



Integrated Country Strategy

ROMANIA

FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

U.S. Embassy Bucharest has three priority goals: Addressing Security Challenges, Promoting Prosperity, and Strengthening Democratic Values to further deepen our bilateral relationship. We will engage the Romanian government, civil society, the media, the business community, the academic realm, and directly with Romanian citizens to advance these goals and defend the rules and values central to an open and stable international system.

In 2024, Romania and the United States marked 27 years since the establishment of our bilateral Strategic Partnership, 20 years since Romania joined NATO, and 13 years since the signing of an agreement to base a U.S. missile defense system in Romania. Our relationship with this strong and growing NATO Ally continues to reach new heights of cooperation, collaboration, and mutual support. Romania is a leader in its region of Europe, fully committed to spending 2.5% of its GDP on defense and a vocal proponent of NATO's collective defense role, acting to protect its economy and information space from predatory foreign influence, and seeking to become a significant exporter of energy to increase the energy independence of Central European and Black Sea partners. Romania stepped away from Chinese participation in the renovation of its existing nuclear reactors and partnered with American firms to provide cutting-edge small modular reactor (SMR) technology, increasing Romania's energy independence and combating climate change. We will continue to seek ways that the United States can partner with this emergent leader to tackle the full range of global challenges. In 2023, Romania's economy was one of the fastest growing among high-income countries in Central Europe, and we seek to contribute to its continued high growth, especially in innovative sectors where Romania has flourished and in which ties to U.S. firms are strong. A key factor for enabling economic prosperity is Romania's continued commitment to democratic values and the rule of law, the focus of our third goal. Despite significant efforts by the government and the judiciary to combat it, corruption remains a challenge. We will continue to support Romanian efforts to strengthen its rule of law. We will also emphasize the fight against human trafficking, an area in which Romania is eager to collaborate, but still faces many challenges as a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking victims. In general, Romania's prospects

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trend upward, and our partners are eager to deepen cooperation with the U.S. Our mission goals are designed to make the most of this potential and align with the five pillars of the U.S. 2023 Black Sea Strategy.

Security Challenges

Our first priority is addressing security challenges, particularly in the context of Russia's brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Romania has matured in the last 35 years as a democracy and as an U.S. Ally, becoming a voice within NATO and the EU that is often aligned with the United States. We seek to build on this trajectory to partner with Romania in addressing pressing security challenges, from foreign influence in the Black Sea region to hybrid threats and traveler safety. All of this is aimed at making both Romanians and Americans safer.

Romania's leadership within NATO as an Ally committed to exceeding the EU's 2.0% GDP benchmark on defense spending is now well-established. Our efforts will aim to continue its strong defense modernization program to bolster the Alliance's collective defense of the Black Sea region and NATO's southwestern flank. Romania's acquisition of American mobile rocket artillery, sophisticated air defense systems, modern combat aircraft and infantry fighting vehicles, and a host of other important systems will continue to modernize the already-capable Romanian military. We will also work to ensure Romania continues to increase interoperability and is prepared to participate in international missions aligned with U.S., NATO, and EU security goals. Our outstanding military-to-military relationship will continue to drive this crucial pillar of engagement.

Protection of American citizens traveling or residing in Romania remains a primary focus. We will continue to maintain high standards of service in providing routine and emergency services to American citizens. By supporting Romania's Visa Waiver Program aspirations and facilitating legitimate travel to the United States, we will help boost economic and people-to-people ties, which are included in other mission objectives.

Transnational organized crime transcends geographical boundaries and continues to threaten U.S. and Romanian citizens, as well as global stability. We will continue to cooperate with

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Romania to combat transnational criminal organizations engaged in drug trafficking, violence, illicit weapons trade and diversion, human trafficking, and smuggling, among other things. Detecting, disrupting, and reducing the power and influence of these criminal organizations will protect Americans and Romanians, and our core national security interests.

Prosperity

Promoting Romania's economic prosperity remains a top priority. Against the backdrop of Russia's war against Ukraine, energy security for the region has become a top priority as countries, including Romania, seek security of energy supply in electricity, natural gas, oil, renewable energy, and other resources. Romania boasts an enormous energy potential, particularly in the production of offshore natural gas and wind. Separately, Romania is a leader in civilian nuclear energy and has partnered with the U.S. government to double the size of its Cernavoda Nuclear Power Plant, as well as develop Europe's first SMR in Doicești. The increased development of its nuclear, offshore wind, and offshore natural gas sectors in the Black Sea will enable Romania to become a net exporter of both electricity and natural gas and help its regional partners to divest from Russian energy sources, all while meeting climate change abatement goals to protect Romania's diverse landscape.

