

Threat Brief #: TBR002

Date: 27/03/2026

Title: An inauthentic network of Facebook assets links to fringe news outlets in Romania

Summary

A network of 45 active Facebook pages, collectively amassing over 17.5 million followers, engages in coordinated inauthentic behavior targeting Romanian-speaking Facebook users. The network combines two primary content narratives: lifestyle and nostalgia content used as engagement bait, and sensationalist clickbait news linked via URL shorteners to external fringe news outlets. The biggest pages that post content are [Obiectiv Substantial](#) (1.26M followers) and [Eduard](#) (1.4M followers); they often copy-paste headlines from legitimate news sources, and drive traffic drivers to the external fringe news websites. Headlines often mentioned NATO, Russia, Romanian President Nicusor Dan, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and former Romanian presidential candidate Calin Georgescu. The investigation shows that headlines are often stolen from legitimate news articles or rewritten to imply catastrophic or false news, further enticing users to click on the links embedded in the post or first comment. These websites are part of a broader network flagged by Romania's National Authority for Management and Regulation in Communications for [imitating](#) legitimate Romanian news outlets.

Target of operation	Romanian-speaking users on Facebook
Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facebook• Websites
Timeframe of activity	June 2025 – ongoing
Language(s) of operation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Romanian• English

Detailed explanation of activity

As previously [reported](#) by Romanian online news outlet G4media, the network has a core group of high-follower lifestyle and nostalgia Facebook pages (e.g., In Familie, Iisus tine la tine, Aripa de iubire) that build large audiences through generic, emotional, or religious content. These audiences are then exposed to sensationalist political and geopolitical narratives through

content posted by pages with lower reach, functioning as news aggregators, most notably [Obiectiv Substantial](#), [Eduard](#), and [Surse pe Net](#). Our analysis of 63,917 posts reveals systematic coordination with 4,732 copy/paste posts published by two or more pages in the network, and 680 copy/paste posts duplicated across 20 or more pages simultaneously.

In addition, we identified 5,236 timestamps where multiple pages published identical content at the exact same second highlighting that the pages are very likely engaging in automated cross posting. Further, five pages ([Priveste si Asculta](#), [Surse pe Net](#), [Acasa in Romania](#), [Sunt Gospodina](#), [Romania mea](#)) published between 64 percent and 74 percent of their content at exact 15-minute posting intervals (:00, :15, :30, :45), reinforcing the likelihood of automated posting.

Facebook pages [Obiectiv Substantial](#) and [Eduard](#) shared at least 145 identical TinyURL shortened links across their posts, with both pages publishing the same shortened URL pointing to external news websites. This practice obscures the destination domains and prevents direct attribution to specific fringe news outlets within the dataset.

Further, the pages often use existing headlines published by legitimate media, in a likely attempt to gain reach and entice users to click the shortened links embedded in the first comment of the Facebook posts. These links redirect to fringe news sites such as [surse.eu](#), [extranews.ro](#), and [citeste.viralnews.ro](#). These websites were notably [flagged](#) by Romania's National Authority for Management and Regulation in Communications, also known as ANCOM, due to them impersonating legitimate media.

Using [URLScan.io](#), we confirmed ANCOM's initial assessment which [reported](#) that the websites that the Facebook pages link to, placed adverts in the content of the webpages emanating from Russia-linked company AdNow. We found that the domain [nnowa\[.\]com](#) was used in one of the [web sites](#) ([vedete.monden.ro](#)) linked to by a shortened link in a Facebook comment of a [post](#) published by the network. This domain is located on the [same IP address](#) as AdNow's ad delivery websites, which confirms the suspicion of ad revenue being generated by this company. The company was also reportedly [suspected](#) of taking part in Russian influence campaigns during the COVID-19 pandemic and [targeting](#) EU audiences and the various member states' election cycles.

