



## POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CRIMINAL RECORD<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** *The paper brings an original contribution to the debate on the accountability of the political class and the reform of the public administration, proposing a practical and concrete mechanism for the evaluation of the activity. The objective is to show that the introduction of a political and administrative record as an innovative tool for assessing the performance and integrity of politicians, dignitaries and public officials will lead to increased transparency and accountability in public administration, providing citizens with a clear and objective means to make informed decisions in the electoral process. The main research methods were the comparative analysis (a parallel between the criminal record model and the proposed concept of political and administrative record), the inductive method (starting from concrete examples of administrative and political dysfunctions, general conclusions are drawn on the need for an accountability tool) and the exploratory method (the proposal of the political and administrative record is an innovative initiative, and the author explores the feasibility of this mechanism, identifying potential advantages, risks and solutions for implementation). As regards the implications of the work, the implementation of a political and administrative record would have major implications for society, being beneficial both for citizens because it would represent an information tool that allows them to exercise their right to vote consciously, and for public institutions as it would improve the process of selection and promotion of civil servants, increasing professionalism and ethics in the public sector. The essential value of the paper is to highlight the transformative role that such an instrument would have, especially since the proposal is based on pre-existing models (criminal record) and explores the feasibility of implementing a similar system for the political and administrative area, based on objective criteria for evaluating the activity of politicians and dignitaries. In addition, researchers and practitioners could use this tool to analyse political and administrative trends and propose further measures to improve governance.*

**Keywords:** *Public Administration, Politics, Accountability, Transparency, Evaluation, Good Governance, Democracy, Rule of Law.*

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## 1. Introduction

The interaction between democratic society, good governance and the well-being of citizens forms an interdependent and circular system, in which each element influences and is influenced by the others. A rule of law “*defined by all principles regarding organization, legality, human rights and freedoms*” provides the institutional and normative framework necessary for transparent, participatory and accountable governance (Drăganu, 1992). “*Recent studies have begun to examine the numerous and multiple forums or stakeholders that interact at the same time, including citizens, users, oversight bodies, public servants at different levels, political bodies, and societal actors*” (Perez-Duran, 2024, p. 3). Through free elections, the separation and balance of powers in the state expressly mentioned in the Fundamental Law, the existence of a robust legal framework and an active civic sector, democracy creates the premises for an efficient Government and a legitimate Parliament. “*At present, the state asserts itself, from a sociological point of view, as a human collectivity based on citizenship relations and legitimately endowed with specialized government institutions, which have an impersonal and permanent character*” (Rădulescu, 2012).

A modern democratic state puts the citizens at the centre of the ecosystem, and the main concern must be their well-being. Any slippage, whether declarative or material, affects the balance of the entire system, and the social tensions fuelled by these slippages can lead to major dysfunctions with consequences that are difficult to counteract. In our case, such slippages can take us away from the European path and the values of the European Union, isolating Romania and condemning its citizens to return to undemocratic and authoritarian regimes (Zlătescu & Marinică, 2020). “*Evidence also suggests that reforms that aim to create or strengthen a values-based culture of sound public governance are more likely to achieve their objectives*” (OECD, 2020, p. 18).

Under these conditions, the foundation on which any democratic state construction should be founded is trust, the strongest binder and at the same time the most susceptible to irremediable depreciation. As in interpersonal relationships, in the state-citizen relationship, trust is hard to earn and, once lost, regaining it is difficult, with great efforts and does not guarantee a return to the 100% level. “*This article investigates the relationships between corruption, democracy and trust in government, emphasizing the effect of societal norms that support corruption on these relationships*” (Mizrahi & Natan Krup, 2025, p. 1).

The criminal record model served as the source of inspiration for the proposal to establish a political and administrative record; however, there are significant differences between the two instruments in terms of legal foundation, purpose, content, and social impact. The criminal record is enshrined by law and managed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, reflecting exclusively final court rulings and criminal sanctions imposed by the judiciary. By contrast, the political and administrative record does not currently benefit from a normative framework, being an innovative proposal that would require the involvement of an independent institution, such as the National Integrity Agency or the Ministry of Justice, capable of ensuring impartiality and objectivity in managing information. While the former focuses on documenting criminal antecedents, the latter would aim to record aspects such as political party switching, integrity conflicts, absences from parliamentary or governmental activities, cabinet reshuffles, legislative initiatives, implemented projects, and the relationship with citizens. *“Switches produce a lack of credibility and damage a party’s image, signalling weakness and an inability to select loyal MPs and preserve unity”* (Ceron & Volpi, 2022, p. 1043).

