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**CENTRUL PENTRU STUDIUL DEZVOLTĂRII
INTERNAȚIONALE ȘI MIGRAȚIEI**
CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MIGRATION



SUBJECTS OF THE MOMENT

according to media, think-tanks, international organizations, and other actors interested in international development and migration

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social enterprises in Romania create 1,500 jobs for marginalized people

The NESsT – IKEA Social Entrepreneurship Accelerator Program has supported four social enterprises in Romania in creating over 1,500 jobs for individuals from marginalized groups. The primary beneficiaries of this social impact are women from disadvantaged backgrounds. The involved social enterprises, such as ROMO, Helyénvaló, ALTRNTV, and Atelierul de Pânză, operate in fields like sustainable agriculture and the circular economy, aiming to increase economic, social, and environmental impact. The program included mentorship sessions and culminated in the Social Enterprises Sustainability Fair held at IKEA Băneasa, where the products and initiatives of these enterprises were showcased.

News, Româniapozitivă.ro 20.05.2024: <https://shorturl.at/OWpY8>

Exim Banca Românească and Export Credit Greece Collaborate to Develop Bilateral Trade and Investments

Exim Banca Românească and Export Credit Greece have signed a memorandum of understanding to facilitate and promote bilateral trade and investments between Greece and Romania. The agreement aims to strengthen economic relations through export credit insurance, re-insurance, and co-insurance for goods and investments, providing support to companies in both countries. Traian Halalai, President of Exim Banca Românească, emphasized the importance of this cooperation framework for developing businesses in secure and predictable conditions. Grigoris Stamatopoulos, General Director of Export Credit Greece, highlighted the benefits of the extensive international network and the importance of the agreement for strengthening bilateral economic relations.

News, Eximbank.ro, 22.05.2024: <https://shorturl.at/6vquX>



Standard of living in Romania reaches 80% of the European Average

In the past 10 years, Romania has experienced the fastest economic convergence in the EU, achieving a GDP per capita of 78% of the European average, up from 55% a decade ago. According to Eurostat, the standard of living in Romania has increased by over 40%, while in wealthy countries like Luxembourg and Sweden, it has declined. However, Romania remains a country of contrasts, with the Bucharest-Ilfov region having a purchasing power of 164% of the EU average, while the Moldova region has only a quarter of this value. Economist Andrei Rădulescu emphasizes that although economic convergence has slowed in recent years, accelerating structural reforms is crucial to reducing the economic gap between Eastern and Western Europe.

News, HotNews.ro, 29.05.2024: <https://t.ly/t5dXi>

Europeans continue to feel directly affected by environmental issues and policies.

A new Eurobarometer survey on "Europeans' attitudes towards the environment" shows that Europeans remain very concerned about the environment, considering it an aspect that personally affects them. Over three-quarters of Europeans believe that environmental issues have a direct impact on their daily lives and health. More than four out of five respondents support the need for EU legislation to protect the environment in their country. The survey results are similar to those from 2019, highlighting the continued relevance of EU environmental policy. Citizens are also concerned about the costs of pollution and water shortages. The survey shows their support for the circular economy and nature restoration. Additionally, citizens are aware of the negative impact of harmful chemicals on the environment.

News, European Commission, 29.05.2024: <https://shorturl.at/urMTH>



Romania and Albania strengthen cooperation in labor, pensions, and social protection

The Minister of Labor and Social Solidarity, Simona Bucura–Oprescu, and the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania have signed an Administrative Arrangement for the implementation of the Agreement on Social Security between the two countries. The document strengthens the bilateral legal framework, facilitating the recognition and aggregation of social insurance periods and determining the applicable legislation for migrant workers. Minister Bucura–Oprescu emphasized Romania's support for Albania's integration into the European Union and the importance of cooperation in labor and social protection. The agreement incorporates modern social security principles, ensuring the protection and conti-

Official statement, Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity, 05.06.2024:

<https://shorturl.at/IP4tA>

European Commission Supports Social Economy; Challenges in Romania

At the social economy conference in Iași, Ana–Maria Coscotin from DG EMPL emphasized the European Commission's support for the social economy through the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). Romania receives €235 million for the Education and Employment (PEO) and Inclusion and Social Dignity (PIDS) programs. However, discrepancies exist between the Commission's intentions and implementation in Romania. Sector actors' proposals were not included in the final guidelines, and the sustainability of social enterprises remains a major issue. Transparent and responsible fund management is necessary to ensure the desired impact.

