DEMOCRATIZATION

April 2026
Volume 33, Number 3

Special Issue:
Fifty Years of the Third Wave: From Democratization to De-democratization

edited by
Nadine Sika and Balázs Szent-Iványi

Routledge

Democratization

ISSN: 1351-0347 (Print) 1743-890X (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/fdem20

How movement parties contest democratic backsliding: evidence from Hungary and Romania

Lorenzo Mosca, Bálint Mikola, Fred Paxton, Claudiu Vlasie & Dan Mercea

To cite this article: Lorenzo Mosca, Bálint Mikola, Fred Paxton, Claudiu Vlasie & Dan Mercea (20 Apr 2026): How movement parties contest democratic backsliding: evidence from Hungary and Romania, Democratization, DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2026.2651364

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2026.2651364

Published online: 20 Apr 2026.

DEMOCRATIZATION
https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2026.2651364

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

How movement parties contest democratic backsliding: evidence from Hungary and Romania

Lorenzo Mosca [a], Bálint Mikola [b], Fred Paxton [c], Claudiu Vlasie[d] and Dan Mercea [d,e]

[a]University of Parma, Parma, Italy; [b]Democracy Institute, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary; [c]School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK; [d]Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca, Romania; [e]City St George's, University of London, London, UK

ABSTRACT

Democratic backsliding is on the rise globally, prompting renewed attention to the strategies through which democracies resist authoritarian encroachments. One form of resistance involves the transition of protest movements into the electoral arena, in the form of so-called "movement parties." While widely studied in Western Europe, this new party form has received little attention in Eastern European countries where governing elites are fundamentally undermining democracy. This article investigates two movement parties that have emerged in Central and Eastern European countries experiencing democratic backsliding – Momentum in Hungary and USR in Romania – and their impact on the quality of democracy. Focusing on their interaction with media institutions – key arenas both for contesting and enabling democratic erosion – the study draws on semi-structured interviews with party representatives and journalists, party materials and press coverage. The findings show that both parties challenged entrenched elites and introduced new ethical standards, yet their ability to institutionalize democratic gains and counter democratic erosion has been severely limited by media capture and persistent power asymmetries. By analysing the interplay between movement parties and traditional media institutions, the article offers new insights into the constraints and possibilities for democratic innovation under hybrid and democratically declining regimes.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 2 October 2025; Accepted 23 March 2026

KEYWORDS Movement parties; democratic backsliding; quality of democracy; media capture; Romania; Hungary

Introduction

Democratic backsliding is on the rise globally, prompting renewed attention to the strategies through which democracies can resist authoritarian encroachments. When such backsliding occurs under elected governments, opposition actors face an

CONTACT Fred Paxton fred.paxton@glasgow.ac.uk

urgent question: how should they respond? One prominent strategy has been the formation of broad opposition coalitions by existing parties[1]. Yet such coalitions often face significant challenges, including co-ordination across ideological divides[2], reputational baggage, and weak grassroots legitimacy. In this context, an alternative form of resistance has emerged with the transition of protest movements into the electoral arena, giving rise to so-called "movement parties."

Movement parties are hybrid organizations that combine features of social movements (such as informality, participatory practices, and unconventional forms of action) with those of political parties operating within representative institutions.[3] They are ideologically diverse, appearing on the right (e.g. the German AfD), the left (e.g. the Spanish Podemos), "centrist"[4] or in a "post-ideological" form (e.g. the Italian Five Star Movement)[5]. Typically emerging in contexts of social and economic crisis, their rise is closely associated with declining trust in parties and democratic institutions. While this phenomenon has been extensively studied in Western European countries with relatively high democratic quality[6], it has received far less attention in Central and Eastern Europe, including countries experiencing democratic backsliding.[7]

This article focuses on two movement parties that have emerged in such contexts – Hungary and Romania – and assesses their relationship to the quality of democracy. The entry of these countries into the European Union – Hungary in 2004 and Romania in 2007 – was accompanied by concerns regarding the fragility of their democratic institutions, particularly with regard to the rule of law, media freedom, and electoral competition. These concerns have intensified over time, as reflected in repeated EU infringement procedures. Hungary has been challenged over issues of judicial independence, media pluralism, and minority rights, culminating in a 2022 European Parliament resolution describing the country as an "electoral autocracy."[8] While Romania's relationship with the EU has been less fraught, it has nonetheless involved repeated warnings and sanctions. These include, in 2018, serious concerns raised by the European Parliament and the Commission about jurisdictional and penal code reforms that would undermine judicial independence.[9] In both cases, protest movements emerged to resist democratic backsliding and subsequently entered the party arena: *Momentum*, founded in Hungary in 2017, and *Uniunea Salvați România* (USR, Save Romania Union), founded in Romania in 2016.

This article asks: what are the characteristics of the movement parties that have emerged in Hungary and Romania in this period, and what is their relationship to the evolving state of democracy? Its aim is to examine the relationship between the emergence of these new parties and the quality of democracy in contexts of democratic backsliding, with particular attention to the media environment as both a constraint and an arena of contestation. By doing so, the article extends existing research on movement parties beyond high-quality liberal democracies, and contributes to understanding how new political actors operate within hybrid or backsliding regimes – both in opposition and, potentially, in government.

To address these questions, we develop a theoretical framework linking democratic quality, media freedom, and movement parties. We argue that media freedom is a particularly relevant mediating factor that shapes the emergence and strategies of movement parties. We then introduce our data and methods, before describing the state of democracy and the media systems in Hungary and Romania, examining how their recent evolution influenced the rise of movement parties. We then examine the perceptions and interactions between movement parties and key media actors, drawing on a

qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with both sets of actors. The article concludes by discussing the broader implications of these findings for the study of movement parties under conditions of democratic decline.

The emergence of movement parties in contexts of democratic backsliding and media capture

The emergence of movement parties can be understood not only as a reaction to economic crises and failing representational linkages,[10] but also to broader processes of democratic decline. Over the past two decades, many democracies experienced what has been described as "democratic backsliding," "de-democratization" or "democratic subversion"[11], characterized by weakened checks and balances, reduced civil liberties, curtailed media freedoms, and eroding trust in political institutions. In such contexts, established parties are often perceived not as agents of democratic renewal but as complicit in, or ineffective at resisting, its erosion. Practices such as corruption, clientelism, and technocratic detachment further alienate political elites from citizens, particularly those concerned with democratic developments, undermining the credibility of established party alternatives.[12]

One significant dimension of democratic erosion is the decline of media freedoms. Media systems are a central pillar of liberal democracy, enabling public accountability, pluralism, and electoral fairness, yet under conditions of democratic backsliding they are frequently subject to political control. Governments may exert influence through ownership structures, advertising pressure, regulatory capture, or politically aligned oligarchic structures.[13] Such control reduces the capacity of the press to hold power to account, limits opposition visibility, and distorts electoral competition, thereby weakening both horizontal accountability and vertical responsiveness.

In response to declining democratic quality, protest movements often emerge as vehicles for citizen discontent. These are typically driven by "critical citizens": those who are highly engaged and informed but deeply dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy.[14] While such movements often begin with extra-institutional action – anti-corruption demonstrations, grassroots campaigns, or challenges to state abuses – some eventually seek to institutionalize their demands by entering the electoral arena. This transition produces hybrid organizations that straddle the boundary between protest and representation, combining elements of social movements with those of political parties.[15]

Movement parties display a set of distinctive organizational and strategic features.[16] They typically combine protest and electoral strategies, present themselves as outsiders to established party systems, and adopt relatively loose organizational structures that emphasize participation and grassroots input. Many also experiment with digital tools and participatory mechanisms to enhance internal democracy.[17] These features are not merely tactical but reflect a broader democratic ethos that contrasts with the perceived elitism and opacity associated with established parties. These characteristics reflect a broader democratic ethos that contrasts with the perceived elitism and opacity of traditional parties. As a result, movement parties often frame their political project not only in terms of elite replacement, but as an attempt to reconfigure democratic representation itself, emphasizing transparency, inclusion, and bottom-up engagement. To understand their aims and strategies, therefore, the communication practices of movement parties are a crucial avenue of investigation.[18]

In contexts of low-quality democracy, the media environment constitutes both a site of contestation and a structural constraint for movement parties. These actors often define themselves in opposition to dominant media narratives and seek to expose the role of media capture in sustaining undemocratic regimes. At the same time, they face significant obstacles to gaining visibility and legitimacy in media systems that may be monopolized, censored, or biased against political challengers. Even in more pluralistic Western European contexts, movement parties often struggle to secure fair coverage, especially during their formative stages.[19] In Central and Eastern Europe, these difficulties are compounded by concentrated media ownership, partisan editorial lines, and the politicization of public broadcasters. For movement parties seeking to restore democratic quality, engaging with the media thus becomes a central challenge in pursuit of their ambitions. They must navigate a hostile information environment while constructing alternative communication channels, often relying on social media, citizen journalism, and grassroots networks to mobilize supporters and bypass gatekeepers.

We argue that democratic decay and the rise of movement parties are linked through a reciprocal relationship in which the media environment plays a pivotal role. While declining democratic quality – particularly restrictions on media freedom – creates conditions conducive to the emergence of movement parties, these actors must also contend with existing media structures in pursuing their aims of democratic renewal. Their organizational forms, participatory ethos, and communication strategies are thus shaped by, and respond to, the institutional and informational deficits of the environments in which they emerge.

