



Aspen – GMF Bucharest Forum 2025

14th edition | October 22 – 24 | Bucharest

The Disintegration of the World Order: Survival of the Fittest

The Aspen – GMF Bucharest Forum is a strategic convening and a flagship public diplomacy event where global leaders engage with the Black Sea area and beyond, bridging Trans-Atlantic conversations and creating a process of reflection on the region and its impact within the international agendas. Situated at the crossroads of Europe, Bucharest offers a unique vantage point to examine the European dimension of global disruptions and to facilitate a broader, inclusive dialogue.

Co-organizers:

Aspen Institute Romania, German Marshall Fund of the United States, Aspen Institute Romania - Chişinău Office

Under the High Patronage of the President of Romania

Institutional Partners:

Government of Romania, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism, Ministry of Investments and European Projects, Ministry of Energy, National Bank of Romania (BNR), EU Commission Representation in Romania, National Energy Regulatory Authority (ANRE), The National Authority for Management and Regulation in Communications of Romania (ANCOM), The Authority for the Digitalization of Romania (ADR)

Aspen International Partners:

The Aspen Institute US, Aspen Institute Central Europe, Aspen Institute Kyiv, Aspen Institute Romania - Brussels Office

Knowledge Partners:

European Center for Economic Security, Technology and Resilience (ECESTR), Romanian National Cyber Security Directorate (DNSC), Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre (E-ARC), European Cybersecurity Competence Centre (ECCC), EY, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), British Romanian Chamber of Commerce (BRCC)

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DC Media Group, Ringier, Libertatea, AGERPRES

DAY 1 - October 22, 2025

Radisson Blu Hotel

13:00 – 14:00 Registration & Welcome Lunch

14:00 – 14:25 Introductory Remarks

- **Mircea Geoană**, President, Aspen Institute Romania; Former Deputy Secretary General, NATO
- **Elliot Gerson**, Executive Vice President, The Aspen Institute

14:25 – 14:40 Keynote Speech

- **Ilie Bolojan**, Prime Minister, Government of Romania (**TBC**)
- **Liviu Ionuț Moșteanu**, Vice Prime Minister & Minister of National Defense of Romania
- **Dragoș Pîslaru**, Minister of Investments and European Projects of Romania

14:40 – 15:00

Panel Session

De-globalization vs. Regionalization - A Conversation

Winners and Losers in the New World Disorder

In an era marked by the ascent of regional power centers, the situation in Ukraine unfolds with significant geopolitical implications. This panel will dissect the potential strategic calculus of the United States, which may see Ukraine's security posture (and its economic alignment) as a bargaining chip in a larger global game, potentially influencing its EU trajectory. We will also assess the enduring strength of the Russia-China relationship as a defining feature of this emerging world disorder and its impact on the winners and losers in this evolving global landscape.

- **Ivan Krastev**, Award winning author, Chairman, Centre for Liberal Strategies and Permanent Fellow, Institute for Human Sciences Vienna

Moderator: Cristina Cileacu, Journalist, DIGI24

15:00 – 15:20

Spotlight Conversation: A New Era of Global Instability?

This session will identify the key factors driving this potential shift and assess its far-reaching impacts, analyzing the power vacuums emerging globally and identifying the novel actors, ideologies, and dynamics shaping the international arena.

- **Rt Hon Lord Jack McConnell**, First Minister of Scotland 2001-2007, Chairman of the McConnell International Foundation

Moderator: Cristina Cileacu, Journalist, DIGI24

15:20 – 15:30

Keynote Speech

Europe at the Crossroads: What Role for the CEE Region?

As Europe adapts to a rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are emerging as increasingly active players in shaping the continent's future. From strengthening European security to driving innovation and economic convergence, the region has become central to the vision of a more strategic and geopolitical Europe.

- **Mircea Abrudean**, President of the Romanian Senate

15:30 – 16:30

Panel Session

European Security & Priorities as Seen Through New Lens

Specifically addressing the unique security challenges facing Europe in the current context and highlighting the significance of European collaborative formats such as Weimar+.