News, ADV România, 05.06.2024, <https://shorturl.at/GY3Pv>



The European Union allocates additional funds for the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan

The European Union has allocated tens of millions of euros to support aid organizations in Afghanistan, where the humanitarian crisis is worsening. The European Commission announced that approximately 125 million euros will be used for food, shelter, medical care, access to water, and sanitation facilities. Additionally, 11 million euros will go to Pakistan for Afghan refugees and disaster preparedness, and 10 million euros will support humanitarian organizations in Iran. In total, the European Commission has provided Afghanistan with 1.8 billion euros in aid from 1994 to the present.

News, G4Media, 11.06.2024: https://t.ly/Rn_TI

Romanians, the most exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU in 2023

In 2023, 32% of Romanians were at risk of poverty and social exclusion, the highest proportion in the European Union, according to Eurostat. At the EU level, 94.6 million people, or 21% of the population, were in this situation, living in households affected by poverty, severe material and social deprivation, or very low work intensity. Although Romania recorded a decrease from 34.4% in 2022, it remains at the top of the ranking, followed by Bulgaria, Spain, and Greece. On the other hand, the lowest proportions are recorded in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Finland, and

News, HotNews.ro, 13.06.2024: <https://shorturl.at/jlUlu>



Flowing Streams Residencies: 8 European Artists Explore Water Ecology in Romania

Eight artists and practitioners from seven European countries will conduct research on water ecology in rural areas of Romania as part of the Flowing Streams residency program, initiated by EUNIC Romania. The finalists, selected from 170 applications, hail from the UK, Czech Republic, Poland, Netherlands, Romania, Germany, and Italy. The program involves seven cultural institutions in Romania and aims to promote sustainable and interdisciplinary work practices. Each artist will spend between one week and one month in one of the residencies, integrating into the local community and collaborating with cultural and environmental organizations.

News, EUNIC ROMÂNIA, 13.06.2024: <https://eunic-romania.ro/>

Mutual Recognition of Work Periods and Pension Rights between Romania and the USA

The Romanian government has approved the mutual recognition of work periods and pension rights between Romania and the United States of America, facilitating the granting of pension rights for citizens of both countries. Under this decision, work periods completed in Romania and the USA will be aggregated, and pensions will be proportionally awarded by each state. The agreement also includes the exemption of posted workers from paying health insurance contributions in the country where they are posted. The document will come into effect four months after the mutual notification of internal procedures by both states.

News, Econimica.net, 13.06.2024: <https://shorturl.at/DRGuU>



ROMPAP Study: Over 80% of Romanians consider sustainability and environmental care a priority

Sustainability and environmental care are highly important concepts for 85% of Romanians, according to a study by ROMPAP and Ipsos Romania. Only 7% of Romanians believe enough is being done regarding recycling, and 6 out of 10 wish to do more. Over 90% of Romanians are familiar with concepts like recycling and plastic pollution, but 56% think too little is being done. ROMPAP President Paul-Henri Kohler emphasizes the need for a team effort at the national level to achieve sustainability goals. More than half of Romanians pay attention to selective waste collection, with plastic being the most frequently collected material. The main barriers to selective collection include lack of access to proper facilities and the belief that sorted waste ends up in the landfill.

News, Business Review, 14.06.2024: <https://t.ly/Vkroq>

Over 20% of young people in Romania do not work or continue their education / We are in last place in the EU

In 2023, over 20% of young Romanians aged 15 to 29 were neither employed nor enrolled in educational or training courses, according to Eurostat, with Romania having the highest NEET rate in the EU, with 24.8% of young women in this situation. The European average NEET rate is 12.4%, with the EU's goal being to reduce it to 9% by 2030. Five member states, including the Netherlands and Sweden, have already reached this target. Gender differences are notable, with 12.5% of young women in the EU being NEET, compared to 10.1% of young men. Assistance for educational guidance and labor market integration is essential, especially in the face of global crises. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions highlights the vulnerability of young people to crises such as the 2008 financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic.