Attribution

Known links to previous incidents or threat actors:

According to Romanian news outlet [G4Media](#), the network at one point involved multiple subnetworks and [spread](#) "anti-Nicusor Dan propaganda." The report also found that "many of these accounts suddenly turn into pages of political propaganda with a high success rate due to increased influence," in the leadup to the May 2025 presidential election. The [network](#) was also flagged in a 2023 report by RFE/RL that indicated that it promoted "communist nostalgia" and highlighted that it could be used during an election year to "make a difference in voting."

Narratives

Using a narrative clustering system built with Anthropic’s Claude AI, we isolated the Romanian keywords most often found in the body of the Facebook posts. This analysis excludes sensationalist words such as “last minute,” “shock,” or “breaking news,” that are found in almost all publications by the network. We found 64.5 percent of posts carried no narrative keyword at all. This may be due to the use of images to convey messaging as we could not query or group this content by topic without text data. However, manually reviewing the images posted by the network seems to confirm that they also fall in the categories we identified, amplifying sensationalist and false claims.

Primary keywords

The network is split between two types of topics. Most posts are about Romania and its geopolitical or economic situation with keywords such as “Romania” found in 4,525 posts, “US President Donald Trump” 1,521 in posts, “Prime Minister Ilie Bolojan” in 1,375 posts and “Romanian President Nicusor Dan” in 1,005 posts. The country’s political situation is also mentioned with posts that mention the Romanian keywords for “money” 1,448 times and to a lesser degree, “pensions” 384 times.

The network is also heavily focused on family and traditional values, with Romanian keywords such as “husband” (3,409 posts) and “family” (1,559 posts) among the most often cited. Together this content is often mixed with lifestyle and clickbait posts, such as posts about the “horoscope” (1,189 posts) which is mentioned in roughly as many posts as the word “Romanians” (1,224 posts).

These topical leads are further corroborated and confirmed by prior research that highlighted how the network focused on these topics and religion in the names of the pages. Among the pages with the most followers are In Familie (“In Family in English”) with 1.4 million followers, Isus tine la tine (“Jesus is with you”) with 760,000 followers or Acasa In Romania (“At home in Romania”) with 681,000 followers.

Primary narratives

The network spread fearmongering and panic content alongside the lifestyle posts, that matched real world events unfolding as the news broke out.

The network spread content amplifying fears of conflict with Russia/NATO, Iran, and regional instability (10.7 percent of posts). With posts including Romanian military preparedness ([RO-ALERT: fighter jets scrambled](#)), NATO deployments ([NATO ready to strike inside Russia](#)), and the continuation of the Ukraine war spreading messaging of alleged escalation ([Zelensky ready to enter the war](#)), coinciding with events such as the falling through of the peace negotiations or the US attack against Teheran.

Further, the network spread posts with narratives centered on government collapse, pension cuts, criminal investigations, and electoral legitimacy (10.1 percent of posts). Political figures and judiciary developments are mentioned in numerous posts with slanderous claims such as

for Călin Georgescu (500 posts, concentrated around his criminal proceedings, "[key evidence eliminated from coup attempt case](#)"), Nicușor Dan (1,006 posts, "[Trump demands Dan act on Iran war](#)"; "[Dan and Zelensky sign historic deal](#)"), and Ilie Bolojan ("[harsh announcement on school holidays](#)").

The network also continues to publish content about Romanian traditions, and celebrity gossip used to build audience trust and algorithmic reach before exposing audiences to political content (10.7 percent of posts). Celebrity and human interest content represents a distinct sub-pillar (4.6 percent of posts), and horoscope content alone accounts for 1,189 posts.

Social media metrics

The network has amassed 17,540,875 combined followers across 45 Facebook pages, and four of the pages have garnered beyond one million followers each, for a total of beyond 18 million views since the network's inception. The network publishes nearly 226 posts per day, which suggests that each page publishes around five posts daily.

Following:

Top four pages

- In Familie (1.42M)
- Eduard (1.40M)
- Obiectiv Substantial (1.26M)
- Priveste si Asculta (1.03M)

Engagement: 1,322,826 interactions recorded between June 2025 and March 2026 (918,293 likes, 69,707 shares, 334,826 comments)

- 18,219,147 total views
- Average 226 posts per day across the network

Audience: The primary audience is Romanian-speaking Facebook users in Romania; secondary audience could include Romanian diaspora communities in the EU, based on channel names such as "România in Strainatate" ("Romania Abroad").