Romania has benefited from joining the EU, nearly tripling its economy since it joined in 2007, and it retains enormous economic potential. Leveraging \$62 billion in EU investment funds from accession to 2023, Romania has seen its per capita income grow to nearly 76% of the EU average, and it has increased its EU Structural and Cohesion Fund absorption rate from 50% to nearly 75% in 2023. Romania could further unlock its economic potential by improving its transportation infrastructure, digitalizing public administration, and pursuing efficiencies in tax and public administration.

However, the investment climate, while inviting, remains uneven. American investment is present in many sectors of the economy, particularly in the IT sector where it is perhaps most visible and holds the most potential for significant growth. Romania has access to upwards of \$80 billion in EU funds in the 2021-2027 budgetary cycle, much of which is slated for infrastructure, healthcare, and digitalization efforts. Not only is there strong potential for U.S.

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commercial benefit from this funding program, but there also remains a preexisting challenge to properly absorb and utilize EU funds, something with which the country has struggled. We will work with the Romanian government to encourage reform of public procurement by, among other things, leveraging the expertise of the private sector, particularly among Romanians working for American and other western firms. We will promote bilateral trade and investment and a level playing field for U.S. companies.

Romania has been a leader in countering predatory foreign actors seeking economic influence or a strategic advantage. It signed an intergovernmental agreement with the United States on civil nuclear issues and approved a deal in 2020 with an American consortium to double the size of its nuclear power plant. It also passed legislation to protect its key strategic sectors, including 5G telecom network, to ensure infrastructure of national importance is built by trusted vendors. Romania also adopted regulations to screen foreign investments against predatory third-country economic actors. We will continue to bolster Romania's leadership in this area. We support Romania in defending its right to make independent choices free of coercion or undue foreign influence.

Romania is in a unique position to play a leading role in global food security by assisting Ukraine with shipments of grain through Romanian territory to the world market. Additionally, Romania is well-positioned to aid in the reconstruction and economic recovery of Ukraine once Russia's war against Ukraine comes to an end. Stemming from these opportunities, Romania has the potential to improve, revitalize, and expand its infrastructure network throughout the country to meet its modern-day economic and transportation needs. We promote high standards for infrastructure investments to help ensure projects in Romania are beneficial and sustainable over the long term. We will continue to work closely with the government to identify and support these projects to benefit all citizens in Romania.

Democratic Values

In its 30-plus year history since the end of communism, Romania has embraced democratic values – popular elections, peaceful transitions of government, human rights, respect for

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minorities, and the rule of law. It has become a leader in promoting and respecting these values in a region where other post-communist countries have recently seen a degree of backsliding.

While Romania has made important progress, some challenges remain. Since the 1989 revolution, the embassy has actively helped Romania advance democratic values in many areas of society, and we will continue to prioritize this as a mission goal.

Current goals include assisting Romania in its efforts to further reforming the criminal justice system so that it operates fully in accord with EU laws and principles. Cases of public corruption, organized crime, human trafficking, and complicated public procurement processes continue to pose barriers to economic growth and contribute to the disillusionment of Romanian voters, giving a boost to anti-system parties. The embassy, through engagement of various agencies at post, and in coordination with the EC, will continue to strongly advocate for continued reform of the judiciary, unfettered application of anti-corruption measures, increased government transparency, and procurement reforms. Law enforcement cooperation, conducted through various agencies, also serves not only to protect the United States, but as a practical reinforcement of our values.

Respect for and social inclusion of minorities in Romania has advanced since 1989, but there are areas where more progress is needed. In particular, the Roma community still faces many obstacles in terms of overcoming discrimination, especially in education, employment, healthcare, and housing. We will continue to encourage and assist the Romanian government to make progress in more fully integrating the Roma, in combatting antisemitism, and in confronting and teaching about the history of the Holocaust in Romania. In 2023, Romania introduced mandatory Holocaust education into the public school curriculum, an initiative supported by the embassy. We will continue to support plans to build a Holocaust museum in Bucharest, a project funded by the EU.

Romania's strong science and technology sectors illustrate a national strength in IT and cyber skills. In 2023, Romania opened the EU's new cyber resilience center in Bucharest. As the Romanian government aims to increase Romania's enterprise-wide cyber capabilities and move towards digitalization we will work with the government to encourage continued growth and

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development in this area. We will support Romania in its efforts to build a vibrant and diverse supply chain of trustworthy telecommunications equipment and services. We will also support scientific-exchanges with the United States, particularly in areas with high levels of scientific complexity and innovation. We will pursue ways to foster and expand these linkages, with a particular focus on Romania's best performing research facilities, to foster innovation and facilitate systemic resilience.