News, G4 Media, 17.06.2024: <https://shorturl.at/uzSMS>



Kazakhstan, Romania discuss prospects for development of Middle Corridor

Kazakhstan and Romania have discussed the development of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), focusing on enhancing transport systems and creating sustainable ties between carriers. The Middle Corridor, a trade route connecting Asia and Europe, serves as an alternative to traditional Northern and Southern Corridors. This route starts in China and passes through Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, and several other countries before reaching Europe. In a separate development, Turkmenistan will host the next meeting of the Administrative Council of the Eurasian Patent Organization (EAPO) in 2025. Turkmenistan's President approved proposals to hold a regional forum on industrial design protection and for the country to join the Protocol to the Eurasian Patent Convention.

News, Trend News Agency, 18.06.2024: <https://shorturl.at/dlyDf>

Study: Rural girls, main victims of child trafficking in Romania

A research conducted by Justice and Care Romania reveals that victims of child trafficking in Romania are mainly 14-15-year-old girls from rural areas, coming from low-income families. The intervention capacity of institutions is limited by local actors who validate the normalization of deviance. In the past 5 years, 1,525 children have fallen victim to traffickers, with over 90% being sexually exploited girls.

Study, G4media, 18.06.2024, <https://shorturl.at/PtpNQ>



Romania and three other EU countries on the Council of Europe's list for media discrimination against Roma: The press portrays them negatively

The Council of Europe presented a study with recommendations for combating discrimination in the media against Roma and nomadic communities in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, and Romania. The study highlights that the representation of Roma on television contributes to inequality and prejudices, portraying them negatively through stereotypes. Although national legislations prohibit hate speech and discrimination, the media continues to depict Roma as violent and uneducated. The Council of Europe recommends strengthening the capacities of regulatory bodies and raising awareness among media workers. Other recommendations include avoiding unfavorable generalizations and providing Roma the opportunity to be represented in the media. The institution emphasizes the need to highlight the positive contributions of Roma to society and to avoid dehumanizing language.

News, Libertatea, 19.06.2024: <https://shorturl.at/x5nsK>

The European Commission asks Romania to tighten its fiscal policy, reforms and accelerate the attraction of euro funds

The European Commission has warned Romania about excessive imbalances and a projected budget deficit of 6.9% of GDP, calling for stricter fiscal policy and structural reforms. Romania is urged to accelerate the absorption of European funds, including PNRR funds, to reduce the deficit and government debt. Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu stated that Romania will close 2024 with a budget deficit of around 5% of GDP and that a new agreement with the EU is being discussed to reduce the deficit below 3% of GDP within 5–7 years. The Commission recommends a medium-term structural fiscal plan and limiting net expenditure growth in 2025 to reduce the deficit. Additionally, the Commission emphasizes the need for rapid implementation of cohesion programs and the Recovery and Resilience Plan.

News, G4 Media, 19.06.2024: <https://t.ly/wUBwl>



The European Commission recommends that the Council of the EU officially state that Romania "has not taken effective measures"

The European Commission has harshly criticized Romania for its lack of reforms and recommended that the EU Council adopt an official conclusion that "Romania has not taken effective measures" to reduce the budget deficit. This could lead to the freezing of some EU funds for Romania starting in 2025, increasing the country's borrowing costs. The Commission highlighted significant delays in implementing the PNRR due to the lack of involvement from institutional leaders and recommended swift measures to cover the projected budget deficit of 6.9%. Recommendations include presenting a medium-term fiscal-structural plan, tightening fiscal policy, and accelerating the implementation of cohesion programs and the recovery and resilience plan.

News, Economedia, 19.06.2024: <https://shorturl.at/wyXfm>

OECD Schools+ opens to all schools in Romania interested in implementing tools already developed by 140 schools around the world in the autumn

Romania has the opportunity to participate in the OECD's School+ project, aimed at improving global education through collaboration between 40 participating countries. The announcement was made by Avenor College, which has been invited to join the network. School+ offers modern educational resources, continuous professional development, and networking opportunities for teachers. The project aims to create a modern and efficient educational framework, connecting scientific research with educational practice. Participation of Romanian schools in this project involves access to innovative pedagogical resources and international collaboration. Romanian teachers will benefit from training sessions and workshops conducted by education experts.