Data and methods

The article adopts a comparative research design, focusing on two cases – Hungary and Romania – where democratic backsliding is underway, albeit along distinct trajectories. The case selection follows a most-different systems logic: while both countries are EU member states that underwent post-communist transitions and face EU scrutiny over rule-of-law issues, they differ substantially in the severity of democratic backsliding and structures of media ownership. Within these contrasting contexts, we focus on two movement parties that have emerged in the past decade: Momentum in Hungary (founded in 2017) and USR Romania (founded in 2016). Both parties fit the conceptual profile of movement parties, combining activist origins and participatory practices with electoral competition and institutional engagement. While USR's period in opposition offers the closest similarity with Momentum, its subsequent experience in government is also relevant to our broader interest in how movement parties interact with media institutions and pursue democratic renewal under conditions of democratic backsliding. This design allows us to examine how movement parties operate under divergent institutional and media conditions, while assessing the extent to which they encounter similar constraints in their efforts to contest democratic decline.

To analyse the relationship between movement parties and the media under conditions of democratic backsliding, we conducted 18 semi-structured interviews: 10 with movement party representatives and 8 with journalists. In each country, five movement party representatives and at least three journalists from major national media outlets were interviewed. The sample included actors from traditional print and broadcast media, as well as online platforms, aiming to reflect variation in editorial

Table 1. Interviews.

		Interviews	
	Movement party	Movement party (MP)	Traditional media (M)
Hungary	Momentum	5 [HU_MP1 – HU_MP5]	5 Blikk [HU_M1], ATV [HU_M2], Hvg.hu [HU_M3], HU_M4] Index [HU_M5]
Romania	USR	5 [RO_MP1 – RO_MP5]	3 Hotnews [RO_M1, RO_M3], Adevărul [RO_M2]

N.B. Interviews are referenced in an abbreviated format of "country_Media/MovementParty_number"; for example, "HU_MP_1".

stances. Interviewees were selected using purposive sampling, supplemented by snowball techniques. Party interviewees were selected based on their roles in communications, campaigning, or public-facing positions, while media interviewees included political editors, reporters, and senior journalists who had covered the movement parties or engaged with them professionally. Interviews were conducted via videoconferencing between 2022 and 2024, lasting between 45 minutes and 90 minutes, recorded with consent, and anonymised. An overview of the interview sample is shown in Table 1.

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis following an iterative coding strategy that combined inductive and deductive approaches.[20] Transcripts were coded in MAXQDA, with inductive coding used to identify recurring themes and cross-case patterns, and deductive coding guided by theoretical expectations about movement parties, media systems, and democratic backsliding. Codes were organized into a set of overarching thematic categories: the party's approach towards the media; the approach of the media towards the party; distinctions between different media institutions; the character of media – party relations; the changes in these relations over time; the impact of the party and the media on democracy. This coding structure allowed us to analyse how different actors interpret the same relationship from distinct vantage points. Analysis proceeded within each national case before moving to a comparative assessment across Hungary and Romania, allowing us to identify both shared patterns and context-specific dynamics, with particular attention paid to the influence of different media system characteristics over the strategic behaviour of movement parties and the interpretive frameworks of journalists. Throughout the empirical sections, interview excerpts are used to illustrate key analytical claims and to ground our interpretations in the perspectives of both political and media actors, demonstrating how respondents make sense of their roles, evaluate democratic conditions, and describe their relationships with one another.[21]

The state of democracy and media freedoms in backsliding Eastern Europe

To contextualize the emergence and strategic orientation of movement parties in Hungary and Romania, we begin by analysing the broader political and media

environments. This article addresses a relatively unexplored setting: the development of movement parties under conditions of systematic democratic erosion and media capture. Hungary and Romania are particularly suitable cases, having experienced pronounced democratic backsliding in recent years, alongside declining trust in political elites and established party systems. These conditions provide the backdrop against which movement parties have emerged as challengers to the status quo. The section traces the trajectories of democratic and media decline in each country, setting the stage for the subsequent analysis of their implications for democratic quality.

Democratic backsliding and the media environment in Hungary

Hungary's democratic trajectory has been notably volatile since the fall of communism in 1989. After nearly two decades of liberal democratic consolidation, the rise of the conservative Fidesz party marked a decisive shift. Following its two-thirds parliamentary supermajority in 2010, Fidesz initiated sweeping institutional reforms which transformed the country into an electoral autocracy.[22] By 2023, Hungary ranked as the lowest-performing democracy in the EU across major indices, with the V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index declining from 0.77 in the early 2000s to 0.34 by 2022.[23] Democratic backsliding has been driven primarily by institutional changes, including reforms to the electoral system that increased majoritarian bias, constituency redistricting favouring the governing party, and the obstruction of opposition-led referenda through legal, administrative, and at times coercive means.[24]

Media capture has been a central pillar of this process. Fidesz's efforts to control the media began with the 2010 Media Act, which enabled party dominance over regulatory authorities. Since then, the party has consolidated control through hostile media takeovers, licencing manipulation, hindering mergers and acquisitions, and channelling state advertising to supportive outlets.[25] These interventions have contributed to the emergence of an illiberal media system.[26]

The most consequential move towards media capture occurred in 2018, when pro-Fidesz oligarchs transferred ownership of more than 400 media outlets to a government-aligned not-for-profit association called Central European Press and Media Foundation (KESMA). This concentration brought most local and regional newspapers, alongside a variety of sports, lifestyle and tabloid outlets which reach broad segments of the population, under government-aligned control. The merger was justified by the government as a matter of "national interest," exempting it from competition oversight.

Media pluralism now varies sharply across sectors. Radio broadcasting is dominated by pro-government outlets, with independent stations facing persistent licencing obstacles. In contrast, commercial television remains somewhat pluralistic due to the continued presence of the German-owned RTL group, which provides independent news coverage. The online media space – while subject to political pressure as evidenced by the takeovers of Origo.hu (2015) and Index.hu (2020), and pressure on 24.hu – also remains relatively pluralistic. Independent online outlets are still widely popular and have adapted by adopting subscription and crowdfunding models, allowing them to maintain significant reach despite distortions of the advertising market.

Accordingly, Hungary's media landscape remains somewhat diverse, especially online, and experts generally differentiate between pro-government and independent outlets, along with a third, in-between category characterized as "semi-independent."[27]

This latter category includes outlets that appeal to urban, educated constituencies outside of the governing party's electorate, while still receiving generous advertising revenues from the state.[28]

The first group – independent media outlets – operate primarily online, while facing pressure. Examples include 24.hu, 444.hu, Partizán, Telex.hu, and Valaszonline.hu. These outlets maintain high journalistic standards, offer critical coverage across the political spectrum, and appeal mainly to urban, educated audiences. Some legacy print media like hvg.hu have transitioned successfully to digital formats. Despite financial and political pressures, independent media are still the dominant news source for Hungarian elites and therefore have a large potential influence over intellectual debates and the views of educated citizens.

The second group – pro-government media – includes hundreds of outlets with content strongly aligned with Fidesz narratives. The unofficial pro-government media sphere, an immensely diverse group, can be categorized along three lines. The first important pillar is public service media, which comprises a variety of TV and radio channels, the most important of which is the TV channel M1. This has traditionally been a news source to most Hungarian families, and the successor of the only TV channel that existed during the socialist era. Following Fidesz's ascent to power in 2010, it became a government mouthpiece, giving airtime to opposition only when legally mandated during election campaigns.[29] The second pillar is represented by the already mentioned KESMA network dominating regional and local markets and often distributing identical front pages during elections and promoting simplified messages – frequently framing opposition sympathizers as agents of war or disorder. Finally, elite-oriented and specialized outlets include more refined publications like Mandiner, Magyar Nemzet, and HírTV. Some business-focused sites such as economx.hu and vg.hu also belong to this category, subtly aligning with government messaging.

The third group – semi-independent media – appears oppositional but is constrained in two crucial ways. First, many depend on state advertising, requiring them to regularly disseminate "pro-government information campaigns" on topics like immigration, the EU, and George Soros. Second, they often feature opposition voices that are non-threatening to the status quo and publish news stories that embarrass opposition actors who pose a credible threat to the Fidesz-led government, including Budapest's mayor Gergely Karácsony and the newly emerged Tisza Party.[30] Outlets such as Index.hu and ATV typify this category, maintaining a delicate balance that limits their oppositional impact.

Democratic backsliding and the media environment in Romania

Romania's democracy, relatively consolidated following EU accession in 2007, has faced growing challenges in recent years. Similar to developments in Hungary and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the country has exhibited symptoms of democratic backsliding.[31] Freedom House ranks Romania as only "partly free," citing corruption and political interference in both the media and judiciary. While V-Dem continues to classify Romania as a liberal democracy, it also records declines in judicial independence and media autonomy.

Romania's media landscape reflects the legacies of its post-communist transition. The early post-1989 period was marked by pluralism and expanded freedom of

expression, but more recent years have seen rising concerns about ownership concentration, political interference, and declining journalistic standards. Romania's middling position in the 2024 World Press Freedom Index (RSF 2024) captures this tension between formal press freedom and mounting political-economic pressures.