The enormous reservoir of goodwill Romanians have for the United States provides an opportunity to deepen and broaden our bilateral ties at all levels and, in so doing, to further reinforce democratic values within Romanian society and, more broadly, in the region.

Management Platform

A strong management platform and robust team of U.S. direct hire (USDH) and locally employed (LE) staff are essential to enable Embassy Bucharest to achieve the goals outlined in this strategy, as well the EUR Joint Regional Strategy (JRS). Over the past five years, the number of USDHs at Embassy Bucharest has grown , while the number of LE staff has decreased due to our inability to recruit and retain due to inadequate financial compensation rates. We will continue to prioritize the recruitment and retention of LE staff.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Cooperate with Romania to increase security within its borders, regionally, and globally to address current and emerging threats.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Romania, supported by U.S. embassy security assistance and cooperation mechanisms, continues to modernize and strengthen its armed forces to bolster the Alliance's collective defense and deterrence, and contributes to international and regional security missions aligned with U.S., NATO, and EU goals.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Support and protect American citizens traveling to, or residing in, Romania and facilitate legitimate travel to the United States to strengthen our shared values and ties while keeping Americans safe.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** Romania effectively combats transnational criminal organizations that threaten the general public and global stability.

Mission Goal 2: Promote energy security and economic prosperity to increase the country's security, competitiveness, and investment and trade opportunities for U.S. companies.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Romania develops carbon-neutral energy efficient resources and green technologies to provide greater national and regional energy security and address environmental concerns and preservation.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Romania develops a more attractive, transparent, and stable investment environment through substantive consultation with the private sector, increased public-private partnerships, and continued economic reforms.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** Romania strengthens its economic security by countering third-country predatory economic influence and investment and rejects coercive economic practices and investments.

- **Mission Objective 2.4:** Romania supports the transit of Ukrainian grain and commodities and facilitates Ukrainian reconstruction and economic recovery.

Mission Goal 3: Improve Romania's capacity to strengthen democracy, improve rule of law, protect against disinformation and vulnerabilities in essential IT infrastructure, increase science and technology collaboration, and create a more equal and inclusive society while improving people-to-people ties between the United States and Romania.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Romania improves rule of law by increasing its capacity at the governmental, societal, and private sector levels to more effectively combat public corruption and organized crime; and by strengthening law enforcement cooperation to increase the effectiveness and fairness of the justice system, to include through reforms to its procurement legislation and improvements to procurement fraud prevention, detection, and prosecution systems.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Romania strengthens its democratic institutions by enhancing government accountability, transparency, and respect for the separation of powers; along with fostering greater social inclusion of vulnerable, marginalized, and minority communities; while also augmenting its national and regional security through improved enterprise-wide cyber capabilities, laws, and policies, in alignment with the Administration's aim to escalate collaboration in science, technology, artificial intelligence, and tech policy.
- **Mission Objective 3.3:** Strengthen people-to-people ties between the United States and Romania with a focus on underrepresented and under-engaged groups.

Management Objective 1: Provide an efficient and effective platform that allows the Mission to achieve U.S. policy objectives.

Management Objective 2: Uphold principals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in hiring, programming, and external engagements.

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4. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | Cooperate with Romania to increase security within its borders, regionally, and globally to address current and emerging threats.

Description | This goal reflects the U.S. strategic priority of deterring and preventing adversaries from threatening the United States or our Allies, inhibiting access to global common areas, or seeking to dominate key regions. Since joining NATO in 2004, Romania has proven a reliable and effective Ally, contributing to our common security through regional and out-of-area contributions to international security operations and bolstering NATO's collective defense and deterrence on the eastern flank. Embassy Bucharest will work with Romania to bolster its efforts to modernize and strengthen its military, enhance the security and resilience of the Black Sea region in furtherance of the 2023 Black Sea Strategy, contribute to international security missions, and combat transnational organized crime. By supporting Romania's ambitions to join the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and efforts to facilitate legitimate travel to the United States, Embassy Bucharest supports the border security of the United States and our citizens.

Objective 1.1 | Romania, supported by U.S. Embassy security assistance and cooperation mechanisms, continues to modernize and strengthen its armed forces to bolster the Alliance's collective defense, and contribute to international security missions aligned with U.S., NATO, and EU security goals.

- **Justification** | Security cooperation remains the cornerstone of our Strategic Partnership with Romania. Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine significantly changed the security situation in the Black Sea region. As a NATO Ally and Black Sea littoral country, Romania is an essential partner in the region's security. Romania maintains strong political will to contribute to regional, U.S., and NATO security objectives, and while Romania's recent and ongoing military modernization efforts are commendable there remains significant work ahead. In addition to capability upgrades,

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Romanian Armed Forces would benefit from updating doctrine and policy. The U.S. government should assist the Romanian military with increasing its military capabilities and needed military acquisitions, thereby reducing its dependence on older equipment and increasing NATO interoperability via our military-to-military engagements, security assistance programs, and political and technical support. We should also help the Romanian military finish its transformation efforts, wiping away the final vestiges of its Warsaw Pact Era past.

