, as well as the number of electoral competitors participating in the electoral processes.
- In 2016, Romania introduced a new way of providing state funds - *the financing of electoral campaigns*.



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- At the beginning of 2016, 84 political parties were already legally constituted. Nevertheless, as a result of the legislative changes which came into force in 2016, through which a political party could be founded by at least three members, on the 31st of December 2018 there were already 140 political parties and on the 31st of December 2020 there were 184 political parties.





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- Public funding has grown steadily over the past seven years, due to the elimination of the link between the financier and the party.





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- Thus, nowadays a political party can function and ensure a correct representation of party members while no longer depending on individual or group interests in the sphere of the political activity. It should also be noted that the public subsidy increased from 6 million RON in 2015 to 252 million RON in 2019.
- This trend has been influenced during the last two years by the new challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic into the field of public political funding.



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- Another important change concerning this field represents the increase of transparency and integrity of the political financing. During 2019 we were able to finalize the implementation of *ARGUS: integrity, ethics, transparency and anti-corruption in the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns*, a project financed from European funds that led to the increase of accountability of both parties involved in the control of financing: the employees of the PEA and the representatives of the electoral competitors.



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- Following on the completion of the ARGUS project, control actions of the annual financial activity of the political parties (which have been postponed during previous years) have been initiated. Furthermore, the control activities of the financing of electoral campaigns have also been carried out.



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- During 2006-2018, the control actions of the PEA were generally carried out at the headquarters of the political parties or electoral candidates, but since 2019 they have been performed exclusively at the headquarters of the PEA.



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- In 2019, we managed to carry out the control activities for the current activity of all the parties, as well as for the financing of the activity for the two electoral campaigns and the timely reimbursement of the amounts spent by the electoral competitors according to the law.





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- Following this approach, a new modification was implemented in order to ensure the independence of the control structure within the PEA: the involvement of the PEA management in the activity of the department was no longer allowed, except in order to pursue the compliance with the control plan and the applicable law.



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- An extremely useful element for ensuring the transparency of the financing of the political parties and the election campaigns was the launching of the portal *www.finantarepartide.ro*, a PEA platform that, since the beginning of the pandemic period, has been presenting the real image of each political party in Romania from a financial point of view.



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- These new improvements were appreciated by all the actors involved in the electoral processes, namely political parties and other electoral competitors, non-governmental organizations, the press and other entities involved in monitoring the political funding and control of the financing of political activities.



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- The year 2020 brought diverse challenges for all the electoral management bodies, including concerning the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns.
- Before the COVID-19 pandemic the financial reports were submitted in paperback format, but nowadays almost everything can be done in digital format. In order to ensure the health of the people involved in the electoral competition, the parties have been informed in due time by the PEA that they could submit all the mandatory reports by signing them digitally and sending them by e-mail.



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- There were multiple changes which were implemented, such as the online training by video-conferences of the campaign staff of political parties, the candidates and financial representatives, process which brought an increase of the number of participants, as well as the improvement of the level of information provided to the electoral candidates.



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- Moreover, these actions were doubled by activities such as: holding online events in order to present the changes imposed by the pandemic context, video-conferences to present the results of the performed control actions, participation in online events conducted by international organizations with responsibilities in the electoral field, maintaining an open channel of communication with NGOs and facilitating access to information of public interest.



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- Throughout the pandemic process, the exchange of information between the PEA and the electoral competitors took place online, and since January 2021 we have managed to build and launch the first electronic reporting tool regarding the use of subsidies founded from the state budget.



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- The reports are now accessible to the public and they concern the activities for which information was submitted during the first 8 months of this year. Some processes in the field of financing of political parties and electoral campaigns have not been digitalised yet, but we hope that in the near future, after adjusting the Romanian legislative framework, they will be carried out online.



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- In conclusion, the evolution of the monitoring and control of political parties and election campaigns over the last two years has represented a step forward. Nevertheless, there is potential for future improvements. Taking into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe it is extremely important to share good practices in the field of the control of political funding.



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- Thus, while also providing continuous evaluations of the implementation of policies at national level, we believe that an efficient cooperation mechanism at international level could help set a standard of practice in the field of control of the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns.



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Thank you for your attention!



For further questions or inquiries: international.affairs@roaep.ro