Breakout Scale Category

- 1 — One platform, no breakout
- 2 — One platform with breakout or many platforms, no breakout
- 3 — Multiple platforms, multiple breakouts**
- 4 — Cross-medium breakout (e.g., social → traditional media)
- 5 — Celebrity or high-follower amplification
- 6 — Policy response, offline mobilization, or call for violence

Breakout Scale adapted from Ben Nimmo, "[The Breakout Scale](#)," Brookings Institution (2020)

Methodology + Evidence

The investigation analyzed data from the Junkipedia monitoring platform and using Anthropic's AI chatbot Claude to conduct a timestamp and narrative analysis of the dataset. Our review of the dataset highlights suspicions of coordinated inauthentic behavior and attempts to obscure the fringe news sites to which the pages were redirecting by using URL shorteners.

Coordination indicators were identified by comparing the text of posts against all the posts in the collected dataset. 4,732 copy pasta posts appeared on two or more pages, 680 appeared on 20 or more pages. Additionally, post timestamps were compared at second-level precision with 5,236 timestamps were identified at which two or more pages published identical content at the exact same second, showing that the pages engage in coordinated posts delivery down to the second.

In addition, the minute-of-hour distribution of posts for each channel was calculated. Five pages showed 64–74% of posts at :00/:15/:30/:45 minute marks, showing that at least five pages had more than 60% of their content published regularly at the second marks highlighted above. This strongly reinforces the suspicion of automated posting behavior.

Additionally, the operators of the network use a variety of URL shortening tools such as TinyURL, cuttly, and citeste-aici.ro, which are embedded in post texts and in the first comments to the post. By extracting the text body of the posts, we compared them across all pages. We found 745 posts that used TinyURL and 22 that relied on cuttly. Most notably, Obiectiv Substantial and Eduard share 145 identical TinyURL-shortened links. Headlines are systematically truncated with "...Vezi mai mult" / "...See more" to drive click-through to external websites.

We also identified multiple instances where the text of the posts was copy-pasta of actual headlines published by legitimate news outlet Stirile Kanal D, this was further confirmed as the articles published by the news outlets enclosed in the shortened links appear to be stolen material from that legitimate newsroom.

TTPs

[T0016 - Create Clickbait](#): The network systematically uses truncated, sensationalist headlines to drive click-through to linked fringe news articles. 10,145 posts use the headline “shock”, “alarm”, “last minute” in all caps (ȘOC/ALARMĂ/ULTIMA ORĂ) creating a false sense of urgency.

[T0042 - Seed Kernel of Truth](#): Clickbait headlines reference real events, actual politicians (Călin Georgescu, Nicușor Dan, Ilie Bolojan), real institutions (Constitutional Court, Romania's Supreme Council of National Defense aka CSAT, NATO), and genuine news hooks, but strip context and add fabricated urgency or false resolution to drive engagement and traffic.

[T0068 - Respond to Breaking News Event or Active Crisis](#): The network repeatedly amplifies breaking news moments with sensationalist framing across all 45 pages simultaneously. Posts referencing the CCR ruling on Nicușor Dan, the parliamentary vote on US military presence in Romania, and the Iran-Turkey confrontation were published within minutes of the news cycle and cross-posted across 30+ pages.

[T0084.001 - Use Copy-paste](#): Identical post texts are copied verbatim across multiple pages. 4,732 instances of posts were found to have been duplicated across 2 or more pages; 680 were published by 20 or more pages; 21 were published by 30 or more pages.

[T0085.003 - Develop Inauthentic News Articles](#): the external websites receiving traffic via TinyURL links from Obiectiv Substantial and Eduard produce inauthentic news content or sensationalist articles with misleading or unverifiable claims used to generate ad impressions.