- **Linkages** | This mission objective directly supports the Department's Black Sea Strategy by promoting regional security cooperation. It also supports multiple objectives from the October 2022 National Security Strategy: to invest in the underlying sources of American strength and build the strongest possible coalition of nations to enhance our collective influence to shape the global strategic environment and to solve shared challenges. It also supports multiple goals in the 2022 National Defense Strategy. This goal also advances State – USAID Joint Strategic Mission Goal 1: to renew U.S. leadership and mobilize coalitions to address the global challenges that have the greatest impact on Americans' security and well-being. Additionally, this goal supports EUR Joint Regional Strategy Goals 1 and 4: to revitalize European alliances and partnerships; and to leverage alliances and partnerships to address global and regional threats and challenges. Finally, the goal aligns with USEUCOM priorities to deter Russian aggression, Enable the NATO Alliance, Preserve U.S. Strategic Partnerships, and Focus on key Relationships.
- **Risks** | Failure to realize Romania's full potential as an effective and reliable contributor of security would weaken the entire Black Sea region and leave the area vulnerable to threats from malign actors.

Objective 1.2 | Support and protect American citizens traveling to, or residing in, Romania and facilitate legitimate travel to the United States to strengthen our shared values and ties while keeping Americans safe.

- **Justification** | Embassy Bucharest works to ensure the safety and wellbeing of U.S. citizens in Romania. We support U.S. citizens in Romania by advocating for their interests while helping them exercise fundamental rights such as the right to vote. We provide emergency services in the event of death, destitution, disaster, imprisonment, or medical emergency, and provide routine services such as issuing U.S. passports and documenting the births and deaths of U.S. citizens in Romania. We provide information that allows U.S. citizens to make informed decisions about their safety in Romania. Embassy Bucharest facilitates legal travel to the United States and engages on Romania's efforts to enter the VWP. We also keep the American public safe by carefully applying U.S. immigration laws and diligently vetting potential security threats.
- **Linkages** | This mission objective supports Mission Goal 5 of the FY 2022-2026 Department of State and USAID Joint Strategic Plan which calls for the protection of U.S. citizens overseas and the facilitation of legal travel to the U.S. It also supports the NSC's October 2022 National Security Strategy Guidance of strengthening partners' law enforcement and judicial systems, improving threat information sharing, and enhancing border security.
- **Risks** | While information sharing agreements regarding travelers offer benefits for the security of Romania, the United States, and the region, failure to meet all the requirements necessary for VWP accession opens the door for misinformation by foreign malign actors to question the relationship between Romania and the United States.

Objective 1.3 | Romania effectively combats transnational criminal organizations that threaten the general public and global stability.

- **Justification** | Embassy Bucharest continues to partner with Romanian authorities to combat transnational organized crime that threaten American and Romanian citizens, as well as regional and global stability. Engaging with Romania to detect, disrupt, and reduce drug trafficking, violence, illicit weapons trade and diversion, human trafficking and smuggling, financial, and other crimes will support broader security goals, protect the public, and reduce the power and influence of criminal enterprises.
- **Linkages** | This mission objective supports the October 2022 National Security Strategy global priority of cooperating on shared security challenges, and the U.S. Council on Combatting Transnational Organized Crime lines of effort to modernize and expand the U.S. Government's ability to target transnational organized crime members, their enablers, and financial support networks.
- **Risks** | Failure to effectively counter transnational organized crime would leave Romania susceptible to foreign malign influence, weaken institutions and support for the EU and NATO, and increase the vulnerability of Romanian and U.S. citizens to become victims of these crime networks.

Mission Goal 2 | Promote energy security and economic prosperity to increase the country's security, competitiveness, and investment and trade opportunities for U.S. companies.

Description | This goal represents Embassy Bucharest's efforts to create better economic opportunities for all in Romania, as well as creating investment and trade opportunities for U.S. companies. Energy security remains a top priority for Romania as it seeks to secure a constant supply of energy to meet both domestic and regional demands and transition to a green economy. Protecting and preserving Romania's natural landscape requires balancing environmental, economic, and social interests. Romania will have significant opportunities to modernize and stimulate its economic growth using EU recovery funds, implementing energy-efficient technologies, and digitalization to facilitate faster bureaucratic processes. These measures will also help the country to increase its resiliency against the increasing challenge of third-country predatory non-market and coercive economic practices, particularly by U.S. strategic competitors. Embassy Bucharest is committed to working with U.S. companies and Romanian public and private sectors to foster new public-private collaboration, eliminate barriers to inclusive and sustainable growth, encourage increased direct investment in and trade with the United States, reject coercive economic practices, and ensure increased energy security in Romania and the surrounding region.