- **Radu Burnete**, Presidential Adviser, Presidential Administration of Romania
- **Norman Heit**, Global Corporate Security & Resilience Director, Vodafone Group
- **Philip Bednarczyk**, Warsaw Office Director, German Marshall Fund
- **Jo Inge Bekkevold**, Senior Adviser, Norwegian, Institute for Defence Studies
- **H.E. Nicolas Warnery**, French Ambassador to Romania
- **Nadezhda Neynsky**, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bulgaria

Moderator: Alina Inayeh, Lead Advisor, Aspen Institute Romania

16:30 – 17:15

Panel Session

Energy Security, Regional Cooperation & Supply Chains

Exploring the shift towards sustainable economic models and the transition to cleaner energy sources, with a focus on strengthening energy security, regional cooperation, and resilient supply chains. The discussion will address opportunities and challenges in advancing sustainability while ensuring reliable, affordable, and diversified energy access across the region.

- **George Niculescu**, President, Romanian Energy Regulatory Authority (ANRE) **(TBC)**
- **Christina Verchere**, CEO, OMV Petrom
- **Mihaela Mihăilescu**, Associate Director, Deputy Head Romania, EBRD
- **Alessio Menegazzo**, CEO & Country Manager, PPC Romania
- **Dr. Cezara Missing**, Director Public Affairs Germany, Carrier Climate Solutions Europe
- **Mihai Drăghici**, Partener, Business Consulting, EY România, EY CESA South Cluster Energy Sector Lead

Moderator: Cristian Pîrvulescu, CEO and Founding Partner, ENEVO Group / Aspen Fellow

17:15 – 18:00

Panel Session

Strategic Capital: Innovation, Security, and Investment in the CEE Region

The intersection of financial markets, transatlantic trade, and economic security is increasingly shaping the future of Central and Eastern Europe. This panel will explore how regional financial ecosystems are evolving in response to global trends, from the rise of capital markets and the growing role of private equity and venture capital, to the digital transformation of financial services. A special focus will be placed on sustainable finance as a driver of long-term growth and resilience. Discussions will also examine the region's deeper integration into global financial networks, the impact of geopolitical risks on investment flows, and how CEE economies are positioning themselves as emerging hubs for innovation and capital. By linking the transatlantic economic agenda with developments in the CEE financial landscape, the panel will assess both the opportunities and vulnerabilities that define the region's path forward.

- **Dragoș Pîslaru**, Minister of Investments and European Projects of Romania
- **Alexandru Petrescu**, President, The Financial Supervisory Authority
- **Cosmin Vladimirescu**, General Manager Romania and Croatia, Mastercard
- **Mustafa Tiftikcioğlu**, CEO, Garanti BBVA Romania
- **Raluca Țintoiu**, Deputy CEO & Head of Wholesale Banking, ING

Moderator: Roxana Voicu-Dorobanțu, Associate Professor, Bucharest University of Economic Studies / Senior Fellow, Aspen New Economy & Society Program

18:00 – 18:30

Spotlight Conversation

Soft Diplomacy: Building a Nation's Brand

- **Charlie Ottley**, Journalist, Writer, and Presenter of the Netflix travel series "Flavours of Romania"
- **Jean Valvis**, Founder of the Aqua Carpatica Brand (**TBC**)
- **Nicoleta Iordan**, Co-Founder, Cărturești
- **Christoph Promberger**, Executive Director, Foundation Conservation Carpathia

Moderator: Ana-Maria Atonoaie, Strategic Partnerships Director, Foundation Conservation Carpathia / Aspen Alumna

18:30 – 20:00 Cocktail Reception

20:15 – 21:30

Night-Owl Session (By Invitation Only)

hosted by Cărturești

- **Ivan Krastev**, Award winning author, Chairman, Centre for Liberal Strategies and Permanent Fellow, Institute for Human Sciences Vienna

Moderator: Clara Volintiru, Regional Director, German Marshall Fund of the United States / Aspen Alumna

DAY 2 - October 23, 2025

09:00 – 09:30 Registration & Welcome Coffee

09:30 – 09:40 Keynote Address

- **Clara Volintiru**, Regional Director, German Marshall Fund of the United States / Aspen Alumna