[T0153.002 - Link Shortening Platform](#): TinyURL.com is used as the primary link shortening platform across Obiectiv Substantial (539 posts) and Eduard (205 posts). 145 identical TinyURL-shortened links are shared between the two pages, confirming shared infrastructure or a single operator managing both pages.

[T0153.003 - Shortened Link Asset](#): The individual shortened links (e.g. tinyurl.com/3mfpfeny, tinyurl.com/36pdb7uy) serve as a redirection between the Facebook network and the external fringe news sites, masking the destination domain from the audience and the platform,

[T0128.002 - Conceal Network Identity](#): The use of URL shorteners (TinyURL.com) to mask link destinations prevents audiences and platform moderation systems from identifying the fringe news sites receiving traffic, breaking the visible chain between the Facebook network and the external clickbait infrastructure.

[T0121 - Manipulate Platform Algorithm](#): By cross-posting identical content across 45 large pages simultaneously, the network artificially inflates content engagement signals, increasing the likelihood that Facebook's recommendation algorithm surfaces the content to users who do not follow the individual pages.

Summary of violative behavior



Likely violates:

DSA

Platform policies

National policies

Sanctions

Possible intent

- Generate advertising revenue through high-traffic fringe news websites linked from network pages via URL shorteners
- Amplify fear-based and politically divisive narratives to Romanian-speaking audiences ahead of electoral periods
- Inflate organic-appearing engagement metrics to maintain high algorithmic reach on Facebook
- Build large, captive audiences through benign lifestyle content and subsequently expose them to sensationalist political narratives

Realized consequences

- With a combined following of 17.5 million, there is potential for widespread exposure to coordinated sensationalist and click bait content.
- Generating advertising revenue by directing Facebook audiences to fringe news websites through obfuscated links
- Artificial inflation of engagement metrics, distorting Facebook's recommendation algorithms and giving disproportionate reach to content from network pages
- The funneling of advertising data and generation of ad revenue using a known Russian company, reportedly involved in influence operations that targeted Romania in the past.

Potential impacts

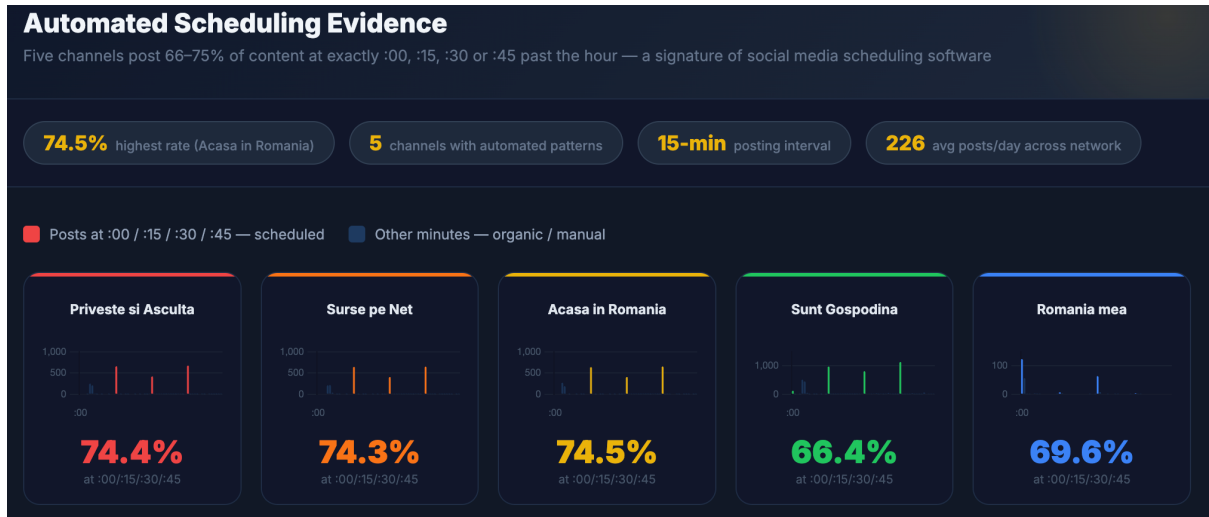
- Erosion of public trust in Romanian mainstream media through sustained exposure to sensationalist and misleading narratives copying headlines from legitimate newsrooms
- Risk of network reactivation or expansion ahead of upcoming electoral events in Romania, given the network's demonstrated capacity to reach millions of users with political content.