Objective 2.1 | Romania develops carbon-neutral energy efficient resources and green technologies to provide greater national and regional energy security and address environmental concerns and preservation.

- **Justification** | Romania is aware of the importance of achieving energy independence, even as its energy imports grow. In response, it is looking to further develop its civilian nuclear capacity and offshore resources to account for future energy needs. Advances in clean energy technologies are essential to slowing climate change and to helping Romania fulfill its international climate obligations. To help Romania achieve economic prosperity through sustainable, affordable, and reliable energy access, we will continue to support developing the country's administrative capacity and an investment-friendly legal framework. We will also continue our bilateral cooperation to encourage offshore wind projects, to promote the expansion the Cernavoda Nuclear Power Plant, to advocate for U.S. advanced SMR technology. Simultaneously, we will advocate for new and continued conservation and preservation of Romania's natural landscape to protect the environment for future generations.
- **Linkages** | This mission objective advances State – USAID Joint Strategic Goal 1: to Renew U.S. Leadership and Mobilize Coalitions to Address the Global Challenges that Have the Greatest Impact on Americans' Security and Well-being. It also directly supports the Department's Black Sea Strategy by promoting regional energy security cooperation. Additionally, this objective supports EUR Joint Regional Strategy, Goal 3, Sub-objective 4 to expand partnership with Europe to increase energy security and prevent Russia from using energy as a weapon by promoting diversified energy supplies and green technologies. Finally, this Objective supports JRS Goal 4, Sub-objective 4 to secure ambitious climate mitigation and adaptation outcomes in support of international climate agreements, including the Paris Agreement, and transatlantic priorities.
- **Risks** | Failure to diversify energy resources, strengthen regulations, transition to greener technologies, mitigate climate change, and protect the environment endangers Romania's energy security and independence and poses an increased threat to global climate stability. In addition, a lack of progress on energy transition initiatives may lead to the country's inability to meet its EU and international climate obligations.

Unpredictable and increasing fiscal burdens on energy companies may deter new

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investment. We will support energy cooperation with Romania to ensure the country can achieve both its energy diversification and climate goals. We will also work with Romania to advocate for EU policies and financing that allow for investment into new technologies, including civilian nuclear projects. We will continue to advocate for science-based environmental reforms and conservation that include input from civil society, positioning Romania to implement informed environmental policies.

Objective 2.2 | Romania develops carbon-neutral energy efficient resources and green technologies to provide greater national and regional energy security and address environmental concerns and preservation.

- **Justification |** Romania must continue structural economic reforms, institutionalize good governance, and improve its administrative capacity to take full advantage of EU membership and funds, including under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP). We will encourage the Romania government to comply with recommendations from the EU and international financial institutions, enact structural reforms, improve its public procurement process, enforce sound corporate governance practices in all state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and consult with stakeholders before enacting new economic policies, legislation, and regulations. Growing Romania's private sector, to include entrepreneurial and start-up businesses and more public-private partnerships, will provide increased economic prosperity and security for its citizens. We will continue to advocate for transparency, stability, and predictability, as well as policies that promote market-based growth, improve the business and investment climate, facilitate innovation, and increase potential U.S. exports and investment. We will work with the Romanian government to improve the efficiency of governance and public administration and encourage policies and regulations that support investment and sustainable growth.
- **Linkages |** This mission objective advances State – USAID Joint Strategic Goal 2: to Promote Global Prosperity and Shape an International Environment in Which the United States Can Thrive. Additionally, this mission objective advances the October 2022

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National Security Strategy (NSS) priority to Expand Economic Prosperity and Opportunity. Finally, this Objective supports EUR Joint Regional Strategy Goal 2, Sub-objective 1 to deepen economic cooperation with Europe to attract investment; build stronger, more resilient supply chains and trade ties; and to build back better from the global pandemic.

- **Risks** | Without meaningful progress to improve its investment environment, Romania's growth may slow, negatively impacting fiscal stability and overall prosperity. Modernization of its procurement process can improve anti-corruption efforts, structural inefficiencies, and the absorption of EU funds – particularly for key infrastructure projects. Romania's government does not share knowledge and best practices with the private sector, making the private sector vulnerable to exploitation and/or unable to properly assess and mitigate risks.

Objective 2.3 | Romania strengthens its economic security by countering third-country predatory economic influence and investment and rejects coercive economic practices and investments.