A key driver of these dynamics has been the increasing dependence of media outlets on state funding.[32] This trend intensified following the COVID-19 pandemic, as many local publications closed due to financial pressures while others adopted state-funded business models, contributing to increasing homogeneity of opinions across major outlets.[33] Editorial independence is further undermined by weak legal protections against arbitrary ownership changes and by constant political interference, including opaque propaganda funding and the misuse of public resources to manipulate news content.[34]

The Romanian media sector is divided between traditional outlets and an increasingly influential digital sector.[35] Digitalization has enabled independent publications to reach wider audiences, but it has also intensified competition with mainstream media outlets and short-form content on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. These dynamics contribute to the perception of traditional journalism as outdated, particularly among younger audiences,[36] while also facilitating the spread of disinformation, partisan narratives, and ethics scandals, particularly during electoral cycles.[3738]

Media ownership in Romania is highly concentrated. A small group of politically connected individuals and corporations – often referred to as 'the press barons' – controls major outlets and uses them strategically to secure political influence and access to decision-makers.[39] This occurs within a legislative framework that inadequately addresses conflicts of interest resulting from undue commercial pressure and collusion between media owners and political actors.[40] As a result, trust in news media has declined sharply: the Reuters Institute Digital News Report indicates that only 27 per cent of Romanians trust the news, placing Romania among the lowest-ranked countries in the study.[41]

While most Romanians now access news online, television remains widely popular both as a source of news and entertainment.[42] Four major companies – the CME Group (owner of PROTV), Intact Media Group, Dogan Media, and RCS – account for approximately 73 percent of the national television audience.[43] The first two, established shortly after the fall of communism, dominate the market, attracting nearly one-third of the national audience with generalist programming combining news, entertainment, and investigative reporting.[44]

In the online news market, dominant actors include Ringier Romania, RCS/RDS, PROTV and Adevărul.[45] Ringier owns Libertatea, which commands the second largest audience of any news outlet online, while Adevărul, founded in 1871, remains a highly recognizable and influential news brand.[46] HotNews, founded in 1999 as one of Romania's first exclusively online outlets, has also become a key player.[47]

More recently, new players have emerged with greater apparent independence from traditional media conglomerates and politically linked funding. G4Media, founded in 2018 by former journalists from large media companies, has rapidly gained prominence for investigative journalism and political analysis, particularly on corruption and governance. However, questions have been raised regarding the authenticity of its engagement metrics.[48]

Finally, Romania's media system exhibits limited ideological differentiation. As Marincea argues[49], it resembles an oligopoly primarily driven by the commercial interests of media moguls. Public funding plays an increasingly central role in electoral campaigns: state allocations rised from €8 million a decade ago to €386 million in recent years.[50] Investigations by the independent outlet Recorder exposed how the Social Democratic Party (PSD) secured favourable coverage through small PR agencies.[51] While certain outlets display identifiable partisan tendencies – such as the Intact group's relative proximity to PSD or DIGI and B1TV's support for right-wing candidates – media coverage is ultimately shaped less by ideology than by financial incentives.

The rise of movement parties in the context of democratic backsliding

Democratic backsliding and the rise of movement parties in Hungary

In response to the democratic erosion initiated during Fidesz's first term following its 2010 electoral landslide, segments of Hungarian society mobilized through protests and the rise of new political movements. While large demonstrations over internet taxation (2014), education policy (2016), the expulsion of Central European University (2017), labour laws (2018), and teacher wages (2022–2023) signalled resistance, most failed to achieve lasting political results. The decline of trade unions, coupled with a weak, fragmented opposition, limited the protests' political impact, rendering them isolated and short-lived events.[52] In this context, opposition parties have faced immense pressure to cooperate under Hungary's increasingly majoritarian electoral system. Early attempts at such coordination, such as a 2014 electoral alliance of left-wing parties led by former Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai, however, failed to gain traction.

Their failure coincided with the emergence of new parties advocating for the wholesale replacement of the political elite. This argument has initially been championed by two movement parties that entered the Hungarian parliament in 2010, each embedded in different protest networks: the radical right Jobbik and the centrist green party Politics Can Be Different (LMP).[53] However, by the end of the 2010s, it became evident that LMP did not have the mobilization potential to become a successful challenger party, while Jobbik remained unpalatable to most moderate and left-wing voters due to its extreme nationalist, militaristic, and anti-Semitic positions.[54]

The fatigue of the voters of established opposition parties, along with the coming-of-age of a cohort socialized after the democratic transition, created favourable conditions for the emergence of Momentum, a new generational movement party founded in 2017. The party's first major success was the NOlimpia campaign, which collected over 260,000 signatures to force a referendum on Budapest's bid to host the 2024 Olympics. Although the referendum was ultimately avoided by the government's withdrawal of the bid, the campaign marked a significant political victory for Momentum and established its credibility as a challenger with serious organizational and mobilization capacities.

Despite this early success, the party underperformed in the 2018 national elections, receiving just 3.08% of the vote – below the threshold for parliamentary entry. However, it rebounded in the 2019 European Parliament and municipal elections, securing nearly 10% of the vote, 2 MEP seats, and four mayoral positions.

Yet 2019 also marked a turning point in the party's trajectory. Momentum's involvement in joint opposition primaries for the municipal elections brought it closer to established parties it once sought to distinguish itself from.[55] Perceptions of the party shifted as it became part of the broader opposition bloc, including the Socialists (MSZP), Democratic Coalition (DK), Greens (LMP, P), and even Jobbik. This eroded its outsider status and weakened its generational appeal.

This process of convergence culminated in the 2022 general elections, where Momentum joined a unified opposition list against Fidesz. The list's poor performance, combined with the inclusion of candidates from established parties Momentum had previously criticized (MSZP, DK), led to the resignation of its party founder and chairman András Fekete-Győr and triggered a prolonged identity crisis. Under the leadership of Ferenc Gelencsér and former MEP Anna Donáth, the party struggled to regain its footing and reassert its identity and electoral relevance. Its declining popularity became evident when it failed to return a single MEP in the 2024 European parliamentary elections.

Attempting a rebrand, Momentum, led by Márton Tompos, positioned itself as a liberal "service provider" party focused on local governance and community issues. However, the sudden rise of the Respect and Freedom Party (Tisza), led by former Fidesz insider Péter Magyar, further sidelined Momentum, leading to the party's withdrawal from the 2026 general elections, and the resignation of Márton Tompos as party leader. As of late 2025, Tisza was polling 5-10% ahead of Fidesz, while no party from the 2022 "unified opposition" alliance would have cleared the parliamentary threshold if elections were held during this period, with the possible exception of Democratic Coalition (DK), which hovered around the 5% threshold.[56]

Momentum's offer to restore democratic quality

Despite its electoral setbacks, Momentum has played a notable role in efforts towards democratic renewal in Hungary, particularly by highlighting issues like corruption and rule-of-law violations. It has done this through shaping public discourse and policy proposals, contributing to the increased media salience of these issues, as well as by activities in the European Parliament (2019–2024), where its MEPs were especially active in negotiations regarding the rule-of-law conditionality mechanism of EU funds.

Momentum's broader democratic agenda has involved protest mobilization, grassroots organizational development and participatory democratic practices. Concerning protest, the party played a central role in organizing demonstrations on key national issues – such as the expulsion of CEU (2017), a punitive labour code restriction referred to as the "slave law" (2018), and the hostile takeover of previously market leader independent online news site Index.hu (2020). These mobilisations reinforced its activist image and helped to reinforce its appeal among young, urban and educated voters. However, more recent demonstrations, such as a 2023 campaign against the fencing of the Prime Minister's office, failed to mobilize comparable levels of public support.

Drawing lessons from Fidesz's earlier success with local "civic circles" while in opposition,[57] Momentum tried to build a grassroots network through "local circles of activism." After the success of the NOlimpia campaign in 2017, and the European Parliamentary elections in 2019, the party enjoyed rapid rates of membership growth, and managed to secure strongholds in the countryside, too, such as the mayoralty of

the mid-sized town Baja. However, the network it created remained disproportionately concentrated in Budapest, both organizationally and in terms of its electorate.

Throughout the period, the party has consistently supported participatory democracy. Its NOlimpia campaign showcased the power of referenda in an illiberal environment, where the governing party seeks to avoid holding consultations except for ones that it initiates itself.[58] It also championed the use of open primaries to select single-member district candidates and the candidate for PM of the unified opposition in 2022 (along with small green party Dialogue – P), introducing online participation mechanisms in Hungarian politics.[59] These efforts made political engagement more accessible, especially for urban, educated youth.

Although Momentum has faced electoral disappointments and internal crises, its efforts to defend democratic norms, expand political participation, and engage young voters remain significant. It represents an example of how movement parties can challenge illiberal regimes through a characteristic combination of civic activism, digital innovation, and localized political engagement.

Momentum's impact on democratic quality

Next, we turn to the perceived contribution made by the Hungarian movement party to democratic quality, drawing on the perspectives of both party insiders and journalists. As outlined above, Momentum emerged in an increasingly autocratised political environment,[60] positioning itself as a challenger to the systemic democratic backsliding orchestrated by the Fidesz government – particularly its capture of the media. From the outset, the movement party sought to counter narratives propagated by state-aligned media. The party's campaign against Budapest's Olympic bid (NOlimpia) not only demonstrated its mobilizational capacity but also showcased its ability to disrupt dominant media framing and gain visibility despite limited access to mainstream broadcast platforms. In this light, both journalists and Momentum party members consider NOlimpia a successful grassroots democratic action (HU_M2, HU_M4, HU_MP4).

