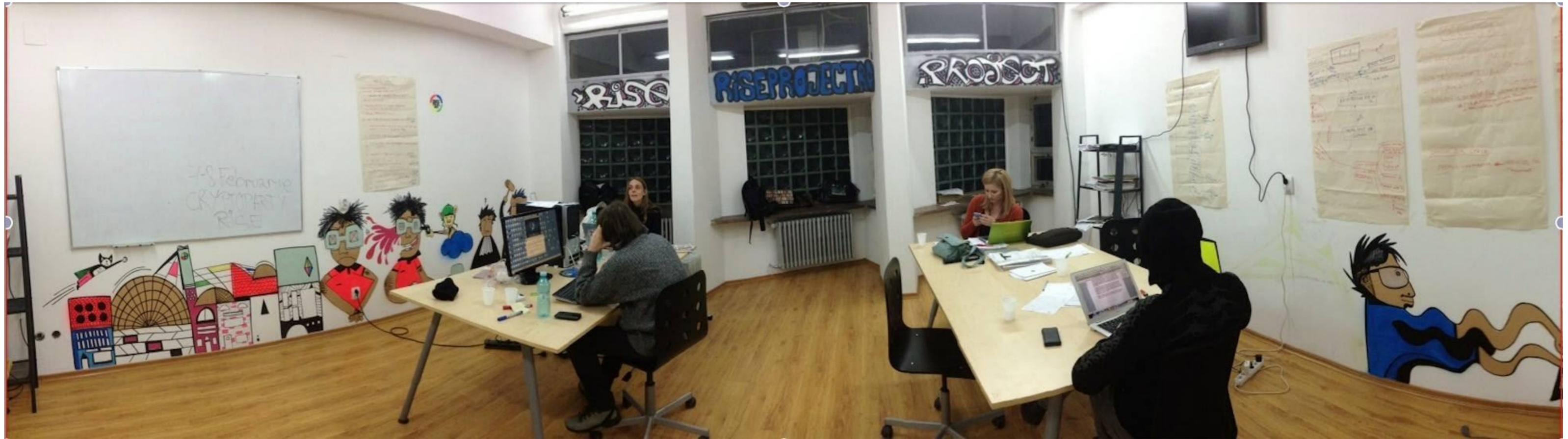




2017

ANNUAL REPORT



ABOUT



Annual Report 2017

RISE Project is an investigative journalism not-for-profit organization that uses advanced data research techniques and technology to generate reliable, hard hitting, investigative reporting.

It was established in January 2012 by a group of Romanian investigative reporters, visual artists and programmers.

We produce investigative stories, databases as well as research and visualization tools.

We educate other journalists and the public at large in researching complex corporate structures used by organized crime and corrupt officials to hide stolen public money.

And this is what we do.



INVESTIGAȚII RISEBLOG CONEXIUNI RISEVIDEO DESPRE NOI DONEAZĂ CAUTĂ ENGLISH



INVESTIGAȚII



"ILUZIA" LUI NIRO

Nicolae Dumitru, zis "Niro", a ieșit de curând din pușcărie. Are 54 de ani și proprietăți imobiliare auto-evaluate la peste 680 de milioane de euro. Prima afacere a făcut-o cu bani de la cămătari, apoi s-a asociat cu un fost colonel de Miliție și a pus bazele complexului comercial Europa din București. [...]

9/01/2018 4 comentarii



Europarlamentarul Ramona Mănescu, tunuri imobiliare prin metoda „Mătușa”

RISE Project risipește una dintre ultimele perdele de fum care mai acoperă o serie de tranzacții în valoare de aproape 12 milioane de euro, petrecute în deceniul trecut. E vorba de retrocedarea suspectă și apoi de vânzarea unui teren enorm din București,



BANUL PARALEL

Banii lasă urme care te ajung din spate. Cum ar fi aproape jumătate de milion de lei care leagă firma Tel Drum de primul șef instalat de PSD-ul lui Dragnea în fruntea unei instituții-cheie: #Oficiul (Național pentru Prevenirea și Combaterea Spălării Banilor), care a trimis gruparea Dragnea de mai multe [...]

30/11/2017 57 comentarii



Rețeaua Comănescu (III): Un cuvânt de 30 de milioane de euro

Miliardarul Gabriel Comănescu, proprietarul unei flote de nave și platforme de foraj marin, a folosit cu succes rețeta financiară malteză. În timp ce companiile sale din România sărăceau, imperiul său offshore din Malta se îmbogățea. Operațiunea n-a rămas fără victime: primul rănit a fost bugetul statului, care a sângerat o [...]

9/11/2017 3 comentarii



Corbul Maltez

Peste 80 de mii de români s-au împrumutat la bănci și alte instituții financiare în România și au devenit, peste noapte, datori în Malta. Creditele lor au fost vândute de băncile de la București, la o fracțiune din valoarea nominală, către grupul polonez Kruk, lider pe piața recuperatorilor de datorii. [...]





Annual Report 2017

Dig for the facts

We help journalists anywhere to trace people, companies and assets across the globe.

RISE Project members are founders of the OCCRP and of the **Investigative Dashboard** (www.investigativedashboard.org).

This tool is developed together with Google Ideas to help investigators track down the money and hidden assets of criminals and corrupt politicians.

Ask our researchers

Journalists can rely on the assistance of the research team to take their stories cross-border.

[Send a research request](#)

Search for leads

Search millions of documents and datasets, from public sources, leaks and investigations.

[Search our document archive](#)

Map your investigation

Create visual investigative scenarios that map the people and companies in your story.

[Visualise networks](#)

RISE PROJECT is a member of the **Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project/OCCRP** and of the Global Investigative Journalism Network.

RISE Project, OCCRP and Quickdata also created Visual Investigative Scenarios (vis.occrp.org), a tool to visualize business and crime networks.



AWARDS

SuperScrierea Anului,
SuperScrieri Awards, 2017

First Place, SuperScrieri
Awards - Investigations,
2017

Second Place, SuperScrieri
Awards - Investigations,
2017

Editor of the Year,
SuperScrieri Awards, 2017

In 2017, RISE Project was
part of the **#PanamaPapers**
team lead by ICIJ, a series
that won the **Pulitzer Prize**