- **Justification** | Increased global competition from the PRC and other actors seeking strategic advantage underscores the need for Romania to develop diversified trade and investments to defend against coercive economic practices, as well as strengthen its institutional capacity to resist foreign actors that also may target the United States. Failure to develop secure supply chains from trusted vendors, to include critical minerals, leaves Romania vulnerable to opportunistic foreign actors seeking political leverage and coercion to pressure Romania to support positions that undermine U.S. interests. In addition, Romania must also strengthen its legal frameworks to protect and build resilience across its political and economic systems to reject foreign economic coercion attempts. We will continue to engage and encourage Romania to strengthen its capability, readiness, and resilience to promote secure investments and bolster its political will against third-country predatory economic practices and political influence.

- **Linkages** | This mission objective advances State – USAID Joint Strategic Goals 1 and 2: to Renew U.S. Leadership and Mobilize Coalitions to Address the Global Challenges that Have the Greatest Impact on Americans’ Security and Well- being; and to Promote Global Prosperity and Shape an International Environment in Which the United States Can Thrive. Additionally, this Objective supports the October 2022 National Security Strategy (NSS) objective to Protect the Security of the American People. Finally, this Objective supports EUR Joint Regional Strategy Goal 2, Sub-objectives 2 and 3 to counter non-market and coercive economic practices, collaborate with Europe to create a Transatlantic digital economy, jointly set the rules of the road for a 21st century economy that promotes democratic tech leadership, and promote safe and reliable data flows and a free, open, secure, and reliable Internet.
- **Risks** | Romania’ desire to maintain economic ties with the PRC could prevent closer alignment with the United States to deter economic and political coercion. Inability to secure its critical networks and promote investment legislation leaves Romania susceptible to influence from state-controlled foreign investors, which could threaten the country’s security and its status as a strong digital ally and partner of the United States. We will use U.S. technical assistance and diplomatic engagement to equip Romania to negotiate effectively with foreign bidders, especially U.S. strategic competitors, will help ensure that the United States remains Romania’s primary economic, energy, and security partner.

Objective 2.4 | Romania supports the transit of Ukrainian grain and commodities and facilitates Ukrainian reconstruction and economic recovery.

- **Justification** | Against the backdrop of Russia’s war against Ukraine, Romania has a unique opportunity to facilitate the export of Ukrainian grain and commodities to global markets while benefitting from infrastructure improvements throughout the country. It can achieve this with further investments across multiple modes of transportation: increased shipping capacity through the Danube Delta, including nighttime navigation along the Sulina Canal, as well as new buoys and barge management at Constanta Port;

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streamlined customs procedures at land border crossings with its Moldovan and Ukrainian neighbors; improved efficiency of its rail connections with Moldova and Ukraine; and construction of new highways throughout the country. We will continue to work closely with Romanian authorities towards these ends to increase the overall capacity for transporting Ukrainian grain and commodities through the Danube corridor. As the region looks ahead to the eventual cessation of hostilities in Ukraine, Romania will be well positioned to play a leading role in the reconstruction and economic recovery of Ukraine. The Embassy will continue to highlight the needs and opportunities that will arise and encourage Romanian authorities to plan for concrete projects to support Ukraine's overall recovery that also benefit Romania.

- **Linkages |** This mission objective advances Bureau Goal 3 of the Joint Regional Strategy – State Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, and will promote deeper trade, investment, and energy cooperation, accelerate transatlantic connections and collaborate with the EU, NATO Allies, and European and Eurasian partners to counter non-market and coercive economic practices. It also supports the National Security Strategy, Part II and Part III.
- **Risks |** Putin's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative in July 2023 left most of Ukraine's grain exports vulnerable to attack and slowed export volumes drastically. Without Romanian efforts to find alternate routes of export, much of Ukraine's grain would not reach impoverished communities throughout the world, contributing drastically to global food insecurity. In order to support Ukraine, the government needs our full support and efforts to stress the benefits to Romania from all planned infrastructure works. Without this, Romania may not be able to fully support Ukraine's economic recovery, which could become a regional security threat in the long-term.

Mission Goal 3 | Improve Romania's capacity to strengthen democracy, improve rule of law, protect against disinformation and vulnerabilities in essential IT infrastructure, increase science and technology collaboration, and create a more equal and inclusive society while improving people-to-people ties between the United States and Romania.

Description | Our shared values make our partnership stronger. Embassy Bucharest is committed to deepening our collaboration by encouraging Romania to strengthen its democratic institutions, rule of law, procurement processes, and good governance and to hold corrupt actors accountable. Corruption remains a significant challenge that threatens bilateral cooperation across a range of issues and preserving judicial independence is key to addressing it. Additionally, we will continue to work with Romania as it builds a more equal and inclusive democracy that delivers for all its citizens. People-to-people ties will showcase the diversity of both our countries.