However, the broader impact of Momentum's actions on the quality of democracy and institutional change in the country is widely perceived as limited or, at best, mixed.

As outlined above, Momentum's broader democratic agenda has involved protest mobilization, organizational diffusion, and participatory democratic practices. The party consistently championed the use of referenda, primaries, and online platforms for internal decision-making. The 2021 opposition primaries,[61] held online, were described by a former party leader as a "success story for the whole opposition and Momentum," and a "civilised, democratic, and effective institution for reconciling interests" (HU_MP2). Yet several critical voices questioned whether such initiatives truly translated into democratic renewal. One of Blikk's journalists stated: "Momentum gaining a representative in parliament or taking down cordons does not lead to more freedom or independence for any institution" (HU_M1). Another journalist even declared: "Momentum's botched campaigns in 2018 and 2022 were damaging to Hungarian democracy" (HU_M3). These assessments reflect a common concern: that high-profile, symbolic actions had limited systemic effect as structural constraints – especially Fidesz's dominance – limit Momentum's democratic influence. However, while party members generally view Momentum's initiatives as democratizing (HU_MP4, HU_MP2), journalists question their real effectiveness or even consider them as harmful and vulnerable to political backlash (HU_M3, HU_MP1).

Crucially, Momentum's activity extended beyond national boundaries through its presence in the European Parliament. Between 2019 and 2024, its MEPs – Katalin Cseh and Anna Donáth – played a prominent role in raising awareness about democratic backsliding in Hungary. Momentum's action in EU institutions is viewed positively within the party as a mechanism to counter domestic democratic decline. According to a senior expert of the party, "Momentum's MEPs have drawn attention to the situation in Hungary and brought the voices of oppressed groups to the European Parliament, leading to increased awareness and potential impact on democracy" (HU_MP1). These interventions were not merely symbolic: they helped catalyse pressure on the European Commission to activate rule-of-law mechanisms and encouraged broader European scrutiny of Hungary's governance model.

This strategy aligns with Keck and Sikkink's theory of the "boomerang effect,"[62] whereby domestic actors, blocked from influencing their own state, appeal to international allies to exert pressure on domestic politics. Momentum, facing structural exclusion from Hungary's national media and political institutions, effectively mobilized European institutions to amplify domestic grievances into transnational issues.

The party's communication style has also drawn scrutiny. Interview data confirm that Momentum's engagement with independent and semi-independent media was an important component of its intervention. While the party sought to maintain a respectful relationship with journalists, controversial moments – such as the confrontation between former leader András Fekete-Győr and a journalist at pro-government newspaper Origo – generated polarized responses. According to a party member: "Some saw it as holding the journalist accountable and others found it inappropriate" (HU_MP1). In a more general reflection, a journalist from Hvg observed that "Momentum's media presence and some of their posts and videos are similar to those of other parties" (HU_MP4), suggesting an erosion of distinctiveness. Furthermore, internal party figures in charge of communications expressed that "political actions under Momentum's communications directorate have not been unqualified successes with the public or the press" (HU_MP3).

Moreover, the party's media reception has also been affected by most of Momentum's politicians and independent journalists coming from culturally similar, urban intellectual backgrounds. This has initially facilitated relations during the party's movement phase but turned into an obstacle as it became more institutionalized. As a representative of Momentum puts it: "there's such a thing in the Hungarian public spirit, more precisely in the liberal public spirit, that it is bad to belong to any community, so it's cool to criticize everything, and especially if something becomes a bit institutionalized, or has been in parliament for two years, then it's measured by a completely different yardstick than if it were still a small renegade outsider party" (HU_MP1). Momentum's narrow outreach beyond urban, educated audiences – especially into the countryside – also curtailed its democratic influence. Though intended as grassroots and participatory, critics noted that it remained "strongly Budapest-centric." Ultimately, both internal party actors and journalists note that the party has struggled to maintain a recognizable and peculiar media identity. Journalists (and even voices within the party) critiqued its superficial media strategy and limited resonance.

Table 2 presents the principal areas of convergence and divergence among our interviewees in their assessments of Momentum's contribution to democratic quality. Across all dimensions, party actors consistently express more favourable

Table 2. Summary of interviews with Hungarian journalists and Momentum party activists.

Topic	Party members	Journalists	Summary
Media Impact of Momentum	Media engagement is respectful and strategic, but there is room for improvement (HU_MP3, HU_MP5)	Media strategy seen as ineffective, indistinct, or superficial (HU_M3, HU_M4, HU_M5)	Party overestimates effectiveness; journalists are critical.
Referenda and primaries	Introduced democratic tools enabling participation and hope (HU_MP2, HU_MP4)	May be symbolic only; not impactful long term, possibly even counterproductive (HU_M3)	Party sees innovation; journalists see limits or risks.
European Parliament advocacy	EU presence helps counter domestic repression. MEPs raise awareness internationally (HU_MP1, HU_MP3)	No explicit opposing view from journalists.	Consensus among party members: journalists are silent or neutral.
Overall impact on democracy	Momentum contributes through action, representation, and participation (HU_MP1, HU_MP3, HU_MP2)	At best, Momentum's contribution is seen as mixed (HU_M4), but most agree that it has no or little measurable effect on democracy (HU_M1, HU_M2)	Party sees a positive contribution; journalists are sceptical or dismissive.

evaluations than their media counterparts. While Momentum actors frequently highlighted the organization's European-level advocacy as a meaningful counterweight to domestic democratic erosion, journalists offer little recognition of such activities. Likewise, the party's democratic innovations are enthusiastically endorsed by its members, yet, are often met with scepticism or outright criticism by journalists. Lastly, while party actors point to Momentum's influence on the media landscape and public discourse, such an impact is minimized or denied by media professionals. As one Blikk journalist concluded: "Momentum's activist base and spectacular actions may have changed people's experience of democracy, but not the quality of democracy."

Democratic backsliding and the rise of movement parties in Romania

Romania's democratic erosion has been highlighted by recent research (Blackington et al. 2024), which points to attacks on the independence of the judicial system and escalating corruption as key issues shaping the country's trajectory – and presenting opportunities for new challenger parties. In 2015, following the deadly Clubul Colectiv nightclub fire in Bucharest – widely perceived as the result of corruption and regulatory failure – mass protests erupted, forcing the resignation of the government.[63] Less than six months later, even larger demonstrations arose to oppose Emergency Ordinance 13 (OUG13), which would have weakened anti-corruption legislation. These protests, the largest protests since 1989, again culminated in the government's collapse.[64]

Beyond their immediate effects, the longer-term consequences of these mobilisations included the birth of the #rezist movement and the first movement party in Romania, USR. Originating as a civic initiative focused on urban governance in Bucharest ("Uniunea Salvati Bucurestiul," USB), the movement gradually institutionalized into a national party capable of channelling protest demands into parliamentary politics.[65] Central to its anti-establishment appeal was a promise of political rejuvenation, and the strengthening of anti-corruption efforts.[66]

Over time, however, confidence among protesters in the capacity of institutional reform to deliver meaningful change declined. Disillusionment increasingly shifted from dissatisfaction with particular governments to a broader scepticism toward the post-communist political system itself. This sentiment was reinforced by persistently low trust in political institutions and declining electoral participation.[67] Protest constituencies that initially supported reformist mobilization increasingly came to view themselves as excluded from the benefits of post-accession growth and effective public services, contributing to a broader sense of political marginalization.[68]

This environment proved fertile for the rise of populist radical-right actors, who promise a "reset" of the system through anti-establishment rhetoric, along with an illiberal agenda that focuses on issues such as euroscepticism, sexual minorities' rights, and immigration control.[69] The most prominent beneficiary has been the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR), which has experienced a meteoric rise in electoral support – from 9% in 2020 to 18.3% in 2024 – making it the country's second largest party. The peak of this surge came in November 2024 during the presidential election, when Călin Georgescu, a candidate with ties to fascist guerilla groups,[70] advanced to the second round despite minimal mainstream media exposure. The subsequent cancellation of the runoff by the Constitutional Court, citing alleged Russian interference, highlighted the fragility of Romania's democratic institutions.[71]

USR's offer to restore democratic quality

USR emerged as a movement party explicitly positioning itself as an agent of democratic renewal in Romania. Founded in 2016 by future Romanian president, Nicușor Dan, it used public demonstrations as a key vehicle for engaging the public on the perennial issue plaguing post-1989 Romanian politics: corruption. The party steered a course that circumvented entrenched ideological positions, presenting itself as an actor rather defined by its "anti-system orientation."[72] Its eclectic ideology – similar to that of other European movement parties, most notably Italy's Five Star Movement[73] – was characterized as "a mix between demands for full transparency, anti-corruption, economic liberalism and Eurofederalism."[74] This strategic ambiguity was intended to distinguish USR from its mainstream rivals, while combined with tactical electoral alliances, and broaden its appeal.