Annual Report 2017

**Best Collaborative
Investigative/Enterprise**
Reporting Editor&Publisher
EPPY, 2015

Investigation of the Year,
Global Editor`s Network,
2015

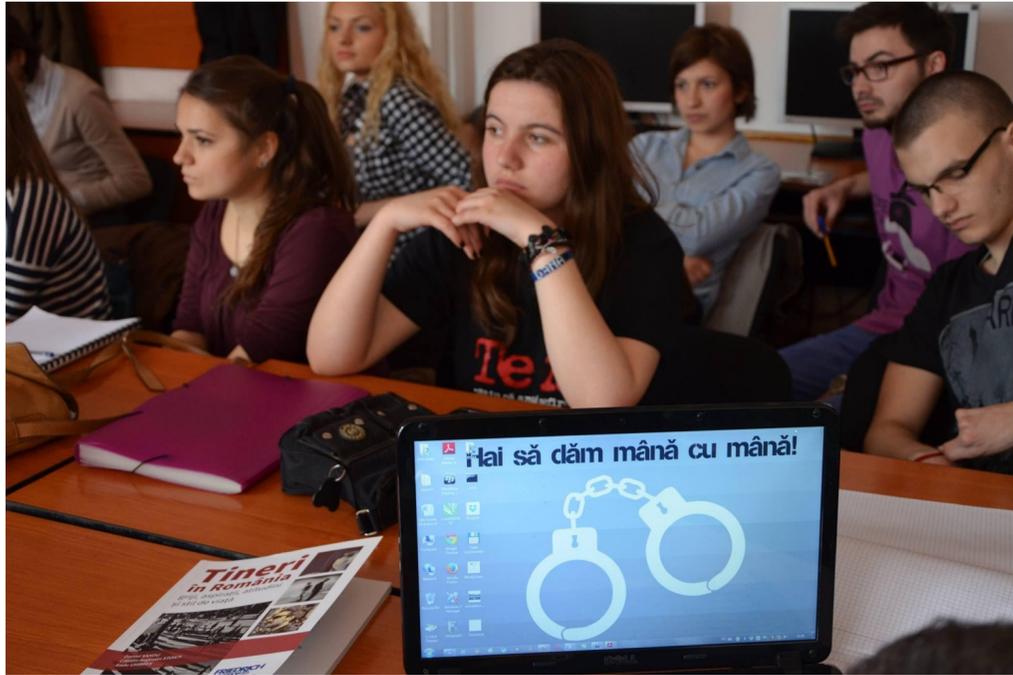
Investigation of the Year,
Data Journalism Awards,
2016

The **Daniel Pearl Award** for
Outstanding International
Reporting

Investigative Reporters and
Editors Awards

The **Global Shining Light**
Award





AIM

To investigate organized crime and corruption in Romania and the region.



HOW WE WORK

We follow the money across borders. We combine footwork with advanced investigative techniques and with data analysis to access hard to get records. We investigate the hidden connections between organized crime, politics and business and we visualize them.



ACROSS BORDERS

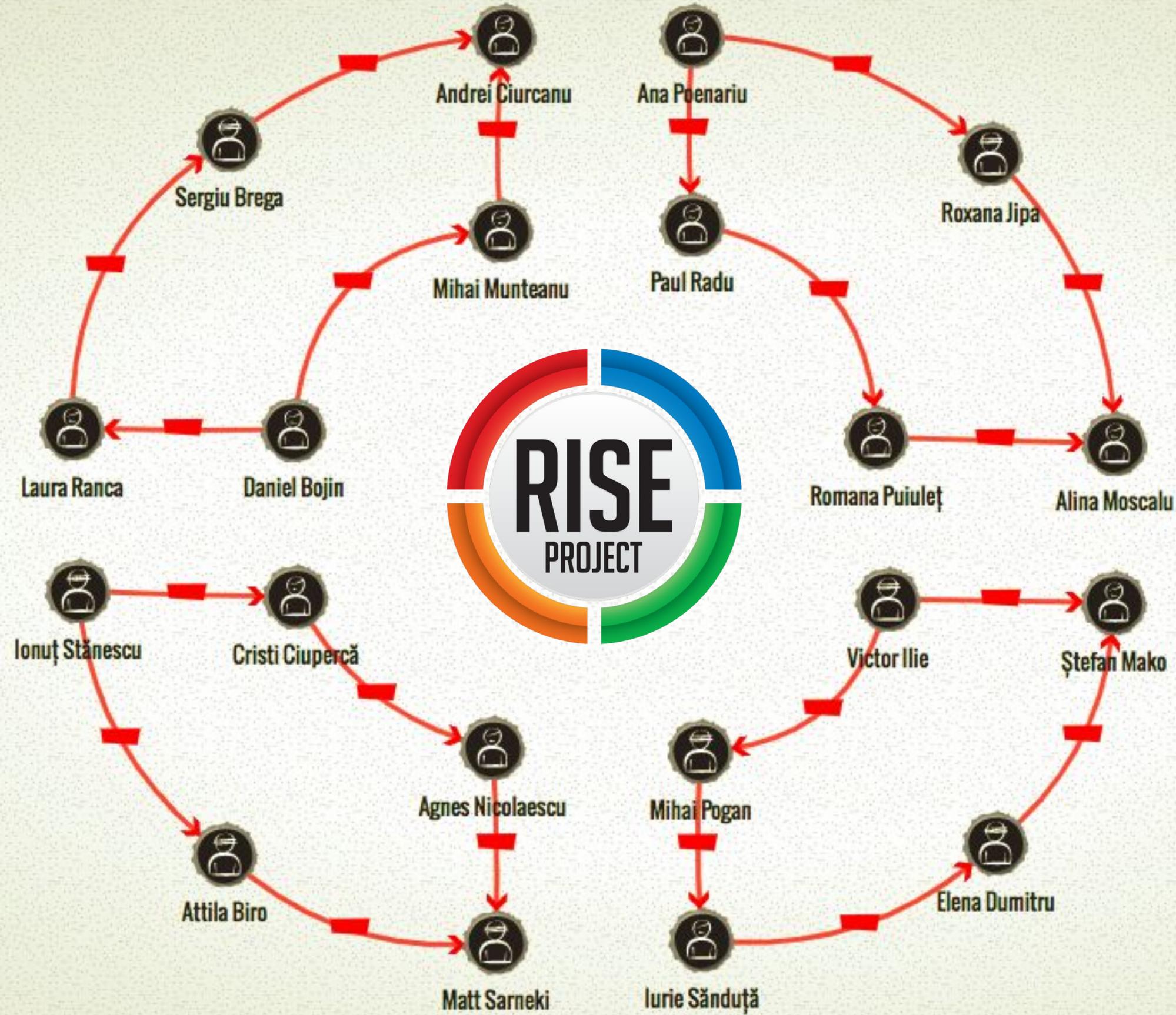
We follow and expose organized crime networks across national boundaries. In 2017, our investigations took us from Romania to Brazil, Malta, Madagascar, Panama, Moldova, Russia or Azerbaijan.



MEMBERS

RISE PROJECT members are experienced investigative journalists and researchers.

Some are freelancers, others are also affiliated with local or international media outlets.





Traficant: Am un produs.
Asta e undeva la 2000 de lei.