Objective 3.1 | Romania improves rule of law by increasing its capacity at the governmental, societal, and private sector levels to more effectively combat public corruption and organized crime; and by strengthening law enforcement cooperation to increase the effectiveness and fairness of the justice system, to include through reforms to its procurement legislation and improvements to procurement fraud prevention, detection, and prosecution systems.

- **Justification** | Romania has made significant progress developing its democracy since the fall of communism. Corruption, however, remains a challenge that threatens progress made to-date. Criminal and foreign malign actors can exploit vulnerabilities caused by corruption to advance their goals and objectives in Romania. This is a direct security threat to NATO, the United States, and Romania. Additionally, Romania's inefficient public procurement system and ambiguous procurement fraud legislation has disincentivized procurement officials from undertaking good faith efforts and actions for fear of prosecution. While Romania has made progress in enforcement of its civil antitrust laws, overall penalties for bid rigging, price fixing, and other anticompetitive criminal activities remain insufficient. The United States must continue to assist Romania to combat corruption, strengthen rule of law, reform its public procurement system, and to treat all its citizens equally under the law, reducing the influence of malevolent actors.
- **Linkages** | This mission objective advances State – USAID Joint Strategic Goal 3: to strengthen democratic institutions, uphold universal values, and promote human dignity. Additionally, this objective supports EUR Joint Regional Strategy Goal 2, to strengthen democracy and the rule of law throughout Europe and Eurasia and the U.S. Department of Justice's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, Objective 4.2, Strategy 3, "Combat Corporate Corruption and Advance International Anti-Corruption Efforts". It also supports the 2023 Declaration of the Summit for Democracy which calls for countries to prevent and combat corruption. Finally, this objective supports October 2022 National Security Strategy Priority to elevate and expand the scale of diplomatic engagement and foreign assistance, including by enhancing partner governments' capacities to fight corruption in cooperation with U.S. law enforcement authorities and bolstering the prevention and oversight capacities of willing governments.

- **Risks** | The risks to Romanian society of not addressing corruption and public procurement reforms are multifold because it negatively impacts nearly all aspects of society. Corruption exacerbates social, political, and economic inequality and polarization; impedes the ability to respond to public health crises or to deliver quality education; degrades the business environment and economic opportunity; drives conflict; facilitates organized crime; and undermines faith in the government. An unpredictable investment climate due to bid rigging and other anticompetitive practices, among other factors, means U.S. businesses struggle to compete and may deter new investment.

Objective 3.2 | Romania strengthens its democratic institutions by enhancing government accountability, transparency, and respect for the separation of powers; along with fostering greater social inclusion of vulnerable, marginalized, and minority communities; while also augmenting its national and regional security through improved enterprise-wide cyber capabilities, laws, and policies, in alignment with the Administration's aim to escalate collaboration in science, technology, artificial intelligence, and tech policy.

- **Justification** | Increasing Romanian government accountability and transparency, ensuring respect for the separation of powers, and creating a society that considers the needs and rights of all its citizens, including vulnerable, marginalized, and minority communities, will help ensure political stability and prevent democratic backsliding. Strengthening Romania's cyber capabilities, improving the management and coordination among agencies with overlapping cybersecurity activities, and fostering scientific exchanges, particularly in laser and aerospace research, will enhance national and regional security and promote collaboration in science, technology, and artificial intelligence (AI).

- **Linkages** | This mission objective advances State – USAID Joint Strategic Goals 1 and 2: to renew U.S. leadership and mobilize coalitions to address global challenges impacting Americans' security and well-being, and to promote global prosperity and shape an international environment in which the United States can thrive, and Joint Strategic Goal 3: to strengthen democratic institutions, uphold universal values, and promote human dignity. It supports EUR Joint Regional Strategy Goal 2, to strengthen democracy and the rule of law throughout Europe and Eurasia, and it supports the October 2022 National Security Strategy (NSS) objective to protect the security of the American people and leverages alliances and partnerships to address global and regional threats and challenges as per EUR Joint Regional Strategy Goal 4. It supports E.O. 13985 on Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities and E.O. 13988 on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation, as well as the Presidential Memorandum on Advancing the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons Around the World. Finally, it supports Executive Order 14110 on Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence.
- **Risks** | Without transparency and demonstrating greater inclusion of vulnerable, marginalized, and minority communities, Romania's democracy runs the risk of backsliding as its citizens lose credibility in the government. Additionally, without strong, coordinated cybersecurity strategies, Romania could face a wide range of cyberattacks, devastating critical service provision for Romanian citizens and posing significant national security implications. As Romania continues to counter malign foreign influences, a lack of advanced scientific developments or AI advancements could put U.S. national security at risk.

