

# Weekly Policy and Political Report

March 20 - 27, 2016



## ISSUE MONITORING

A document prepared by:  
The Center for Monitoring Public Policy

## Week in review

### *The Ruling Coalition*

On Sunday, March 26, ALDE voted to withdraw political support to its co-president Daniel Constantin. Following this political decision of the members of the ruling coalition, Prime Minister Sorin Grindeanu announced he would submit ALDE's proposal for the replacement of Daniel Constantin to President Klaus Iohannis on Monday, March 27. The solution proposed by ALDE for the position of Minister of Environment and Deputy Prime Minister is Leocadia Gavrilescu, former Minister of Environment in the Ponta Government, currently, Minister for the Relation with the Parliament.

While Daniel Constantin's replacement is a done deal, the other consequences of him losing the support of his party are still under development. [Sunday's vote against](#) Constantin was not unanimous, with 12 ALDE members voting against the proposal to strip Constantin of his party's support. It is not yet certain whether the 12 ALDE members or Daniel Constantin are leaving the party. Constantin denied rumors of him leaving ALDE, as Călin Popescu Tăriceanu had implied, while also denying speculations over him forming a new political party with PSD's Victor Ponta, although the two held talks on the matter.

At the same time, the situation in the ruling coalition after the departure of Daniel Constantin appears to have simplified, as decisions only have to be approved by PSD's Dragnea and ALDE's Tăriceanu.

### *The Opposition*

The National Liberals [submitted a draft bill](#) in Parliament proposing that mayors be voted in a two-round system, not after one round as the current runoff. PNL argues that the one-round voting system for the local administration does not bestow the legitimacy required by this position.

In the meanwhile, the National Liberal Party is undergoing internal elections, with local branches voting for their leaders. These elections were organized before this summer's national congress, during which the National Liberals are to elect their national leadership. On this topic, [Ludovic Orban stated](#) that he is certain that President Klaus Iohannis has no favorite candidate in the internal elections, arguing that there would be no involvement from the President into the elections. Orban was the first PNL member to announce his candidacy for the presidency of the party. More so, Orban is one of the National Liberal leaders who [strongly oppose Dacian Cioloș](#) being invited to take over the leadership of the party.

On the matter of Dacian Cioloș joining either PNL or USR, over the past week, Cioloș could not have been clearer in his rejection of a candidacy under USR. On March 22, [the former PM said](#) that “USR should solve internal issues first, and they should not ever mention my name.”

While the ruling coalition may very well benefit from the departure of Daniel Constantin, given that the political power is going to be concentrated into Dragnea and Tăriceanu’s hands, the opposition appears to be losing momentum. In this sense, former PM Cioloș pointed out to USR’s more and more visible internal issues and further developments within the structure of the political party are expected. At the same time, the National Liberals are preparing for the election of their national leadership, with the Congress being announced for the end of June. In the context in which the two sides of PNL, the old National Liberals and the former PDL members, have clashed before, it is expected that further conflicts between the two sides unravel, as the election date approaches.

### *Appointments at SRI and SIE*

On March 22, 2017, the Parliament took notice of [Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu’s resignation](#) from the Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE), which took place seven months ago. President Iohannis, who is to appoint Ungureanu’s replacement, sent an official letter to the Parliament informing them that Ungureanu resigned on September 26, 2016. The heads of the two Intelligence Services (SIE and SRI) are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Parliament.

[PSD leader](#) and president of the Chamber of Deputies Liviu Dragnea highlighted that it is in Iohannis’ powers to appoint a new head of the Foreign Intelligence Services, however, the Parliament has the right to reject his nomination.

More so, Dragnea pointed out to the fact that PSD would never accept Dacian Cioloș for the position, advising Iohannis to comply with the principle of proportionality. Considering that Iohannis appointed Eduard Hellvig (PNL) as head of SRI, it follows that Dragnea would want SIE for a member of the ruling coalition. In his turn, [Cioloș denied rumors](#) about him running for SIE’s presidency. PSD would announce their proposal for the presidency of SIE at the negotiations with Iohannis and not beforehand.

On March 23, the Romanian Intelligence Services appointed [General Răzvan Ionescu](#) Deputy Head of the institution, replacing General Florian Coldea. Coldea resigned after his name was linked to Sebastian Ghiță, a controversial business name with an international arrest warrant, who claimed Coldea was a close friend of his.

### *Future policies, activity in Parliament*

- On March 18, Liviu Dragnea announced that the draft bill enforcing simplified [public procurement](#) procedures for strategic fields (energy, infrastructure, defense) is to be put up for debate in Parliament in two-three weeks' time. On Thursday, March 23, [Dragnea announced](#) that the draft bill is close to be put up for debate. According to Dragnea, the strategic public procurement law would allow authorities to begin works on the bridge over Danube, linking Tulcea and Brăila Counties.
- During the [Government Sitting](#) held on March 22, the Executive adopted two Memoranda with relevance to European Affairs: the Memorandum on Accelerating the preparation for **Romania's Presidency of the EU Council**, 2019, H1; respectively the Memorandum on the establishment of the inter-ministerial mechanism for the preparation of Romania's mandates and for observing the negotiations for **UK's exit from the European Union**.
- PSD MPs [Eugen Nicolicea](#), Oana Florea, Alexandru Bălănescu and Iulian Iacomi proposed a draft bill that aims at limiting [President's rights over referenda](#). According to the draft bill that was discussed on Wednesday, March 22, and not yet submitted in Parliament, the President cannot call referenda on matters over which the Parliament has sole responsibility; also, the Presidential referendum can only be a consultative tool, with no legislative bearing.