**CLEAR CUT
CRIMES**



Annual Report 2017

OVERVIEW

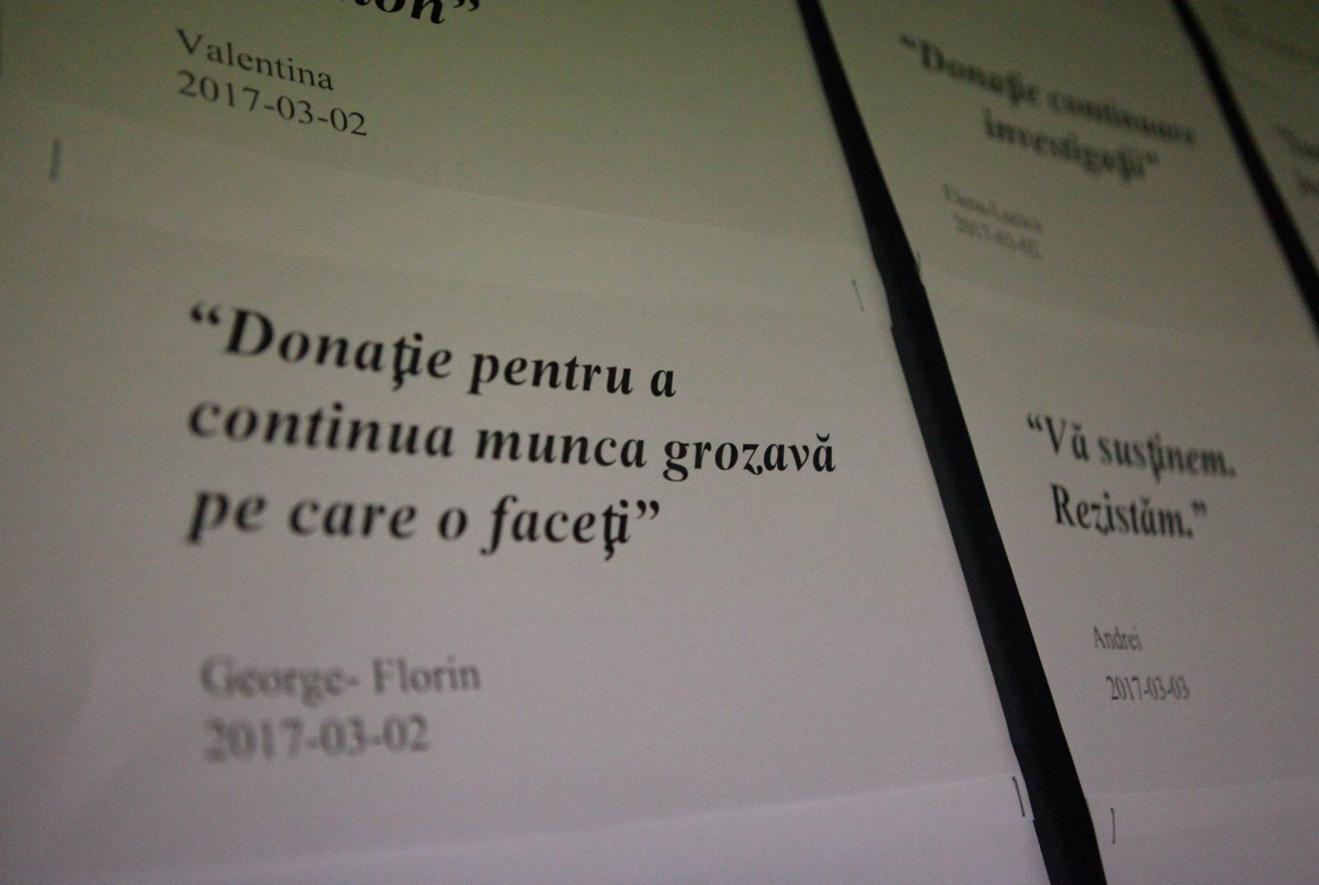
RISE Project published **47** investigative articles in 2017
We went for over **60** field trips
And over **100** interviews
We analyzed over **2.000** official documents
And about **220** company records.

Countries we covered:
**Romania, Moldova,
Ukraine, Bulgaria, Brazil.**

We trained over
150 people and worked
alongside them

We had a total audience of **1,1 mil.** unique visitors
on our website

And our work was featured on all major
mainstream media outlets.



FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Over its six years of activity, RISE has worked solely with external grants from international entities, thus being able to maintain a complete independence.

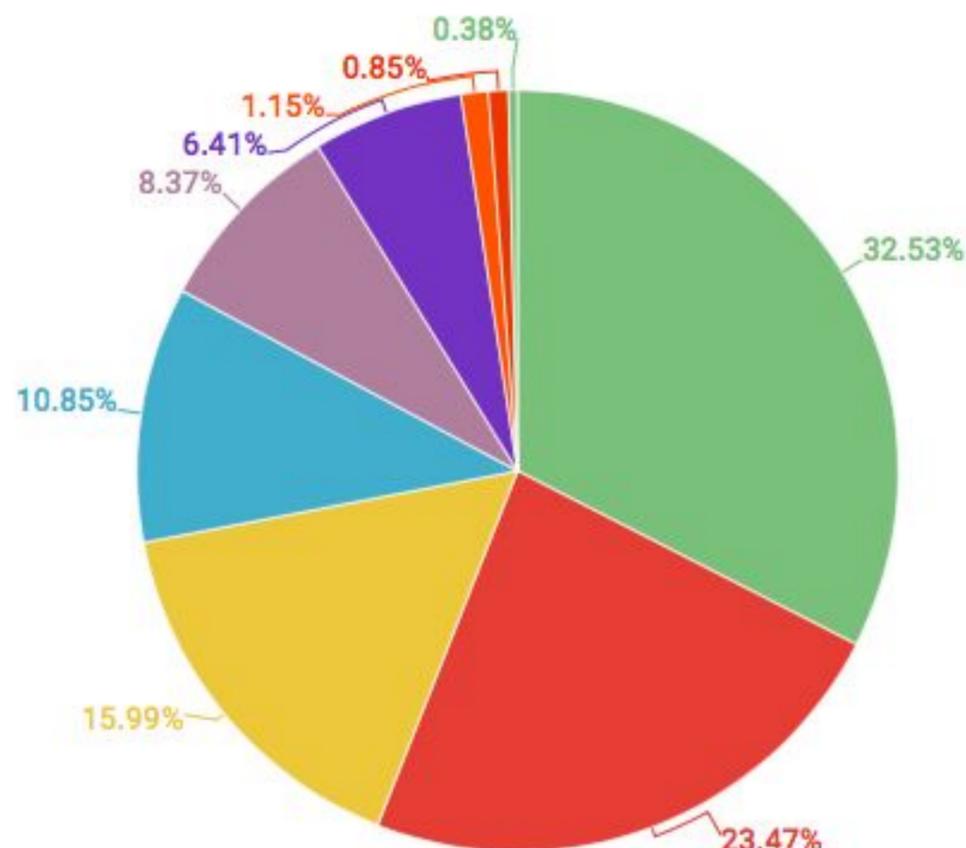
Our only national source of revenue are the donations from our readers, either through PayPal or our bank account.