Objective 3.3 | Strengthen people-to-people ties between the United States and Romania with a focus on underrepresented and under-engaged groups.

- **Justification** | Romania's work toward inclusivity and legal and social equality continues, but there is more to be done. Romanians are receptive to embassy messaging, readily consume American popular culture, and they appreciate and share American values. We will continue to increase people-to-people ties to further American influence in Romania. Stronger people-to-people ties among the United States and all domestic groups—particularly the traditionally underrepresented and under-engaged/marginalized—will result in a society that is better equipped and resilient to defend against malign internal and external division, manipulation, and exploitation.
- **Linkages** | This mission objective advances the October 2022 National Security Strategy goals of continuing to press all partners to respect and advance democracy and human rights. Finally, this objective furthers Department priorities of increased American leadership and expanded international networks while simultaneously promoting executive and Department goals of strengthening democratic institutions and promoting human dignity.
- **Risks** | Romanian voices challenging the U.S. model and American values are gaining ground domestically. The United States risks the loss or losing or weakening its position as a domestic/regional moral voice and aspirational model. Domestically, failure carries the risk of fracturing Romanian society and a return to more overt racism, exclusion, and bigotry. A fractured Romanian society is more susceptible to foreign malign manipulation.

5. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 | Provide an efficient and effective platform that allows the mission to achieve U.S. policy objectives.

Justification | Embassy Bucharest is committed to attracting and retaining the best talent possible to advance the U.S.-Romania relationship. This inherently means recruiting officers and an embassy workforce that represent the diversity of our respective countries, including addressing wage-scale inadequacies that reduce our ability to recruit and retain top local talent. It also means fostering professional development through work opportunities and mentorship programs that develop the next generation of State Department leadership, and which allow our embassy workforce to reach its full potential. Finally, it means ensuring a work environment where people's contributions are both welcomed and recognized and providing the flexibility for people to ensure their and their families' wellbeing while still advancing U.S. strategic interests. In addition to empowering a forward-thinking workforce, Embassy Bucharest will continue to judiciously use U.S. government resources and ensure that proper controls are in place to prevent their misuse, including by malevolent outside actors. It will leverage green technology, IT innovations, and data to make evidence-based decisions that optimize productivity.

Linkages | Embassy Bucharest's management objectives support Mission Goal 4 of the Department of State and USAID Joint Strategic Plan: to build and equip a diverse, inclusive, resilient, and dynamic workforce. Similarly, it aligns with the EUR Joint Strategic Objectives for recruiting officers who reflect the United States' diversity and who have the skillsets to advance EUR bureau goals. Its management objectives also align with the Mission Goal 4's call to modernize IT and leverage data to inform decision making, as well as to protect personnel, information, and physical infrastructure from 21st -century threats.

Risks | The failure to attract diverse, competitive applicants for Embassy Bucharest jeopardizes the advancement of U.S. priorities for Romania, and specifically undercuts key mission priorities such as facilitating cross-cultural exchange that embodies the breadth of American society. Failing to maintain a motivated local workforce similarly puts U.S. mission priorities at risk, as they serve as the backbone and institutional memory of Embassy Bucharest. Injudicious resource management and a lack of management controls limit mission capabilities and open the door to destabilizing threats.

Management Objective 2 | Uphold principals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in hiring, programming, and external engagements.

- **Justification |** Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, signed by President Biden on his first day in office, established that affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity is the responsibility of the whole of Government. Advancing equity requires a systematic approach to embedding fairness in decision-making processes, and executive departments, and agencies must recognize and work to redress inequities in their policies and programs that serve as barriers to equal opportunity. Our foreign policy and the conduct of our diplomacy will reflect those principles to which we aspire: fairness, justice, and equal opportunity for all. This requires the integration of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility into our lives, our laws, and our institutions. Our success here will determine not just our security and prosperity, but the long-term success of our democracies.
- **Linkages |** JRS Objective 5.4, JSP 1.5, 3.2, and 4.1; E.O. 13985. The 2022 NSS states that “pluralism, inclusion, and diversity are a source of national strength in a rapidly changing world.” It further notes that “our system of government enshrines the rule of law and strives to protect the equality and dignity of all individuals.”

- **Risks |** The success of Objective 2 is contingent upon the success of our recruitment, retention, and professional-development programs, as well as our commitment to recognizing our diversity as a national security priority and valued asset that underscores U.S. values, promotes greater cultural cross-cultural understanding. The risk of not fully realizing this objective is that we will lack a diversity of voices and perspectives in our decision-making and understanding of situations, which will lead to more narrow vision, less creativity and innovation, and missed opportunities in how we approach our mission. Additionally, we will miss the opportunity to strengthen our workforce with new skill sets and perspectives.