USR's roots lay firmly outside the party system. Its leader, Nicușor Dan, and later the party as a whole, gained prominence through civic activism and protest "against illegalities and political abuses," notably campaigns against corruption and political abuse in Bucharest, organized through the NGO *Salvați Bucureștiul*, and opposition to the Roșia Montană mining project.[75] Forged through voluntarism and mobilization rather than party fragmentation, USR sought to distinguish itself from established parties by rejecting recycled elites and political opportunism. Nicușor Dan's initial candidacy as an independent in the 2012 Bucharest mayoral election was positioned as an outsider advocating greater transparency in public administration, who "formed the party along similar lines."[76]

The party's strategic choice to eschew any clear ideological commitments other than to good governance – free of corruption and waste in public spending – additionally opened the door to the recruitment of new leaders, from outside of the political mainstream.[77] By foregrounding anti-corruption and the rule of law as issues on which established elites had failed,[78] USR challenged both the institutional and the organizational status-quo, presenting itself as a vehicle for improving democratic quality

through better governance and leadership renewal. His strategy proved electorally effective in the party's early years: in 2020 it came third in the parliamentary elections and subsequently formed a minority government with the Liberal Party (PNL) and the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR).[79]

However, internal tensions soon emerged. A leadership-driven move toward a clearer centre-right ideological profile generated internal divisions and weakened the party's cohesion. By 2024, USR's electoral support had fallen to roughly half of its 2020 level.[80] Despite this decline, anti-corruption remained a salient issue for significant segments of the electorate – particularly in large urban centres[81] – and continued to structure the party's discourse.[82]

USR's experience in government further exposed the tensions inherent in its movement party form. Its first period in office in 2021 lasted less than ten months and was marked by conflict with coalition partners.[83] While it was part of the government led by the then leader of PNL (the Liberal Party), Florin Cîțu, its discourse and actions were often at odds with those of the government.[84] Disagreements culminated in the party's exit from government following its opposition to the dismissal of the Justice Minister, who had refused to endorse a controversial infrastructure investment programme on legal and ethical grounds.[85] As of early 2026, USR is part of a coalition alongside PSD, PNL and UDMR, marshalled to hold off the far-right AUR party. Once again, USR governs alongside parties it initially defined itself against, while attempting to preserve its anti-establishment and anti-corruption credentials in an effort to recover the broader support it once commanded.

USR's impact on democratic quality

Finally, we turn to the perceived impact of USR on democratic quality in Romania, drawing on interviews with party representatives and journalists. As outlined above, USR emerged as a civic-oriented political movement aiming to disrupt Romania's post-communist party system. Its commitment to transparency, participatory politics, meritocratic governance, and anti-corruption resonated with a segment of the electorate disillusioned by the practices of the dominant parties, PSD and PNL, and initially generated heightened public expectations of political integrity. However, interviews with both party representatives and media professionals point to substantial structural and organizational constraints that have limited the party's democratic impact.

Many interviewees – particularly those affiliated with the party – understood USR's most significant democratic contribution as normative and symbolic rather than systemic and substantive. During its time in opposition, the party's refusal to engage in opaque media funding, its emphasis on policy over patronage, and its promotion of "clean" candidate lists were repeatedly framed as a break with Romania's clientelistic traditions. In particular, the party's "No Criminals in Public Office" campaign led to revisions in the lists of candidates for elections, resulting in fewer people with criminal records being included. According to a party's MP, its appearance "was a shock to the system … USR's presence has forced other parties to change and improve their approach to democracy" (RO_MP2).

At the same time, respondents consistently emphasized that USR's capacity to translate these normative commitments into systemic change was curtailed by the structure of Romania's media environment. Journalists characterized the media system as heavily shaped by state subsidies and partisan interests, limiting the space available for challengers unwilling to participate in informal funding arrangement

(RO_M2). According to one, "the press has ceased to be the watchdog of democracy and is now a dog that enjoys the crumbs thrown by power" (RO_M3). USR's refusal to allocate public funds to media outlets – while ethically praised by some journalists (RO_M1) – led to marginalization and, at times, overt hostility from mainstream broadcasters and newspapers. Consequently, USR struggled to access neutral media platforms and relied heavily on social media and informal networks to disseminate its message, reinforcing its concentration among already sympathetic and digitally connected audiences.

These external constraints were compounded by internal organizational weaknesses. The party faced difficulties in developing a coherent, long-term media strategy. Its overreliance on a few national figures and the lack of coordination at the local level led to inconsistent communication (RO_MP5). Moreover, internal conflicts and high-profile departures provided fuel for critical media coverage and reinforced the perception of organizational fragility and communication deficit (RO_M3). Party figures echoed this, admitting that: "The party's media strategy is unclear and may not have been effective" (RO_MP2). Other party members emphasized that USR "communicated almost exclusively through Facebook and avoided direct confrontation with certain media outlets" (RO_MP4). Bypassing traditional media is seen as a limitation given that: "The party is creative and inspired in conveying its messages to the public … it's not enough to rely solely on social media," and furthermore: "Politics is still done in the streets, and USR PLUS needs to combine both online and offline actions" (RO_M3).

The shift from activist movement to governing party proved difficult. While respondents recognized that USR's presence in cabinet politicized issues of transparency and public investment, they also emphasized that the party struggled to convert its reformist ambitions into systemic change. One insider described how "USR has become more established and has taken on some of the practices of the system, losing its anti-system party status" (RO_MP5). The need to negotiate within a complex coalition environment and to compromise with long-standing political actors challenged its outsider identity, reducing the clarity of its democratic mission in the eyes of both journalists and supporters. Moreover, USR's participation in government did not substantially improve its media visibility. Even when holding ministries, party representatives noted that media coverage remained "hostile" and "USR representatives were no longer invited to prime time shows" (RO_MP2). In this phase, the party's institutional position did little to ameliorate the structural disadvantages it faced in the media system. Instead, internal conflicts and leadership instability during and after its time in office further dampened perceptions of the party's capacity to deliver democratic renewal.

Across both opposition and government phases, respondents converged on an ambivalent assessment of USR's democratic impact. The party is widely recognized as a symbolic disruptor that introduced new expectations regarding political ethics, candidate integrity, and transparent governance. Yet its capacity to institutionalize these values and sustain momentum has remained limited. As party representatives observed, USR contributed to "bringing public demands and developing a system of criticism of government decisions" (RO_MP1), yet while "the party has produced some breaches, it has not necessarily managed to bring about systemic change" (RO_MP3). In the absence of sustained access to major media platforms and amid internal volatility, USR's role as a lasting democratic innovator remains uncertain.

Table 3. Summary of interviews with Romanian journalists and USR party activists.

Topic	Party members	Journalists	Summary
Democratic virtues	USR introduced transparency and ethical standards (RO_MP2, RO_MP1)	Admired dissociation from systemic use of public money to buy favourable media coverage (RO_M1)	USR's stance on clean governance is respected across both camps.
Effectiveness of media strategy	Strategy lacked coherence; overreliance on Facebook (RO_MP4, RO_MP2)	Unclear messaging (RO_M3)	General consensus is that the media strategy is a structural weakness for the party.
Organizational coherence	Struggled with leadership, internal conflict, lack of coordination (RO_MP5, RO_MP4)	Factionalism and scandals were detrimental (RO_M3)	Both groups view internal organization as a major vulnerability limiting the party's democratic potential.
Overall impact on democracy	USR has promoted clean governance and pressured old parties to adapt (RO_MP2, RO_MP1, RO_MP3)	Only partial recognition of symbolic value (RO_M3)	While both sides credit the party's intentions, journalists' doubts remain about long-term impact.

Table 3 summarizes these divergent evaluations of USR's contribution to democratic quality in Romania. As in the Hungarian case, party members consistently express a more positive evaluation than journalists. USR's emphasis on political ethics, transparency, and clean governance is strongly endorsed by its representatives, who view the party as a corrective force within Romania's clientelistic political system. However, media professionals often question the party's effectiveness, citing organizational fragmentation and communication weaknesses. While party members emphasize their refusal to fund media outlets as a principled stance, journalists frequently frame this as a reason for USR's marginalization and limited media visibility. Furthermore, although the party's reformist agenda is acknowledged by some observers, its long-term institutional impact remains contested. Ultimately, while USR actors perceive their influence on the democratic system as both ethical and structural, journalists remain more sceptical, highlighting both external constraints and internal shortcomings. These dynamics reflect both the disruptive potential and structural vulnerabilities of movement parties navigating semi-consolidated democracies, where ethical ambition often collides with entrenched systems of political and media power.

Conclusion

This article has examined the relationship between movement parties and the quality of democracy in two Central and Eastern European countries: Hungary and Romania. In doing so, it extends the study of movement parties beyond well-institutionalized liberal democracies,[86] to consider how they emerge and operate under conditions of declining media freedoms and weakening democratic institutions.

Our comparative analysis shows that the capacity of movement parties to counter democratic backsliding depends not only on organizational choices or institutional opportunities, but crucially on the communication strategies they adopt in restricted media environments. In both cases, movement parties struggled to translate normative

commitments – such as transparency, ethical governance, and participatory renewal – into broader public resonance and institutional change. Overreliance on digital communication channels, combined with poorly calibrated engagement with traditional media, limited their reach to narrow socio-demographic groups and reinforced existing communicative asymmetries. Activist origins encouraged mobilization-oriented strategies that consolidated existing support but proved less effective at persuasion beyond urban and politically engaged constituencies.