09:40 – 09:45 High-level Keynote Address

09:45 – 10:15

Spotlight Conversation

From Elections to Next Steps: A case study on Moldova

- **Martin Dvorak**, Minister for European Affairs, Czechia
- **Natalia Gavrilă**, Member of the Supervisory Board, National Bank of Moldova

Moderator: Clara Volintiru, Regional Director, German Marshall Fund of the United States / Aspen Alumna

10:15 – 11:00

Panel Session

Building a Secure and Open Digital Future: Trade, Connectivity, and Innovation

powered by European Center for Economic Security, Technology and Resilience (ECESTR)

In a rapidly evolving geopolitical and technological landscape, the foundations of prosperity and security rely on resilient digital ecosystems. Rules-based trade and investment frameworks, secure cross-border connectivity, and collaborative research and innovation are essential to safeguarding both economic competitiveness and democratic resilience. This panel will bring together diverse stakeholders from leading global technology players, alongside policymakers, regulators, and experts from security and research communities. Discussions will explore how to align digital transformation with digital resilience and security imperatives, from AI innovation and dual-use technologies to next-generation telecom infrastructure, while also looking at the role of transatlantic cooperation in ensuring Europe's competitiveness while upholding democratic values and open markets.

- **Radu Nicolae Mihailescu**, President of the Commission for Information Technology and Communications, Romanian Parliament
- **Eran Kahana**, AI, Cybersecurity and Intellectual Property Attorney, Fellow & Advisory Board Member, Stanford Law School
- **Luigi Ardito**, Senior Director of Government Affairs EMEA, Qualcomm
- **Cezara Panait**, Head of Government Affairs & Public Policy, Google / Aspen Alumna
- **Vitnija Saldava**, Regional Public Policy Lead, Meta

Moderator: Ionuț Sas, Vice-President, UiPath

11:00 – 12:00

Panel Session

Competitiveness in the Digital Era

Europe stands at a critical juncture, as the Draghi report highlights the urgency of renewing competitiveness in the face of global competition. For Romania and the wider region, the digital economy offers a unique chance not just to catch up, but to leapfrog—transforming structural challenges into opportunities for growth, resilience, and integration into Europe’s strategic value chains. This panel will explore how the digital economy can serve as a driver of competitiveness at both EU and regional levels, examining: policy and investment priorities Europe must pursue to remain globally competitive; how the digital transformation, AI, and next-generation connectivity can reshape regional economies; opportunities for Romania and the region to position themselves as hubs for innovation, digital services, and secure infrastructure.

- **Adrian Comănescu**, Competition Councilor, Romanian Competition Council Plenum
- **Radu Hanga**, President of the Board of Directors, The Bucharest Stock Exchange / Aspen Alumnus
- **Joana Sanchez Klosinska**, VP - Government Affairs and Policy for South East Europe and Central Europe, Mastercard
- **Lucian Baltaru**, CEO, Sameday Group
- **Elisa Caner**, Lead, EU Public Policy and Government Affairs, Oracle

Moderator: Radu Puchiu, Director, Aspen Technology & Society Program

12:00 – 12:45

Panel Session

**Aspen City Innovation Initiative Panel Session: Sustainable Development and Smart Cities
powered by City Innovation Program Aspen US**

The session is part of the Aspen City Innovation Initiative, which aims to broaden the scope of the debate on urban policies and innovative planning in Romania: addressing urbanization strategies, urban economics and financing of sustainable projects, energy efficiency, urban safety, social and economic resilience, and the evolution of urban communities and networks. Discussions will highlight how data-driven innovation and collaborative governance can enhance the quality of life and support the sustainable transformation of cities. The panel will further examine integrated approaches to achieve long-term environmental, social, and economic well-being, with a focus on the role of smart technologies in shaping more sustainable and resilient urban environments.

- **Ciprian Ciucu**, Mayor of the 6th District, Bucharest / Aspen Fellow
- **Prof. Dr.-Ing. Jörg Rainer Noennig**, Professor for Digital City Science, HafenCity University Hamburg
- **Ana-Maria Borlovan**, General Manager Uber Romania, and CEE / Aspen Alumna

Moderator: Andrew Tyler, Scotland Hydro Nation Chair, Academic Director for Scotland’s International Environment Centre, University of Stirling

12:45 – 14:00 Lunch Break

14:00 – 14:45

Panel Session

IMEC Economic Corridor - *Expanding the Dialogue, engaging Key Global Players*

The session will look into the strategic implications of initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and its potential to reshape global connectivity and influence power dynamics, integrating perspectives from India into the conversation, recognizing their growing geopolitical and economic significance.