Also, some of our readers were very kind to redirect 2% of their income tax toward RISE Project.

We thank them once again for their support.



Grants received by RISE Project between 2012 - 2017



Amounts in Euros.

All sums were converted to Euros at their respective average rates for each year.

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme	59,940	52,120	59,280	29,170		
Open Society Foundation	8,460	42,301	44,770	30,410	18,721	
Private donations	80,000	8,636	7,390	1,052	1,500	
Google	50,000					16,875
Dutch Foreign Ministry	51,610					
United States Embassy in Romania			12,378	11,985	11,127	4,023
Klarity Sweden		7,109				
Income from contracted training		1,000		4,217		
Awards	1,500	500		332		

Amounts in Euros.

All sums were converted to Euros at their respective average rates for each year.

In 2017, Rise Project had a total budget of 170.010 € (equivalent, all currencies were converted to Euro at the average rate for 2017) under 4 financing programs, respectively:

- Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme - **59.940 €**
- Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs - **51.610 €**
- Google Digital News Initiative Innovation Fund - **50.000 €**
- Open Society Foundation - **8.460 €**





The Open Society Foundation grant began in November 2016 and will end in April 2018.

The purpose of the grant is **Investigative Reporting Workshops and Educational Video Tutorials**. Its total value is 23.900 USD.

The 8.460 € RISE received last year were used for 5 workshops organized in five Romanian cities attended by over 100 journalism students. Each workshop lasted four days.

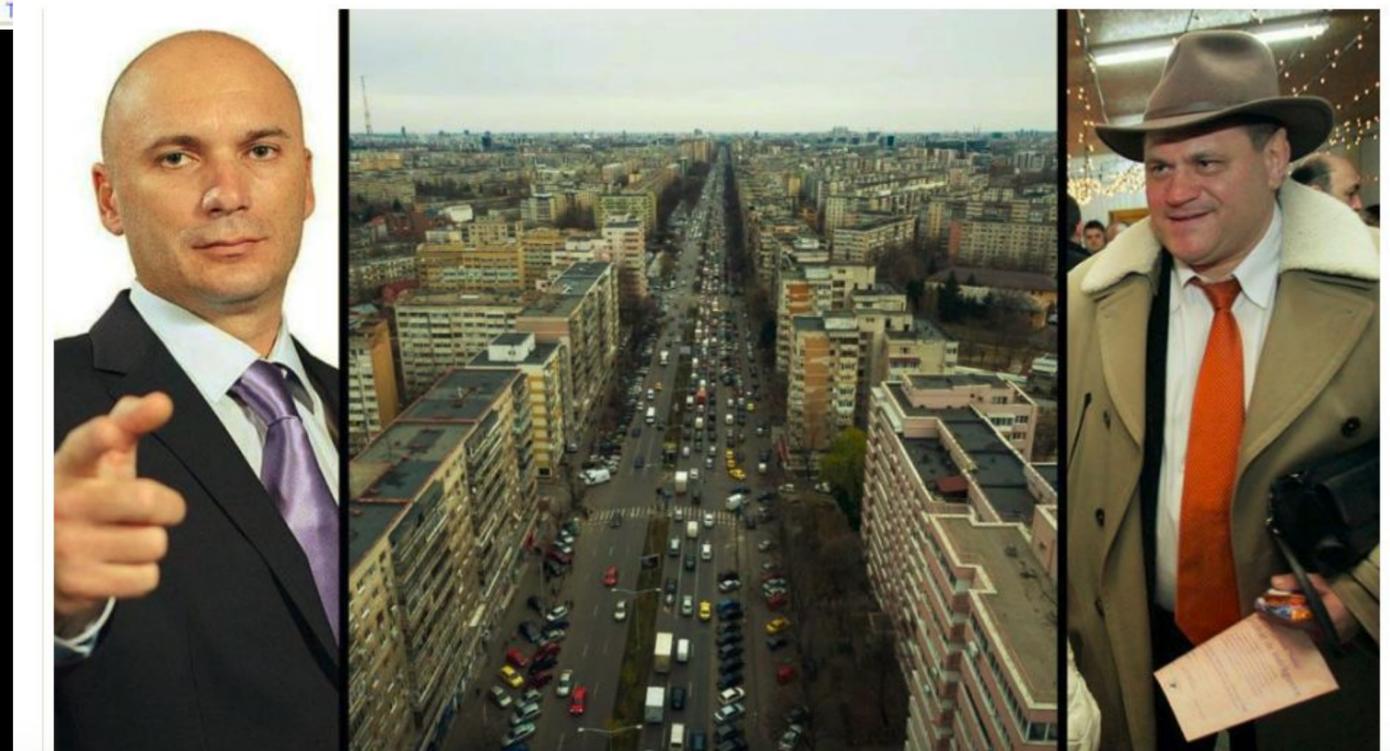
The **Mapping and Visualizing Cross-Border Crime** began in September 2014 and will end in August 2018 and is a collaboration between RISE Project Romania and the Basel Institute on Governance in Switzerland. The total amount received by RISE so far is the equivalent of 200.500 EUR, of which 59.940 EUR were paid in 2017.

Under this project, RISE produced last year **43 investigative** stories, published on www.riseproject.ro, and 16 online tutorials published both on our website and our YouTube channel.

For these outcomes, we studied more than **2.000 official documents**, of which roughly 1.500 were indexed in our databases and also in the „Connections” section of our website, where they are publicly available.

We also produced over 10 **People of Interest** profiles, establishing connections for at least 10 high-profile figures in Romania with other over 200 people - associates, family members, proxies and with over 110 companies related to them.

Our stories were accompanied by at least **20 animated infographics** and **10 short video documentaries**. For the Swiss programme, RISE also has a matching grant from OSF - total value 78 178 USD, under which there were no payments received by RISE in 2017.





The 50.000 EUR **Google Digital News Initiative Innovation Fund** grant was the only financing program that both began and ended in 2017 for RISE.

We used the money to elaborate a **Corruption Pattern Recognition** platform where journalists and programmers identify, reuse and investigate corruption patterns in order to expose corruption through data sets.

It allows investigative journalists to easily identify and track corruption patterns that they can tackle.

For this we indexed over **10 databases** - county budgets, public procurement archives, court archives, national budgets, European funds database, judicial indictments and so on.

We conducted over 50 interviews with experts and potential stakeholders - journalists, lawyers, programmers. The result is a **responsive website soon to be launched**. All source code will be made public on GITHUB once the website is officially launched.

Money Laundering Patterns in Eastern Europe

- RISE Project, in collaboration with RISE Moldova and Funky Citizens, a Romanian NGO, received this grant in November 2016 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Netherlands.