Recommended actions

- Meta should investigate the shared infrastructure (automated posting tools, shared TinyURL accounts) linking the 45 pages.
- Meta' should deplatform content and assets found to violate the company's policy on Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior (CIB).

- Refer evidence to ANCOM (National Authority for Administration and Regulation in Communications) for assessment under Romanian regulation.

Additional evidence



Five frequency charts showing the minute mark at which the pages post the most often, suggesting content automation. The Y axis shows the number of posts that emerged at the exact minute mark (:00, :15, :30 or :45), and the percentage indicates the number of posts that exhibit this behavior among all of the account's post. (Source: DFRLab via Junkipedia)



A coordinated post showing identical content and timestamp. (Source: [Sunt Gospodina](#), [Priveste si Asculta](#), [Acasa in Romania](#), [Surse pe Net](#))

Eduard
March 17 at 9:20 PM · 🌐
ULTIMA ORĂ! E scandal mare pe străzi! Se cere DEMISIA Guvernului --->>
<https://tinyurl.com/3mfpfeny>
"Dați jos Guvernul!"
See translation



Obiectiv Substantial · Follow
March 17 at 9:20 PM · 🌐
ULTIMA ORĂ! E scandal mare pe străzi! Se cere DEMISIA Guvernului --->>
<https://tinyurl.com/3mfpfeny>
"Dați jos Guvernul!"
See translation



A coordinated post showing identical timestamp and content using a TinyURL shortened link. (Source: [Eduard](#), [Obiectiv Substantial](#))

Eduard
March 9 at 2:20 PM · 🌐
BREAKING NEWS! Victorie pentru Călin Georgescu în dosarul tentativei de lovitură de stat --->>
<https://tinyurl.com/36pnb7uy>
Probe cheie au fost eliminate din dosar!
See translation



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See translation



A coordinated post showing identical timestamp and content using a TinyURL shortened link. (Source: [Eduard](#), [Obiectiv Substantial](#))

Extra News
Site-ul capitanului (continuăm) de la casa din... Despre noi (informații) (de contact)

INFLUENȚĂ POLITICĂ SANITATE EXTERN CURIOZITĂȚI RETETE AGRICULTURĂ

Călin Georgescu, blocat în control judiciar: Judecătorii s-au certat pe dosarul lui, dar sentința e clară. „Complețul de divergență” a tăiat în carne vie

March 13, 2026 by Flavius


Juțitia română arată că este mai divizată ca niciodată în cazul fostului candidat la prezidențiale. Înt-o mișcare rară, care trădează incertitudinea din spatele ușilor închise, Tribunalul București a avut nevoie de un al treilea judecător pentru a rupe egalitatea dintre magistrați care nu reușeau să ajungă la un numitor comun. Unul dintre judecători a pledat pentru libertate totală, considerând că restricțiile nu se mai justifică, în timp ce ceilalți a cerut ferm prelungirea controlului judiciar. La final, balanța a înclinat împotriva lui Călin Georgescu, lăsându-l captiv într-un regim de supraveghere strictă.

Război de opinii la tribunal: Cum s-a decis soarta lui Georgescu

Dosarul care vizează acuzațiile de propagandă legionară a provocat o fractură vizibilă în completul de judecată. Procedura „completului de divergență”, un mecanism juridic folosit doar atunci când opiniile sunt ireconciliabile, a fost activată după ce primii doi judecători au ajuns într-un hibrid total. Intrarea în scenă a celui al treilea magistrat a fost deciziivă, acesta aliniind că...