At the same time, our findings demonstrate that effective communication can generate meaningful political impact even under hostile conditions. Campaigns such as "NOlimpia" in Hungary and "No Criminals in Public Office" in Romania illustrate how message clarity, large-scale dissemination, and strategic media engagement can overcome structural constraints, and so shape political agendas and expand democratic expectations. While Momentum and USR did not reach major electoral breakthroughs to become dominant actors within their respective party systems, their repertoires of mobilization informed subsequent challenger strategies. This is evident in the emergence of the Tisza Party in Hungary in 2024-2025,[87] which has combined street demonstrations with organic social media initiatives to establish itself as a credible challenger.[88] This development suggests that, even if the "movement party" label has lost some of its appeal in parties' external communication, the mobilization tools associated with movement parties have been mainstreamed and incorporated into the repertoires of new political actors, underscoring their longer-term contribution to contesting declining democratic quality.

The article makes three broader contributions to the literature on movement parties and democratic resilience. First, it identifies internal tensions within the movement party form that limit their capacity to promote democratic renewal in illiberal or hybrid regimes. Participatory organizational models – often seen as a democratic strength – can generate fragmentation and strategic incoherence when confronted with the demands of electoral competition and governance.[89] This was evident in the divisions within the USR and Momentum's convergence with discredited opposition elites, highlighting the insights to be gained from studying movement parties in such contexts. Second, it demonstrates that media systems act as decisive intermediaries shaping the democratic impact of movement parties. Both parties operated in constrained media environments – politically controlled in Hungary and economically dependent in Romania – which limited the reach and resonance of their narrative. Although movement parties often rely on digital communication, our findings indicate that the limited freedom of traditional media remains a critical obstacle to democratic impact. Third, the analysis suggests that movement parties emerging in contexts of democratic erosion constitute a distinct subtype. Unlike their counterparts in Western Europe[90] or Latin America,[91] USR and Momentum represent electoral responses to authoritarian drift and state capture. Our study suggests that in such contexts, movement parties may offer symbolic democratization yet lack the capacity to generate deeper institutional transformation.

These findings also carry important policy implications. Due to the powerful influence of communication infrastructures over the democratizing potential of movement parties in hybrid regimes, efforts to support democratic resilience must directly address these constraints. Civil society organizations, European political foundations and democracy assistance programmes can play a role in strengthening parties' communication capacities, including strategic messaging and navigating constrained

media environments. Communication strategies must also be adapted to reach publics less integrated into digital communication channels – particularly older and rural voters – whose marginalization is often exploited by governing elites. More broadly, strengthening pluralistic media environments – including through EU-level funding mechanisms, pressure to ensure transparency in media financing and safeguards against politically distorted advertising – remains essential for expanding the communicative space available to democratic challengers.

Notes

1. Gamboa, *Resisting Backsliding*; Mikola and Santos, "Opposition Electoral Strategies."
2. Riedl et al., "Democratic Backsliding, Resilience, and Resistance."
3. Kitschelt, "Movement Parties"; Borbáth and Paxton, "Movement Parties in Europe."
4. Stanley, "Populism in Central and Eastern Europe."
5. Mosca and Tronconi, "Beyond Left and Right."
6. Kitschelt, "Movement Parties"; della Porta et al., *Movement Parties Against Austerity*; Wagemann et al., *Protest and Democracy*.
7. Borbáth and Susánszky, "Party System Transformation from Below"; Caiani and Císař, *Radical Right Movement Parties in Europe*; Pirro and Gattinara, "Movement Parties of the Far Right."
8. European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of September 15, 2022; which denounced "a breakdown in democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights in Hungary, turning the country into a hybrid regime of electoral autocracy"
9. European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 13 November 2018 on the rule of law in Romania.
10. della Porta et al., *Movement Parties Against Austerity*.
11. Bermeo, "On Democratic Backsliding"; Bogaards, "De-democratization in Hungary"; Schedler, "Rethinking Democratic Subversion."
12. Gamboa, *Resisting Backsliding*.
13. Bermeo, "On Democratic Backsliding"; Dragoman, "Save Romania."
14. Norris, *Democratic Deficit*.
15. della Porta et al., *Movement Parties Against Austerity*; Wagemann et al., *Protest and Democracy*.
16. Borbáth and Paxton, "Movement Parties in Europe."
17. della Porta et al., *Movement Parties Against Austerity*.
18. Mercea and Mosca, "Understanding Movement Parties."
19. Mosca and Paxton, "Changing Strategies, Shifting Responses."
20. Boyatzis, *Transforming Qualitative Information*.
21. Knott et al., "Interviews in the Social Sciences."
22. Papada et al., *Democracy Report 2023*.
23. Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report – Hungary.
24. Papp and Zorigt, "Political Constraints."
25. Bátorfy and Urbán, "State Advertising as an Instrument."
26. Polyák, "Media in Hungary."
27. Bajomi-Lázár and Horváth, "Two Journalistic Cultures in One Country."
28. Bátorfy and Urbán, "State Advertising as an Instrument."
29. Urbán and Polyák, "How Public Service Media Disinformation Shapes Hungarian Public Discourse."
30. Kovarek, "Elite Defection and Opposition Realignment."
31. Gherghina, "Still on the Fringes?"
32. Dragomir, "Control the Money, Control the Media."
33. Dragomir et al., "Striving and Surviving."
34. Botan, "The Romanian Media System."
35. Ibid.
36. Hendrickx, "Normal News Is Boring."
37. For insights into the alleged concerted disinformation campaign during the 2024 Romanian presidential elections, see: Nistor and Zadobrischi, "Virality of TikTok and New Media."

38. Mungiu-Pippidi and Ghinea, "Struggling with Media Capture."
39. Botan, "The Romanian Media System."
40. Toma et al., *Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era*.
41. Radu, "Digital News Report 2025: Romania."
42. Botan, "The Romanian Media System."
43. Toma et al., *Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era*.
44. Holdis, *Media Influence Matrix: Romania*.
45. Toma et al., *Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era*.
46. Radu, "Digital News Report 2025: Romania."
47. Belu, "The New Paradigm of Communication."
48. Ibid.
49. Marincea, "A Century of Media Capture in Romania."
50. Cârlugea, "De la 8 la 386 milioane de lei."
51. Voinea et al., "Prețul tăcerii."
52. Neumann, "The History of Trade Unions in Hungary."
53. Borbáth and Susánszky, "Party System Transformation from Below."
54. Kyriazi, "Ultranationalist Discourses of Exclusion."
55. Kovarek and Littvay, "Greater than the Sum of Its Part(ie)s."
56. See the results of Medián polling agency's relevant survey in the following article: HVG, "A Tisza annyival vezet a Fidesz előtt."
57. Greskovits, "Rebuilding the Hungarian Right."
58. Mikola, "Fabricating Public Support for Illiberal Policies."
59. Oross and Tap, "Moving Online."
60. Enyedi and Mikola, "Legislative Capture in Hungary."
61. Mikola and Santos, "Opposition Electoral Strategies."
62. Keck and Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*.
63. Nemeș, "Colectiv"; Creţan and O'Brien, "Corruption and Conflagration."
64. Adi and Lilleker, *#Rezist*.
65. Munteanu, "Beyond #Rezist."
66. Dragoman, "Save Romania."
67. Cinpoes, "The Challenges of Political Protest and Democratic Representation."
68. Gabor, "De la Mineriade, la oameni aduși cu autocarul."
69. Armeanu, "The Fast Rise of Populist Radical Right Parties."
70. Cârlugea and Despa, "Ce conține dosarul."
71. Ziarul Financiar, "Lovitură de teatru."
72. Dragoman, "Save Romania," 310.
73. Mosca and Tronconi, "Beyond Left and Right."
74. Gherghina and Grad, "Political Game-Changers," 618.
75. Dima, "David and Goliath," 175; see also Dragoman, "Save Romania."
76. Dima, "David and Goliath," 175.
77. Ibid., 177.
78. Ibid., 176.
79. Dima, "David and Goliath," 175.
80. Onofrei, "Rezultatul final al alegerilor parlamentare 2024."
81. Stoian, "Sondaj pentru alegerile din București."
82. Dragoman, "Save Romania."
83. G4Media.ro, "UPDATE: Miniștrii USR PLUS."
84. Trif, "Back to the 'Future'."
85. Păcurar, "Florin Cîțu l-a demis."
86. della Porta et al., *Movement Parties Against Austerity*.
87. Kovarek, "Elite Defection and Opposition Realignment."
88. Baranyai et al., "Hungary: Political Developments and Data in 2024."
89. Mosca and Paxton, "The Rise of Movement Parties."
90. della Porta et al., "Movement Parties Against Austerity."
91. Anria, *When Movements Become Parties*.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Bálint Mikola for conducting the interviews in Hungary, and Dana Trif and Diana Margarit for conducting the interviews in Romania. They also thank all interviewees for generously giving their time and sharing their experiences and perspectives.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

The project from which the research and writing of this article originates has been funded by the Volkswagen Foundation (grant number 98144). Fred Paxton completed this article while in receipt of funding from the Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowship (ECF-2024-354). Lorenzo Mosca and Fred Paxton wrote this article while in receipt of funding for the Project of National Interest (PRIN) "Mimesys' (MIsperceptions, information disorder and polarization between MEdia and political SYStems) by the Italian Ministry of Education, University, and Research (MUR) – Project code 2022WYEW47. Bálint Mikola has received funding from the AUTHLIBNeo-Authoritarianisms in Europe and the Liberal Democratic Response project funded by the European Union (Horizon Europe, grant number 101060899). Dan Mercea and Claudiu Vlasie wrote this article while in receipt of funding from the European Union – NextGenerationEU – and the Romanian Government, under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan for Romania, contract no. 760038/23.05.2023, cod PNRR-C9-I8-CF204/29.11.2022, disbursed by the Romanian Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, within Component 9, Investment I8. Dan Mercea and Lorenzo Mosca also acknowledge receipt of funding from Horizon Europe, grant number 101178268.