The programme is part of the NFRP/Matra: Grants for strengthening democracy and the rule of law in Europe. The program ended in February 2018.

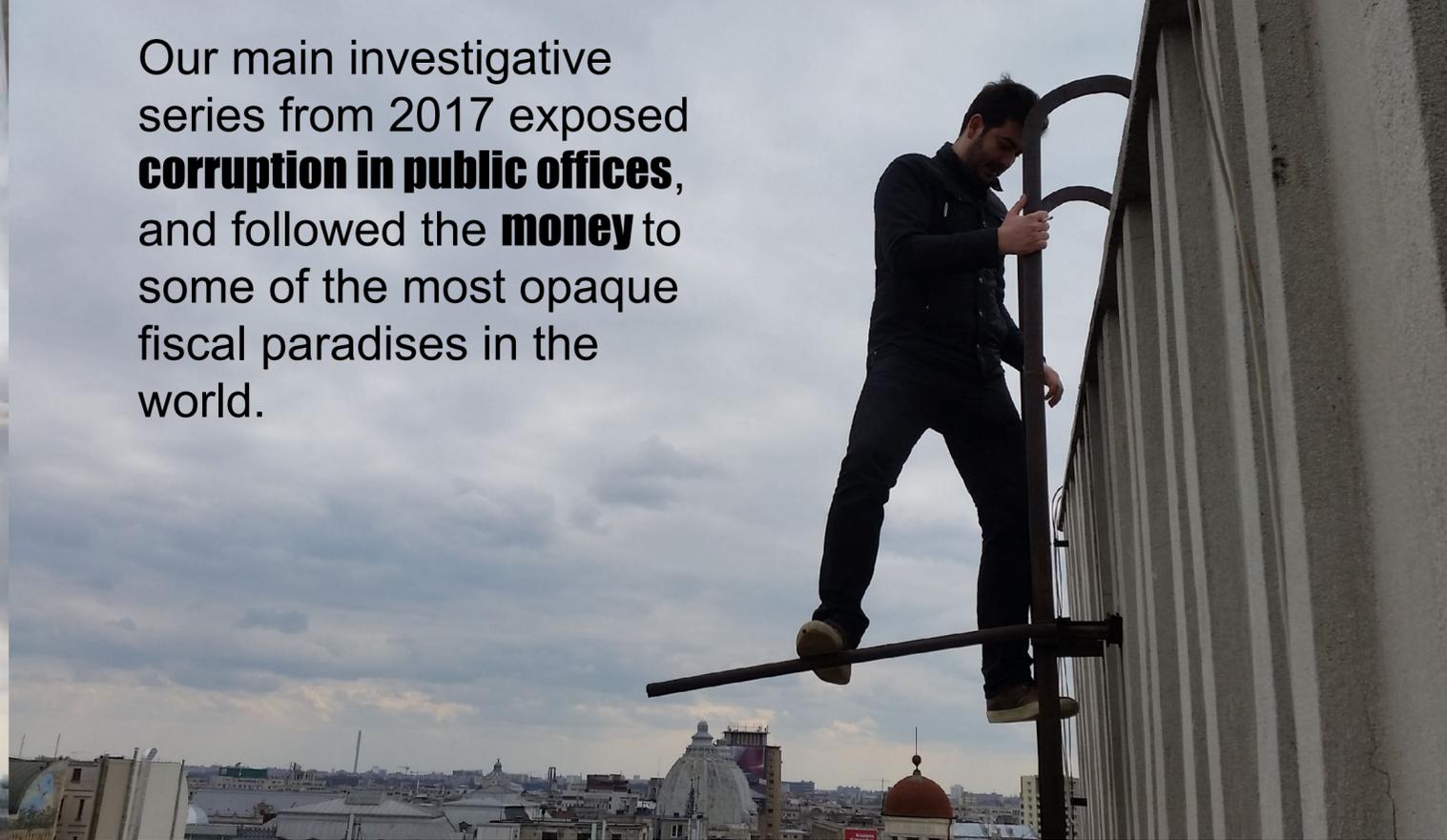
The main objective of the program is to develop an inventory of the new types of money laundering practices that use cryptocurrencies, onion type web pages and other software or web based tools.

The goal of the project is to use the tools of investigative journalism to identify patterns used by Romanian and Moldovan criminal organizations to launder money in cyber-space.

Under the programme, the team has evaluated the legislation regarding money laundering and cryptocurrencies in Romania and Moldova, indexed 14 companies that trade in cryptocurrencies and 12 criminal cases linked to such activities.

Overall, we collected data from over 20 public institutions in Romania, Moldova and other European Union bodies.





Our main investigative series from 2017 exposed **corruption in public offices**, and followed the **money** to some of the most opaque fiscal paradises in the world.

INVESTIGATIONS

RISE Project combines traditional fieldwork with data journalism. Organized crime and corruption networks are expanding, and so is our journalism.

We apply innovative data processing and visualization technology to produce investigations that uncover local, regional and global organized crime and corruption networks.





AFACERILE PUTERII SI ALE OPOZITIEI:

DRAGNEA, FORTĂREAȚA DIN BRAZILIA

The 'Dragnea' Organization

A total of **10 stories** were published as part of this investigation revolving around Liviu Dragnea, the president of the governing Social Democrat Party and leader of the Chamber of Deputies in the Romanian Parliament.



Because the company at stake had **bearer shares**, there was no legal way to determine its true ownership. We revealed that Dragnea used to spend his vacations in **Brazil**, together with his businessmen friends.



We indexed dozens of unknown connections between the third person in the Romanian chain-of-command and some of his most trusted friends. Today, they control a very profitable infrastructure company privatised in the early 2000's by Liviu Dragnea.

We also showed how Dragnea failed to include in his financial disclosure statements payments totaling 1 million Euro that he received from another of his friends who, in the midst of a criminal investigation targeting him, hanged himself in the toilet of a plane headed to Costa Rica.



The Underground City

An ongoing series that exposed, through its 9 stories published so far, a history of shady real-estate dealings from the very beginning of the Romanian democracy.

Over the years, many of the people who won the jackpot by buying prime real estate at extremely low prices became involved in politics.



Some of them ascended to public office, such as **minister** in the Government or member of the **European Parliament**.





Gabriel Comănescu, one of the wealthiest Romanians, used a Maltese vehicle to exports his oil profits while his local companies declared yearly losses.