Extra News


Călin Georgescu, blocat în control judiciar: Judecătorii s-au certat pe dosarul lui, dar sentința e clară. „Complețul de divergență” a tăiat în carne vie



Ioana-stiri.com

ȘTIINȚĂ BUGĂCĂRII POVEȘTI RETETE CONTACT POLITICA DE CONFIDENȚIALITATE

Călin Georgescu, blocat în control judiciar: Judecătorii s-au certat pe dosarul lui, dar sentința e clară. „Complețul de divergență” a tăiat în carne vie



Three copy pasta articles from inauthentic news sites, linked in the first comment of the posts disseminated by the network. (Source: [Chidul Medicului](#), [Extra News](#), [Ioana-stiri.com](#))

ȘTIRILE KANAL D ACTUALE POLITICĂ EDUCAȚIE EXTERNE LIFE TECH AUTO ECONOMIC ...

Mojaba Khamenei Iran Donald Trump Volodimir Zelenski Iie Bolojan

Știri Kanal D • Știri externe • Moscova, atacată pe timpul nopții. Sute de drone au creat panică în capitala Rusiei

Moscova, atacată pe timpul nopții. Sute de drone au creat panică în capitala Rusiei



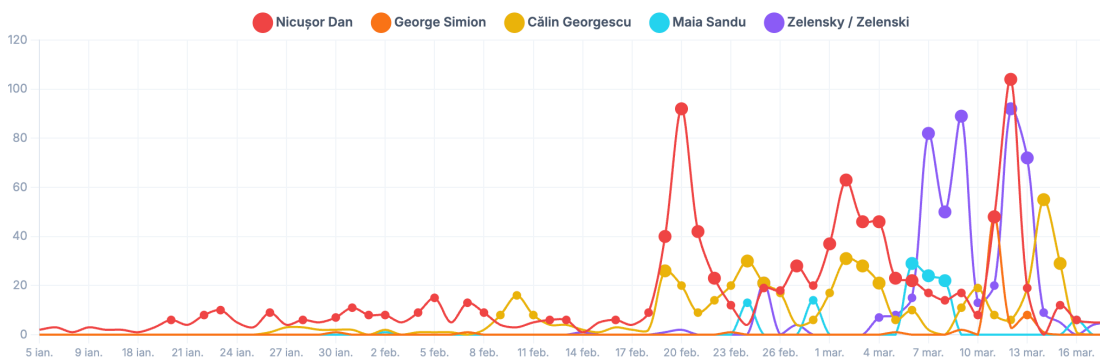
DINPopor MONDEN EVENIMENTE MODĂ ȘI LIFESTYLE SCANDALURI SHOWBIZ

Prima pagină • Moscova, atacată pe timpul nopții. Sute de drone au creat panică în capitala Rusiei

Moscova, atacată pe timpul nopții. Sute de drone au creat panică în capitala Rusiei



A collage comparing identical headlines from legitimate news outlet [Stirile Kanal D](#) (at left) and [DinPopor Monden](#) (at right). (Sources: [Stirile Kanal D](#), [DinPopor Monden](#))



A frequency chart showing the distribution of mentions to politicians across the network over time since 2026. (Source: [DFRLab](#) via [Junkipedia](#))

Traditional Romanesc
Yesterday at 12:41 PM · 🌐

ȘOC MONDIAL! Vladimir Putin a fost atacat...
Vezi mai mult

11
Like Comment Share

Most relevant

Author
Traditional Romanesc
<https://citate-ai-ci.com/moscova-atacata-pe-timpul.../>

CONTINUAREA AICI CITESTE-AICI.COM
Moscova atacată pe timpul nopții...

1d Like Reply

Radu Sorin Barlea

1d Like Reply

Write a comment...

DINPopor
IMONDEN

EVENTIMENTE MODĂ ȘI LIFESTYLE SCANDALURI SHOWBIZ

Prima pagină » Moscova, atacată pe timpul nopții. Sute de drone au creat panică în capitala Rusiei

Moscova, atacată pe timpul nopții. Sute de drone au creat panică în capitala Rusiei

A Facebook post by an account in the network using a shortened link, leading, in reality, to fringe news outlet Dinpopor Monden. (Source: [Facebook](#), [DinPopor Monden](#))