News, Edupedu, 19.06.2024: <https://shorturl.at/BzuUb>



Romania faces decrease in the recycling of packaging waste

Romania recycled only 38.31% of its packaging waste in 2021, a 1.56% decrease from the previous year, according to the National Institute of Statistics. Significant declines were seen in glass and metal recycling, while plastic and paper/cardboard recycling saw modest increases. Cosmin Monda, CEO of Clean Recycle, emphasizes the urgent need for coordinated measures to improve recycling. Clean Recycle managed over 37,000 tons of waste in the first 4 months of 2023, recycling 18,000 tons. It is crucial for all stakeholders to collaborate to increase recycling rates and adopt sustainable practices.

News, Green Report. 19.06.2024: <https://shorturl.at/K18fQ>



MIGRATION

15 EU countries, including Romania, call for externalization of migration and asylum policy

A group of 15 EU member states, led by Denmark, have called for the outsourcing of migration and asylum policy due to the "unsustainable" increase in irregular arrivals. In a letter to the European Commission, the signatories propose durable partnerships with countries along migration routes, similar to existing EU deals with Turkey, Tunisia, and Egypt. The letter, also backed by Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Romania, and Finland, highlights the need to support host communities and combat human trafficking. This appeal comes shortly after the completion of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, set to be fully enforceable in two years.

News, Euro News, 16.05.2024, <https://shorturl.at/GouTi>

Romanian Government to maintain aid for Ukrainian refugees

Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu announced that Romania will continue to provide aid to Ukrainian refugees, with 84.000 Ukrainian citizens having settled in Romania since the outbreak of the war on February 24, 2022. Ciolacu emphasized the importance of integrating them into the school system and noted that Romania will continue to support Ukraine, especially in the humanitarian area, using European funds.

News, Digi24, 17.05.2024: <https://shorturl.at/b0Lq2>



Asylum seekers can stay in Romania until procedure is finalized

President Klaus Iohannis signed into law on Wednesday a bill allowing asylum seekers to remain in Romania until the asylum procedure is finalized, Agerpres reports. This measure comes in the context of the massive influx of displaced persons from Ukraine and the need for additional support for the General Inspectorate for Immigration.

News, 30.05.2024, Libertatea, <https://shorturl.at/Eu5F4>

Young people in Eastern Europe more anti-immigration than older generations, poll shows

A Guardian analysis of Eurobarometer polls reveals that young people in eastern Europe, particularly millennials and generation Z, have more negative attitudes towards immigration than older generations. These findings came ahead of the June European elections, when support for far-right parties was expected to rise.

Poll, G4media, 28.05.2024, <https://shorturl.at/AsrE5>

Migrants heading to Europe face "unimaginable horrors"

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has called for expanded rescue efforts for migrants heading to Europe, who face "unimaginable horrors," according to DPA, cited by Agerpres. UNHCR's Special Envoy Vincent Cochetel urged increased cooperation with local authorities and more funding from donor countries. Cochetel emphasized the need to improve access to legal migration methods and protection services. A new UNHCR report shows that hundreds of thousands of migrants risk their lives annually, with many dying or suffering severe human rights abuses. Over 108 million refugees live in low and middle-income countries, and over 280 million people are international migrants, according to the IOM.

Report, Hot News, 05.06.2024, <https://shorturl.at/Z3MB9>



Interview: Without Merkel's Refugee Policy, the German Far-Right Wouldn't Be Poised to Make History in the 2024 Elections

The far-right party "Alternative for Germany" (AfD) is expected to achieve its best result yet in Sunday's European elections, according to German political scientist Ursula Münch, director of the Tutzing Academy for Political Education in Bavaria. She explained that AfD's success is largely due to former Chancellor Angela Merkel's refugee policy. Münch highlights that AfD voters include workers disillusioned with the Social Democrats and people with authoritarian sympathies. Despite numerous scandals, AfD remains popular, especially in eastern Germany.