FOTOGRAFII: Mediafax Foto

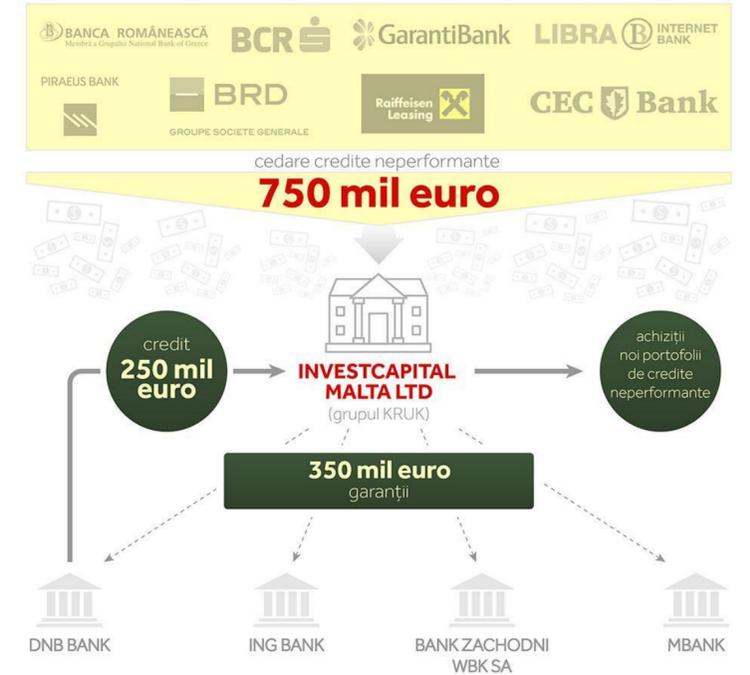
Many corruption schemes often end in a fiscal paradise, where the black money is well hidden out of the range of the authorities. One of them is Malta, a European safe heaven chosen by dozens of Romanian citizens for their businesses.



Dumitru 'Niro' Nicolae, one of the most controversial Romanian businessmen, was sentenced in 2016 to prison for trafficking influence in a corruption case.

Niro used Malta to register a yacht with a price tag of almost **3 mil. €** in the same period when he was transferring bribes from businessmen.

CIRCUITUL DATORIILOR



Malta is also used by **Kruk**, leader of the debt collecting market in Romania and Eastern and Central Europe, to buy debts worth of **750 mil. €** in Romania.

The Polish company used its Maltese arm to guarantee a **350 mil. €** loan from three banks, a loan guaranteed by the Romanian debt.





2017 also meant a new chapter of the **Laundromat** project. We have uncovered a massive scheme through which the Azerbaijan ruling regime of Ilham Alyiev paid millions of dollars to several European officials, journalists and corporations.

We also took a look at how an influential politician used the same lobby company as **Donald Trump** and the pro-Brexit campaign to improve up his image.

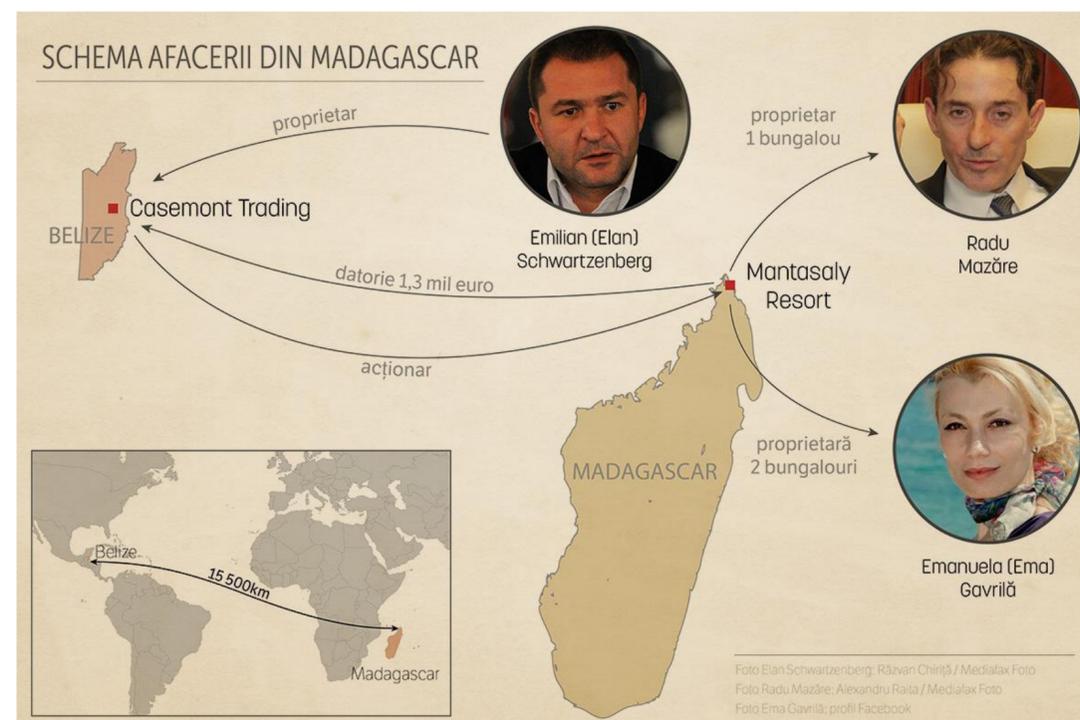
We showed how hundred of **tons of meat** was being trafficked in the heart of Bucharest.

We discovered how Romania's biggest port, **a national strategic objective**, is being rented out cheaper than the average price for an apartment.

And, in the Faces of the Victims of Corruption project, we revealed how, because of **corruption**, two miners died and another was severely injured.