- **Indrani Bagchi**, Chief Executive Officer, Ananta Aspen Centre (**online**)
- **Daniel Kliman**, Senior Vice President for Global Power Shifts, German Marshall Fund
- **Pekka Hakala**, Head of Strategy and Innovation Unit, Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, European Parliament
- **Charles Powell**, Director, Elcano Royal Institute
- **Efgan Nifti**, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Caspian Policy Center

Moderator: Marie Harf, National Security Policy and Communications Strategist; Executive Director of Perry World House, University of Pennsylvania; Fox News Contributor

15:00 – 17:00

Closed-door Roundtable Discussion

EU Enlargement Path: from the Western Balkans to Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia. Pro-European Future Amidst Geopolitical Challenges?

powered by the Aspen Institute Romania Chişinău Office

What are the most pressing challenges and most promising opportunities facing countries in the Western Balkans and the extended Black Sea region—particularly Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia—on their paths toward closer integration with the European Union?

This roundtable will bring together diverse perspectives on the region's evolving political, economic, and social dynamics. Participants will examine how ongoing geopolitical tensions, governance reforms, and societal aspirations shape each country's European trajectory. The discussion will also address prospects for greater stability, resilience, and cooperation within the EU neighborhood.

Building upon recent studies and presentations conducted by Aspen Institute Romania, in partnership with the Association for Foreign Policy (APE) and Watchdog Moldova, this session aims to deepen the regional dialogue on Europe's future and the shared challenges of transformation and integration.

- **Martin Dvorak**, Minister for European Affairs, Czechia
- **Natalia Gavrilă**, Member of the Supervisory Board, National Bank of Moldova
- **Radu Burduja**, Executive Director of the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Center, Chişinău
- **Goran Buldioski**, Senior Fellow, Hertie School, University of Governance in Berlin
- **Brandon Bohrn**, Expert for Transatlantic Relations, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Germany
- **Narek Sukiasyan**, Senior Policy Officer and Program Manager Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Armenia and Researcher at the Center for Culture and Civilization Studies
- **Elene Kintsurashvili**, Senior Program Coordinator, GMF Warsaw

Moderator: Oana Popa, Former EU Ambassador to Montenegro

DAY 3 - October 24, 2025

10:00 – 12:30

By-invitation Only, Roundtable discussion

Aspen Economic Strategy Initiative

*The **Aspen Economic Strategy Initiative** (AESI) by Aspen Institute Romania is a high-level, non-partisan platform bringing together leading voices from government, business, academia, and civil society to shape strategic conversations on Romania's and Europe's economic future. Inspired by the Aspen Institute US Economic Strategy Group, AESI Romania is designed as a high-level initiative of the Aspen New Economy & Society Program, and aims to foster informed debate and actionable ideas at the intersection of economic policy, competitiveness, and European integration. Its work will focus on: **Competitiveness & Growth, Fiscal & Economic Policy, Romania in Europe, Regional Perspectives.***

11:00 - 14:00

By-invitation Only, Roundtable discussion

At the Crossroads: Future of Security and Connectivity in the Black Sea

The round tables on the geopolitics of the Black Sea region will bring together experts, policymakers, and industry leaders to discuss the critical issues of connectivity, trade, infrastructure, energy security, and supply chain resilience. The strategic importance of the Black Sea tends to be seen through the security lenses, fully justified by the current context, yet its importance is equally economic. Black Sea is a vital corridor for regional and international commerce, which emphasizes the need for secure ports, shipping routes, and energy pipelines. The discussion will address challenges related to infrastructure protection, ensuring safe and stable energy supplies, and maintaining seamless trade flows amidst geopolitical tensions. Attendees will also consider initiatives to enhance regional cooperation, improve supply chain security, and foster sustainable economic development in this geopolitically significant area. The round table aims to foster dialogue between business, government, and strategists from and outside the region.