Ethical approval and informed consent

Approval granted by the Ethics Committee of the University of Milan (Università degli Studi di Milano), parere n. 111/21, 28 October 2021.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available due to ethical and privacy restrictions but could be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Notes on contributors

Lorenzo Mosca is a professor of Political Communication and Sociology of Digital Media at the University of Parma. He is the co-author of "Movement parties against austerity" (with D. della Porta, J. Fernández, and H. Kouki, Polity, 2017) and co-editor of "Protest and Democracy: How Movement Parties, Social Movements and Active Citizens are Reshaping Europe" (with C. Wagemann, T. Burean, D. Mercea, and C. Neumayer, Routledge, 2025). His recent articles appeared in journals such as South European Society and Politics, West European Politics, Acta Politica, Information, Communication & Society, and European Societies.

Bálint Mikola is a political scientist who works as a researcher at the CEU Democracy Institute. His current research focuses on political influencers and their impact on the public sphere, illiberal cultural and media policy, as well as digital party innovations. His research has been published in Democratization, East European Politics, and Politics and Governance, among others. Until June 2021, he served as Head of Communications and Research at Transparency International Hungary, where he was involved in various research and advocacy projects. Due to his experience in working in the media as well as in public relations, he has an interest in the relationship between media and politics.

Fred Paxton is a Research Fellow at the School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow, where he holds a Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowship. He works on populism, local politics, movement parties, and political communication. He is the author of Restrained Radicals: Populist Radical Right Parties in Local Government (Cambridge University Press, 2023), and his research has been published in journals such as Political Science Research and Methods, Government and Opposition, and Acta Politica.

Claudiu Vlasie is a graduate in Political Science with a master's degree in European Affairs and Project Management. He is currently a doctoral candidate at the School of Political Science and Communication. His thesis focuses primarily on social movements in digital environments. At the same time, he works full-time as a research assistant in the TakePart project.

Dan Mercea is a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at City St George's, University of London (UK), PI of the NextGeneration EU project "Social Learning to Take Part in Social Movements: Understanding the Social Transformation of Civic Participation" (2023-2026, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania) and Coordinating PI of the Horizon Europe project INTERFACED, "Interfaces for Democratic Participation: Deliberation, Mobilization and Contestation Since the Onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic" (2025-2028).

ORCID

Lorenzo Mosca http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3248-0489
Bálint Mikola http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6874-5269
Fred Paxton http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5635-8448
Dan Mercea http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3762-2404

Bibliography

Adi, A., and D. G. Lilleker. *#Rezist. Romania's Anti-Corruption Protests: Causes, Development and Implications*. Berlin: Quadriga University of Applied Sciences, 2017.

Anria, S. *When Movements Become Parties: The Bolivian MAS in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Armeanu, O. I. "The Fast Rise of Populist Radical Right Parties: Evidence from the Alliance for the Union of Romanians." *Government and Opposition* (2025): 1–17.

Bajomi-Lázár, P., and K. Horváth. "Two Journalistic Cultures in One Country. The Case of Hungary in the Light of Journalists' Discourses on Fake News." *Journalism Practice* 19, no. 5 (2025): 1055–1073.

Bakó, B. *Challenges to EU Values in Hungary: How the European Union Misunderstood the Government of Viktor Orbán*. Routledge, 2022.

Baranyai, A., A. Gyulai, and Z. Papp. "Hungary: Political Developments and Data in 2024: From Scandal to Shake-Up: The Rise of a New Opposition and the Re-Opening of the Political Competition." *European Journal of Political Research Political Data Yearbook* (2025).

Bátorfy, A., and Á. Urbán. "State Advertising as an Instrument of Transformation of the Media Market in Hungary." *East European Politics* 36, no. 1 (2020): 44–65.

Belu, M. "The New Paradigm of Communication. Influencing The Algorithm That Controls The Spread Of Information." Proceedings Of The International Scientific Conference Strategies Xxi. Volume Xviii (pp. 466-473). Carol I National Defence University Publishing House., 2022.

Bermeo, N. "On Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 1 (2016): 5–19.

Stiftung, Bertelsmann. *BTI 2024 Country Report — Hungary*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024.

Blackington, C., A. L. Dimitrova, I. Ionita, and M. A. Vachudova. *Mobilizing against Democratic Backsliding: What Motivates Protestors in Central and Eastern Europe?* East European Politics and Societies, 2024.

Bloj, R. "Parliamentary Election in Romania, 6 December 2020. Blue, 2021 1(1)." https://shs.cairn.info/journal-blue-2021-1-page-21?lang=en., 2022.

Bogaards, M. "De-democratization in Hungary: Diffusely Defective Democracy." *Democratization* 25, no. 8 (2018): 1481–1499.

Borbáth, E., and F. Paxton. "Movement Parties in Europe: A Comparative Assessment." *Acta Politica* 60, no. 1 (2025): 1–16.
Borbáth, E., and P. Susánszky. "Party System Transformation from below: Protests by Jobbik and LMP." *Acta Politica* (2024): 1–21.
Botan, M. "The Romanian Media System: Dynamics, Challenges, and Implications for Democracy." *Media and Communication* 12 (2024).
Boyatzis, R. E. *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*. Sage Publications, 1998.
Caiani, M., and O. Císař, eds. *Radical Right Movement Parties in Europe*. Routledge, 2019.
Cârlugea, S., and O. Despa. "Ce conține dosarul în care procurorii au luat măsura controlului judiciar împotriva lui Călin Georgescu." Europa Liberă România. Accessed March 3, 2025. https://romania.europalibera.org/a/calin-georgescu-acuzatii-antisemitism/33330427.html, 2025.
Cârlugea, S. "De la 8 la 386 milioane de lei. De ce a crescut, în 10 ani, subvenția pentru partidele parlamentare și care sunt riscurile pentru România." Europa Liberă România. Accessed November 29, 2025. https://romania.europalibera.org/a/cum-a-crescut-in-zece-ani-subventia-pentru-partide-de-la-bugetul-statului-de-la-8-la-386-de-milioane-de-lei/33302932.html., 2025.
Cinpoes, R. "The Challenges of Political Protest and Democratic Representation." In *Post-Communist Progress and Stagnation at 35*, edited by L. Stan and D. Vancea. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024.
Cmeciu, C., A. Anton, and E. Glăvan. "(De) Legitimation in Policy Transfer and Branding: A Dialogical View of the Romanian Covid-19 Vaccination Policy." *Media and Communication* 12 (2024).
Creţan, R., and T. O'Brien. "Corruption and Conflagration:(in) Justice and Protest in Bucharest after the Colectiv fire." *Urban Geography* 41, no. 3 (2020): 368–388.
Della Porta, D., J. Fernández, H. Kouki, and L. Mosca. *Movement Parties Against Austerity*. John Wiley & Sons, 2017.
Dima, C. "David and Goliath. Save Romania Union's Analysis of the Genesis and the Electoral Success in 2016 Local and Parliamentary Elections." *Polis (bologna, Italy)* 5, no. 1 (2017): 171–197.
Dragoman, D. "'Save Romania' Union and the Persistent Populism in Romania." *Problems of Post-Communism* 68, no. 4 (2021): 303–314.
Dragomir, M. "Control the Money, Control the Media: How Government Uses Funding to Keep Media in Line." *Journalism* 19, no. 8 (2018): 1131–1148.
Dragomir, M., M. Preoteasa, D. Holdiș, and C. Lupu. "Striving and Surviving: Romanian Journalism on the Quest for Funding Models." *Journal of Romanian Studies* (2021).
Enyedi, Z., and B. Mikola. "Legislative Capture in Hungary: Well-Managed Autocratization." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 712, no. 1 (2025): 34–46. doi:10.1177/00027162241307778.
European Parliament. *European Parliament Resolution of 13 November 2018 on the Rule of Law in Romania*. Strasbourg: European Parliament, 2018. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0446_EN.html.
European Parliament. *European Parliament Resolution of 15 September 2022 on the Proposal for a Council Decision Determining, Pursuant to Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union, the Existence of a Clear Risk of a Serious Breach by Hungary of the Values on which the Union is Founded*. Strasbourg: European Parliament, 2022.
G4Media.ro. "UPDATE: Miniștrii USR PLUS și-au depus demisiile din Guvernul Cîțu/ Premierul nu se afla în Palatul Victoria/ Dan Barna: Mergem mai departe." G4Media.ro. https://www.g4media.ro/ministrii-usr-plus-care-si-au-anuntat-demisiile-au-ajuns-la-guvern.html, 2021, September 7.
Gabor, A. "De la Mineriade, la oameni aduși cu autocarul. Cum a evoluat cultura protestului în România postcomunistă Interview by Norbert Nemeș, Europa Libera Romania, 28.02.2025." https://romania.europalibera.org/a/de-la-mineriade-la-manifestanti-adusi-cu-autocarul-cum-a-evoluat-cultura-protestului-in-romania-postcomunista-/33331474.html, 2025.
Gamboa, L. *Resisting Backsliding: Opposition Strategies against the Erosion of Democracy*. Cambridge University Press, 2022.
Gherghina, S. Still on the Fringes? Far-Right Parties and Identity in Romania. In *The Many Faces of the Far Right in the Post-Communist Space*. Vol. 128, 2022.
Gherghina, S., and M. Grad. "Political Game-Changers: The Importance of Leaders for Newly Emerged Parties in Romania." *Slavic Review* 80, no. 3 (2021): 608–628.