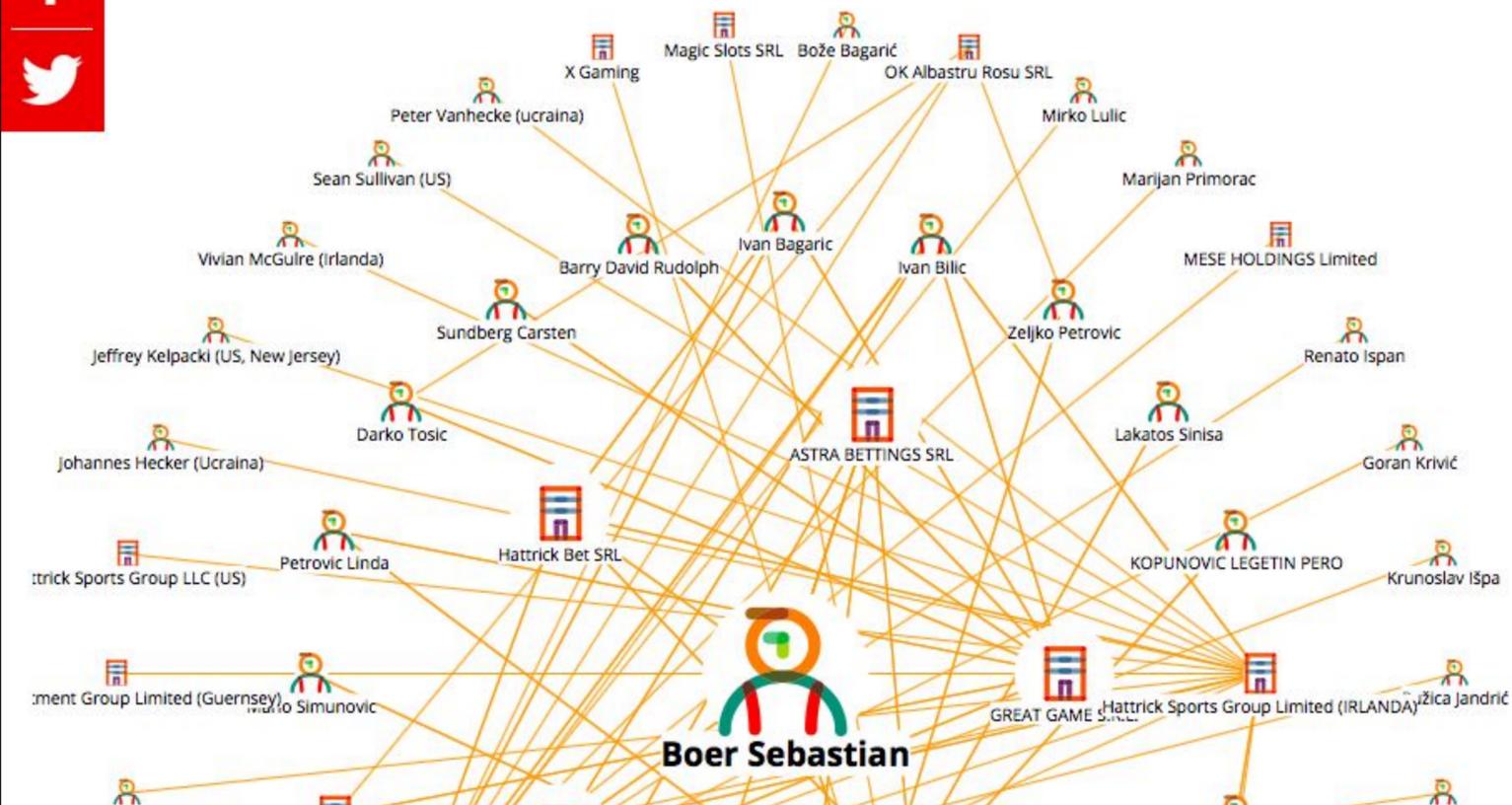
Another highlight story from 2017 include a close-up of the Madagascar luxury resort built by a group of Romanian businessmen who, together with a local mayor, are under criminal investigation.

They are accused of bribing the mayor, **Radu Mazăre**, in return for winning multi-million Euro public contracts for housing. The businessmen and the mayor have fled Romania.





CONEXIUNI



Boer Sebastian

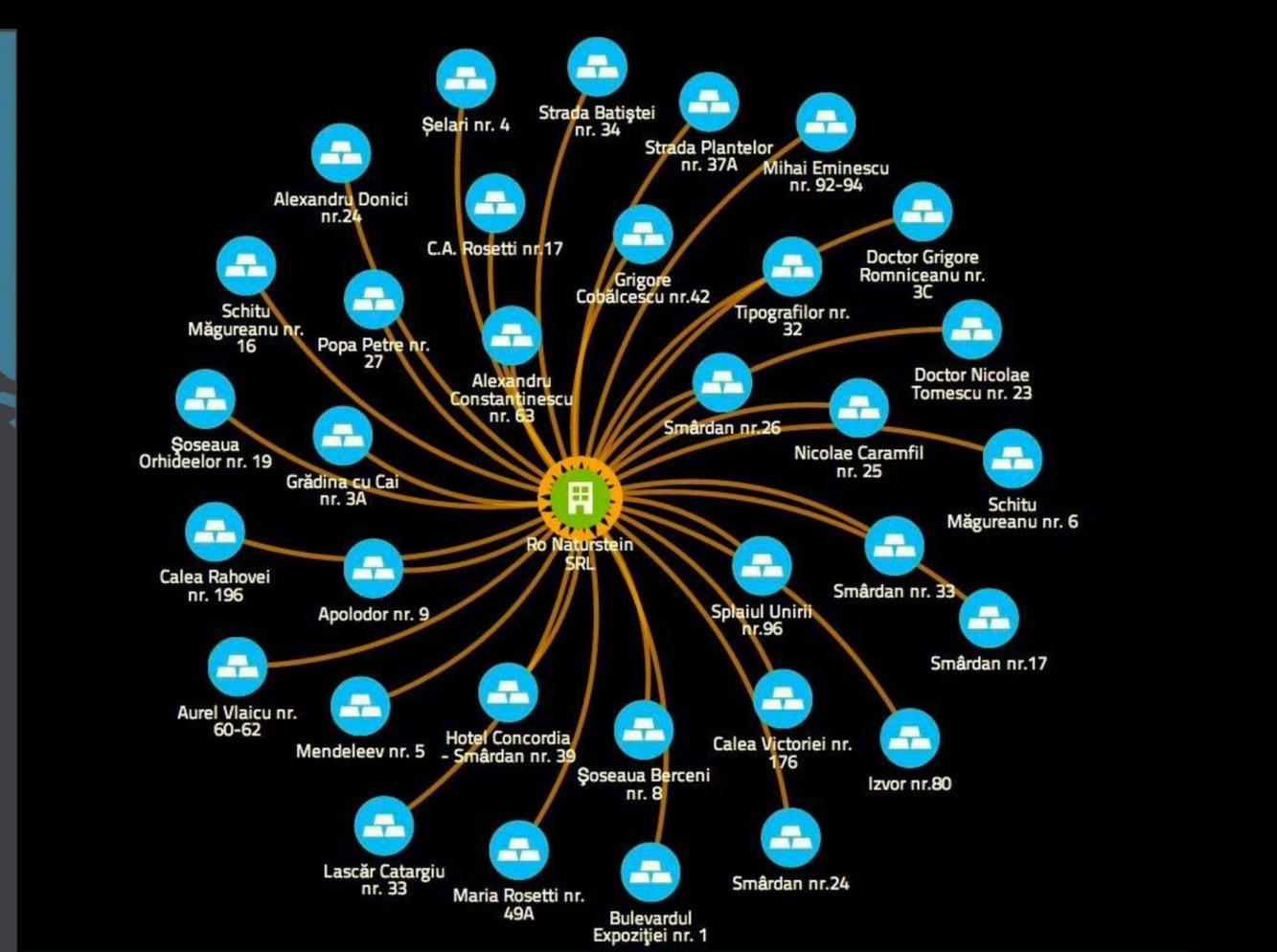
Până-n 2006, Sebastian Boer a fost locotenent-colonel în Inspectoratul General de Poliție, unde se ocupa de investigarea fraudelor fiscale. În trecut, el a mai activat în cadrul misiunii ONU în Kosovo, unde a condus o unitate de analiză a riscurilor, responsabilă de siguranța oficialilor și locațiilor misiunii. Ulterior a intrat în afaceri cu pariuri. A condus mai întâi operațiunile Astra Bettings, iar apoi a administrat afacerea Casa Pariurilor. În final, a plecat ca director la ultimii proprietari ai acestei afaceri, irlandezii de la Hatrick Sport Group. Boer este și vicepreședintele patronatului organizatorilor de pariuri Romanian Bookmakers și membru în Consiliul Consultativ de pe lângă ONJN- arbitrul pieței.