News, Hot News, 08.06.2024, <https://shorturl.at/auVnf>

Tensions Rise at Poland-Belarus Border Amid Increasing Migrant Arrivals

Tensions are escalating at the Poland-Belarus border as more migrants from the Middle East arrive. Polish border guards and soldiers are closely monitoring migrants attempting to cross the barbed-wire fence. Poland and the European Union accuse Belarus and Russia of orchestrating a "hybrid war" by pushing migrants across the border, allegations denied by Minsk and Moscow. The Polish government has reported a recent increase in migrant arrivals, and a Polish soldier died last week following a confrontation at the border. In response, the Polish government plans to reintroduce a restricted zone at the border to protect soldiers and citizens. This measure could complicate the situation for migrants and volunteers assisting them, such as Agata Kluczevska, who warns that the restrictions will make it harder to provide aid to migrants.

News, Hot News, 08.06.2024, <https://shorturl.at/OduWm>



Romania – Repatriation of Ukrainian citizens to Ukraine (January – March 2024)

Between January and March 2024, IOM collected data from 1,298 Ukrainian nationals and TCNs returning to Ukraine from Romania and other countries. Most respondents had previously stayed in Romania (57%) or other EU countries (36%). The majority (63%) were short-term visitors, while 15% intended to return permanently. Most were returning to their regions of origin, such as Odeska, Chernivetska, and Kyiv.

Analysis, IOM, 10.06.2024, <https://shorturl.at/Tm393>

Historic decision: Female asylum seekers believing in gender equality can obtain refugee status

The European Court of Justice ruled on Tuesday that female asylum seekers who believe in gender equality can qualify for refugee status if this belief poses a "reason for persecution" in their home country. The decision follows the case of two Iraqi teenage girls whose initial asylum applications in the Netherlands were rejected.

News, ProTV, 11.06.2024, <https://shorturl.at/Xaqn0>



Nearly 40% of foreign workers left Romania following partial Schengen accession

Approximately 35–40% of foreign workers have left Romania following the country's partial accession to the Schengen zone by air and sea, according to recruitment agencies. This situation has impacted Romanian employers facing labor shortages. Foreign workers leaving risk losing fundamental rights if they work illegally in other Schengen countries. Romania is already grappling with significant labor shortages, reporting 154 shortage occupations and facing difficulties in visa approvals. Employers suggest launching an information campaign to warn foreign workers about the risks of illegal employment and departure.

News, SchengenNews, 14.06.2024, <https://shorturl.at/oZJu8>

IOM Romania Hosts Successful Second Ukrainian Improvisation Event

On June 13, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Romania held the second performance of the Ukrainian amateur improvisation group at Restaurant La Mama, part of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest. The event attracted around 100 attendees, who enjoyed the unique, on-the-spot performances driven by audience suggestions. This activity is part of IOM Romania's inclusion efforts under the Ukraine Response, supported by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) through the Migrant and Refugee Fund (MRF). Mircea Mocanu, Head of IOM Romania, highlighted the importance of such social events for inclusion and the enjoyment they bring to both performers and audience. He emphasized the psychosocial benefits of creative activities in refugee inclusion programs.

News, IOM, 14.06.2024, <https://t.ly/-BnZ9>



Asians deported from Romania and banned from EU for attempted illegal border crossing

Several citizens from Bangladesh, Egypt, Nepal, and Pakistan, who legally came to Romania for work, were deported after attempting to illegally cross the border into Western Europe. According to the General Inspectorate for Immigration, 13 men aged between 20 and 39 were escorted to Cluj-Napoca International Airport and sent back to their home countries. Upon departure, they were issued a five-year ban from entering EU, EEA countries, and Switzerland.

News, ProTV, 17.06.2024, <https://t.ly/i3l0L>

Abandoned Asian workers in Romania flee to other countries via trafficking networks

Asian workers brought to Romania by recruitment companies are abandoned and exploited, prompting them to flee to other European countries through trafficking networks, according to a Rise Project investigation. In recent months, many have been caught attempting to leave Romania illegally, after paying thousands of euros to reach the country.

News, Libertatea, 18.06.2024: <https://shorturl.at/nXDCs>

MEDIA MONITORING

A DIM INITIATIVE

PROJECT COORDINATOR

Alina TEODORESCU

ISSUE EDITORS

Adriana CIOCÂRLAN – COLLIE

Cristina HURDUBAIA

Robert Mihail ORBAN

CONTACT

E-MAIL

mdim@politice.ro

WEBSITE

<https://dim.politice.ro/>

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mdim.snspace>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/mdim.snspace>

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@mdim_fsp

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