# Green Deal Facebook Narratives in Romania - Proxy for anti-EU messaging

## Green Deal Facebook narratives in Romania

*by 45North*                                                        *June 2022*

## Key takeaways

- Majority of monitored posts (74) supported the Green Deal but most of the interactions (60%) came from posts on sources labeled as potentially "harmful".
- Green Deal policies were discussed mainly by political actors or political commentators.
- Most of the narratives discussed the Green Deal in the context of the Ukraine conflict, however we also observed conspiracy narratives such as: pacifism to the detriment of Ukraine (15 posts), climate change denialism (14 posts), US imperialism (11 posts), Romania is a US/NATO colony (11 posts).
- Potentially harmful sources were present, but only a minority (20,5%).

45North, in partnership with the International Republican Institute's Beacon Project, tracked Romanian language Facebook conversations regarding the European Green Deal using CrowdTangle. Initial results show that the policy package is mainly discussed within the broader context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Romanian energy security. The most prevalent narratives opposing Green Deal policies describe them as a product of EU or US imperialism.

The top 100 most interacted with posts between 20 April-20 May 2022 were examined to identify malign narratives and sources as well as better understand the general debate about the Green Deal legislation in the Romanian language space. This monitoring is a part of a larger IRI initiative being implemented simultaneously in five EU countries.

## Summary

Monitored posts were generated by 78 unique sources and resulted in 25,524 interactions, with an average of 255 interactions per post. However, 43% (11,173) were related to the most popular post published during this time period. The post by Gheorghe Piperea, a Romanian lawyer, promoted objections to donations for the war effort in Ukraine claiming there is a cabal of powerful progressive globalist actors seeking to benefit from the war and in turn, in his twisted logic, also harming the environment. This text was reshared at least seven times, resulting in an additional 379 interactions.

All posts were also manually coded based on the overall context of the post, using a predefined structure of eight categories. Five of eight of the predetermined context tags (politics, military, economy, social, information, infrastructure, health, and environment) with the following results: "politics" (37 posts), "economy" (19 posts), "environment" (17 posts), "social" (16 posts), "infrastructure" (11 posts). Most posts had a political context and were published either by politicians and political organizations and/or the motive behind the message was mostly political in nature. In contrast, the least present tag was "infrastructure". This might be one indication that the Green Deal topic is primarily used as a proxy for political arguments, in whatever context convenient to the source, and rarely in terms of building long-term, complex infrastructure projects, or the substance of climate package itself.

Monitored sources were also reviewed and manually coded depending on the type of source. Openly conspiratory/known "fringe" sources were labeled as potentially "harmful". These sources constituted 20.5% (16 out of 78) of all monitored sources and contained mainly anti-EU, anti-US messaging. Interestingly, about 4% of the sources labeled as potentially harmful for spreading climate denialism and other anti-EU narratives and conspiracies, come from a pseudo-science background (parapsychology/astrology) that, in theory, should not have anything to do with politics. The most prolific source present in the data is Invectiva.ro (11 posts, 1,997 interactions in total), a blog, active since 2011, that is classified as potentially harmful for equating the EU and NATO with Nazi Germany and espousing conspiracy theories and pro-Putin messaging.

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Given that the Green Deal is relevant in multiple contexts that intertwine, it can be a useful marker to identify under the radar online actors that spread a broad spectrum of disinformation. Future monitoring may be also useful for identification of atypical mediums in which disinformation is spread, for example significant FB groups that promote pseudoscience, as we've observed in this data set.

Going forward, we will continue to monitor the Romanian language Facebook conversations regarding the European Green Deal for malign narratives, particularly Russian narratives, with an aim to identify individual malign sources and to better understand the broader disinformation challenge that we face.