Greskovits, B. "Rebuilding the Hungarian Right through Conquering Civil Society: The Civic Circles Movement." *East European Politics* 36, no. 2 (2020): 247–266.
Hendrickx, J. "'Normal News is Boring': How Young Adults Encounter and Experience News on Instagram and TikTok." *New Media & Society* (2024).
Holdis, D. "Media Influence Matrix: Romania." CEU Center for Media, Data and Society (CMDS). https://cmds.ceu.edu/sites/cmcs.ceu.hu/files/attachment/basicpage/1473/mimromaniafullreport.pdf, 2019.
HVG. "A Tisza annyival vezet a Fidesz előtt, amennyivel Orbánék verték 2022-ben Márki-Zay hatos fogatát." Reporting on a Medián poll. 18 June 2025. https://hvg.hu/360/20250618_A-Tisza-annyival-vezet-a-Fidesz-elott-amennyivel-Orbanek-vertek-2022-ben-Marki-Zay-hatos-fogatat, 2025.
Keck, M. E., and K. A. Sikkink. *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Cornell University Press, 2014.
Kitschelt, H. "Movement Parties." In *Handbook of Party Politics*, 278–290. SAGE Publications Ltd, 2006.
Knott, E., A. H. Rao, K. Summers, and C. Teeger. "Interviews in the Social Sciences." *Nature Reviews Methods Primers* 2, no. 1 (2022): Article 1.
Kovarek, D., and L. Littvay. "Greater than the Sum of its Part (ie) s: Opposition Comeback in the 2019 Hungarian Local Elections." *East European Politics* 38, no. 3 (2022). 382–399.
Kovarek, D. "Elite Defection and Opposition Realignment in Hungary: Respect and Freedom Party (TISZA) in the 2024 European Parliamentary Elections." *East European Politics* (2025): 1–14.
Kyriazi, A. "Ultranationalist Discourses of Exclusion: A Comparison between the Hungarian Jobbik and the Greek Golden Dawn." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42, no. 15 (2016): 2528–2547.
Lovi, S. "How Disinformation Can Influence a Nation: The Case of Romania." *Studia i Analizy Nauk o Polityce* 1 (2025): 27–44.
Marincea, A. "A Century of Media Capture in Romania: From State Monopoly to Market Oligopoly." *Southeastern Europe* 47, no. 1 (2023): 81–107.
Mikola, B. "Fabricating Public Support for Illiberal Policies–The Case of 'national consultations' in Hungary." Conference paper presented at the 27th IPSA World Congress of Political Science, Buenos Aires., 2023b.
Mikola, B., and F. G. Santos. "Opposition Electoral Strategies against Democratic Backsliding: The United for Hungary Coalition and its 2022 Primaries." *Democratization* (2025): 1–25.
Mercea, D., and L. Mosca. "Understanding Movement Parties through their Communication." *Information, Communication & Society* 24, no. 10 (2021): 1327–1343.
Mosca, L., and F. Paxton. "Changing Strategies, Shifting Responses: How Movement Parties and the Traditional Media Interact." In *Protest and Democracy*. 1st ed, 95–119. Routledge, 2025a.
Mosca, L., and F. Paxton. "The Rise of Movement Parties and their Implications for Progressive Politics." In *Handbook of Progressive Politics*, edited by A. Mattoni, 142–158. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2025b.
Mosca, L., and F. Tronconi. "Beyond Left and Right: The Eclectic Populism of the Five Star Movement." *West European Politics* 42, no. 6 (2019): 1–26.
Mungiu-Pippidi, A. "Explaining Eastern Europe: Romania's Italian-Style Anticorruption Populism." *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 3 (2018): 104–116.
Mungiu-Pipidi, A., and C. Ghinea. "Struggling with Media Capture: Romania." In *Understanding Media Policies: A European Perspective*, edited by Evangelia Psychogiopolou, 166–181. Basingstoke, London: Palgrave, 2012.
Munteanu, D. G. *Beyond# Rezist: The Surreal Challenges Facing Romania's New Civic MPs*, edited by: Ana Adi and Darren G. Lilleker., 2017.
Nemeș, N. *Colectiv | Focul care ne-a trezit la realitate pentru scurt timp. După 7 ani, problemele persistă*. Arafat: Suntem mai bine pregătiți! Europa Liberă România. https://romania.europalibera.org/a/colectiv-focul-arafat-suntem-mai-bine-pregatiti/32106553.html, 2022, October 29.
Neumann, L. "The history of trade unions in Hungary." In *Trade Unionism since 1945: Towards a Global History*, edited by C. Phelan, 279–303. Peter Lang, 2009.

Nistor, A., and E. Zadobrischi. "The Virality of TikTok and New Media in Disrupting and Overturning the Election Cancellation Paradigm in Romania." *Administrative Sciences* 15, no. 11 (2025): 448.â.

Norris, P. *Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Onofrei, N. "Rezultatul final al alegerilor parlamentare 2024: Clasamentul oficial al partidelor la Senat și Camera Deputaților." HotNews.ro. https://hotnews.ro/rezultatul-final-al-alegerilor-parlamentare-clasamentul-oficial-al-partidelor-la-senat-si-camera-deputatilor-1856560hotnews.ro, 2024, December 7.

Oross, D., and P. Tap. "Moving Online: Political Parties and the Internal Use of Digital Tools in Hungary." *European Societies* 25, no. 2 (2023): 346–370.

Păcurar, B. "Florin Cîțu l-a demis pe ministrul Justiției, Stelian Ion." Digi24.ro. https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/politica/florin-citu-il-demite-pe-ministruljustitiei-stelian-ion-1653741, 2021, September 1.

Papada, E., D. Altman, F. Angiolillo, L. Gastaldi, T. Köhler, M. Lundstedt, N. Natsika, et al. *Defiance in the Face of Autocratization: Democracy Report 2023*. Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem Institute), University of Gothenburg, 2023.

Papp, Z., and B. Zorigt. "Political Constraints and the Limited Effect of Electoral System Change on Personal Vote-seeking in Hungary." *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 32, no. 1 (2018): 119–141.

Pirro, A. L., and P. C. Gattinara. "Movement Parties of the Far Right: The Organization and Strategies of Nativist Collective Actors." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (2018): 367–383.

Polyák, G. "Media in Hungary: Three Pillars of an Illiberal Democracy." In *Public Service Broadcasting and Media Systems in Troubled European Democracies*, 279–303, 2019.

Radu, R.-N. "Digital News Report 2025: Romania." Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/romania, 2025, June 17.

Riedl, R. B., P. Friesen, J. McCoy, and K. Roberts. *Democratic Backsliding, Resilience, and Resistance*. World Politics, 2024.

Schedler, A. "Rethinking Democratic Subversion." In *The Routledge Handbook of Autocratization*, 19–36. Routledge, 2024.

Stanley, B. "Populism in Central and Eastern Europe." *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* 1, no. 6 (2017): 140–158.

Stoian, C. "Sondaj pentru alegerile din București: Cursa este extrem de strânsă și rămâne imprevizibilă până la final. Victoria se poate obține cu sub 25% din voturi." HotNews.ro. https://hotnews.ro/sondaj-pentru-alegerile-din-bucuresti-cursa-este-extrem-de-stransa-si-ramane-imprevizibila-pana-la-final-victoria-se-poate-obtine-cu-sub-25-din-voturi-2119468, 2025, November 30.

Trif, D. S. "Back to the 'Future': USR and the 'New People' in Politics (2020–2024)." *Journal of Romanian Studies* 7, no. 2 (2025): 171–195.

Toma, Raluca, Marina Popescu, and Roxana Bodea. "Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital era : Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Member States and in Candidate Countries in 2023. Country Report: Romania; Monitorizarea Pluralismului Media în epoca digitală : aplicarea media pluralism monitor în Uniunea Europeană și în țările candidate în anul 2023. Raport de țară: România, EUI, RSC, Research Project Report, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF), 2024, Country Reports." https://hdl.handle.net/1814/77014.

Urbán, Á, and G. Polyák. "How Public Service Media Disinformation Shapes Hungarian Public Discourse." *Media and Communication* 11, no. 4 (2023): 62–72.

Voinea, M., V. Ilie, and C. Delcea. "Prețul tăcerii. O investigație în contabilitatea presei de partid." Recorder. Accessed December 3, 2025. https://recorder.ro/pretul-tacerii-o-investigatie-in-contabilitatea-presei-de-partid/, 2022, September 14.

Wagemann, C., T. Burean, D. Mercea, L. Mosca, and C. Neumayer. "Protest and Democracy: How Movement Parties, Social Movements and Active Citizens are Reshaping Europe." In *Protest and Democracy*, 1–6. Routledge, 2025.

Ziarul Financiar. "Lovitură de teatru: Curtea Constituțională anulează primul tur al alegerilor prezidențiale cu 48 de ore înainte de turul 2." Accessed March 3,.2025. https://www.zf.ro/eveniment/lovitura-teatru-curtea-constitutionala-anuleaza-primul-tur-22595495, 2024.