RISE PROJECT is all about connections and evidence. With every new investigation we index and visualize all the entities (people, companies, lawsuits) and connections emerging in our research.

We attach the proof: documents, photos and video material, generating an ever-expanding database.

Whenever a new entity is added, it connects to already existing data on our website making the investigative story more thorough and explanatory.





By the end of 2017,
our website database featured:

1.074 connections

between

380 people

633 companies

61 lawsuits



#TraficDeViațăȘiMoarte / În numele Alexandrei / Autor: Diana Neșulescu

MEDIA PRESENCE

In 2017, our work was cited and republished in several international and national media outlets: on-line, print, TV and radio.

National

Mediafax, News.ro, Agerpress, Adevărul, HotNews, Evenimentul Zilei, ziare.com, România Liberă, EurActiv, Digi24, Antena 3, România TV, Pro TV, B1 TV, Profit.ro, Libertatea, Jurnalul Național, Ziarul Financiar, Capital, Europa FM, Kanal D and others.

R7 BRASIL | Morte de milionário romeno ligado a corrupção aponta para lavagem de dinheiro no Brasil

Morte de milionário romeno ligado a corrupção aponta para lavagem de dinheiro no Brasil

Empresário ligado a políticos romenos tinha negócios no Brasil. Sua morte é cercada de mistérios



A Romênia tornou popular a lendária personagem do Conde Drácula, mítico homem-vampiro que sugava o sangue das suas vítimas para se eternizar.

É também da Romênia

International:

<https://noticias.r7.com/brasil/morte-de-milionario-romeno-ligado-a-corrupcao-aponta-para-lavagem-de-dinheiro-no-brasil-03072017>

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/beny-steinmetz-s-arrest-linked-to-real-estate-deals-in-romania-1.5442979>

http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2017/02/08/une-mobilisation-anticorruption-sans-precedent-en-roumanie_5076242_3214.html

<https://exposingtheinvisible.org/resources/rise-project>

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/specialseries/2017/06/romania-people-power-170604093555833.html>

<http://www.adz.ro/artikel/artikel/nach-enthuellungen-ueber-dragnea-fiskus-schiesst-sich-auf-rise-project-ein/>

<https://summeruniversity.ceu.edu/media-2017>

<https://summeruniversity.ceu.edu/media-2017>

http://www.lakroa.mg/item-1281_articles_societe_18-madagascar-beach-resort-built-with-black-money-from-romania.html

<http://www.euronews.com/2018/01/21/thousands-of-romanians-turn-out-for-bucharest-anti-graft-protest>

http://www.saveparadiseforests.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Suceava_2017_0312017_Luick_MS.pdf

<http://www.dritare.net/2017/12/11/gazetari-rumun-reforma-ne-drejtasi-nuk-solli-vetem-arrestime-solli-shtet-me-te-for-te-ligjor/1>

<http://www.dritare.net/2017/12/11/flasin-ekspertet-e-huaj-ne-dritaremerudinen-ja-si-e-zgjedhim-kryeprokurorin-ne-kroaci-dhe-rumani/1>

<http://www.javanews.al/jo-vetem-arrestime-ne-nivele-te-larta-rezultatet-e-nje-reformete-sukseshme-ne-rumani/>

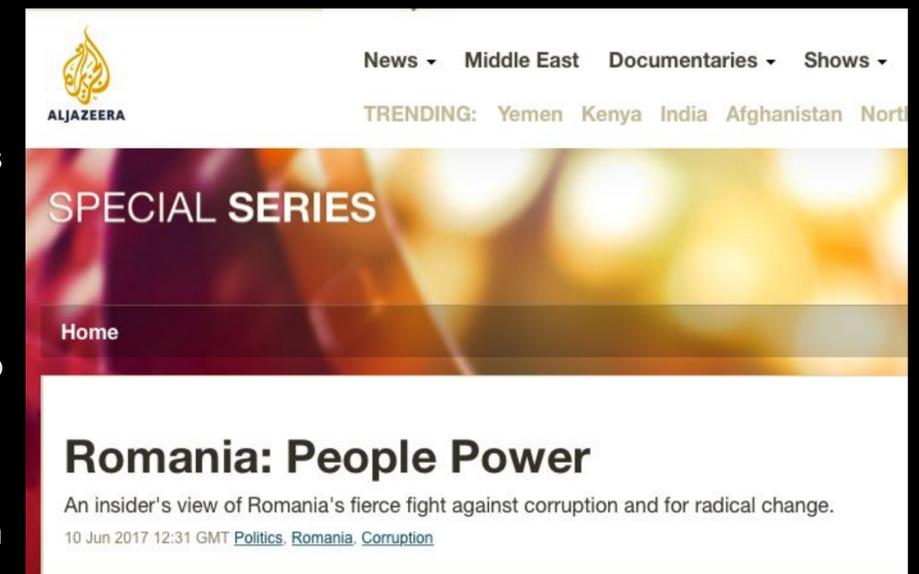
<http://www.joq.al/artikull/289469.html>

<http://ctxt.es/es/20170222/Politica/11269/umania-corrupcion-protestas.htm>

<https://atlatsz.hu/2017/05/17/welsz-tamas-kovacs-gabor-es-egy-rosszhiru-lett-bank-is-uzletelt-a-lavecova/>



Annual Report 2017





www.riseproject.ro was visited 7,2 million times in 2017 by two million users.

Their engagement with RISE is made clear by the time they spend reading our articles, well above the average.

Many of them revisit articles and also constantly follow our website, with a bounce rate of over 80%.

WEBSITE TRAFFIC AND SOCIAL MEDIA

www.riseproject.ro is not just a publishing platform for our investigations. It's also a complex and constantly expanding interactive visual database.

We index people, companies, court cases, connections and related documents - a **visual archive** of the corruption and organized crime phenomena of our times.



Top articles on www.riseproject.ro



95.000

is the number of likes our official Facebook page had at the end of 2017



128.000

is the number of times our articles were shared in Facebook



220.000

is the number of reactions our posts caused from our audience



6.700

is the number of comments our posts received



16 mil.

social media accounts were exposed to our work in 2017



835.000

is the reach of our most popular article on Facebook, *SERVICIUL LOR SECRET*, which got 8.400 reactions and 7.800 shares



*By unique page view, as retrieved from Google Analytics