The purposes of the two instruments differ fundamentally. The criminal record is intended to protect society by preventing recidivism, while also supporting the reintegration of convicted individuals through the institution of rehabilitation, serving as an evidentiary document in legal or administrative proceedings. By contrast, the political and administrative record would be designed as a tool for accountability and transparency in public life, aimed at providing citizens with the ability to make informed decisions during the electoral process and contributing to improving the quality of governance. Whereas the criminal record is limited to information on convictions, prohibitions, and security measures, all verified through court rulings, the political and administrative record would encompass a much broader spectrum of information, combining ethical, professional, and performance-related dimensions. *“Transparency is expected to strengthen electoral accountability. Yet, initiatives disseminating politician performance information directly prior to elections have reported mixed results”* (Grossman & Slough, 2022, p. 1).

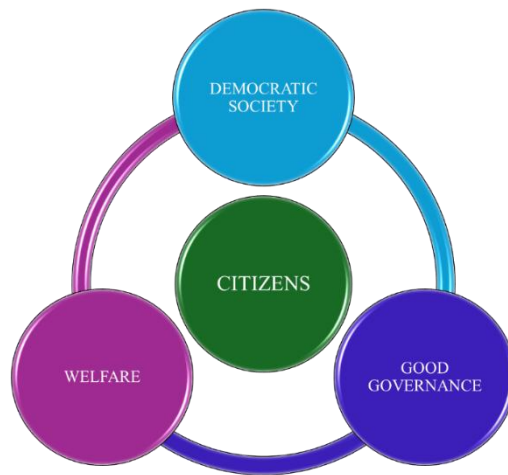
A major difference also lies in terms of accessibility. The criminal record is confidential, being accessible only to the individual concerned, judicial bodies, and certain authorized institutions, in line with the principles of data protection and the right to rehabilitation. By contrast, the political and administrative record would need to be public and available online, updated periodically, so that citizens have access to relevant information regarding the activity of those holding public office. However, such openness raises significant challenges, including the risk

of politicization of the instrument, its use as a means of stigmatization, or as a weapon in political rivalries.

The implications of the two cases also differ in the social sphere. The criminal record produces consequences at the individual level, affecting the right to work, access to certain professions, or the personal image of the individual. The political and administrative record, by contrast, would have collective effects, potentially influencing the electoral process, the legitimacy of public institutions, and citizens' trust in the rule of law. While the first instrument relates to social security and legal order, the second could contribute to strengthening transparency, accountability, and good governance, serving as a democratic control mechanism exercised by society over the political and administrative class.

Both models nevertheless present certain limitations. The criminal record is criticized for failing to capture ethical misconduct or administrative dysfunctions, being strictly limited to criminal acts. The political and administrative record, although it would fill this gap, faces the difficulty of defining objective and fair criteria for including information, the risk of stigmatizing individuals for minor administrative errors, and the challenge of safeguarding the right to rehabilitation. Solutions to these obstacles should consist of clear and strict regulations that distinguish serious misconduct from mere procedural errors, the establishment of mechanisms for appeal and review, as well as the setting of limitation periods that ensure a balance between the public's right to be informed and the individual's right to restore their reputation.

Therefore, although inspired by the criminal record, the concept of a political and administrative record would represent an instrument with a distinct function, aimed not at criminal sanction, but at political and administrative accountability. If built on a solid legal foundation, managed by an independent institution, and governed by objective and fair criteria, it could become a fundamental mechanism for the modernization of public administration and the strengthening of democracy, turning transparency and accountability from exceptions into mandatory standards of public life. *“Issues of accountability are ubiquitous in public governance. Accountability connects with other concerns like legitimacy, power, citizen engagement, and new modes of service production”* (Barbera et al., 2025, p. 1).

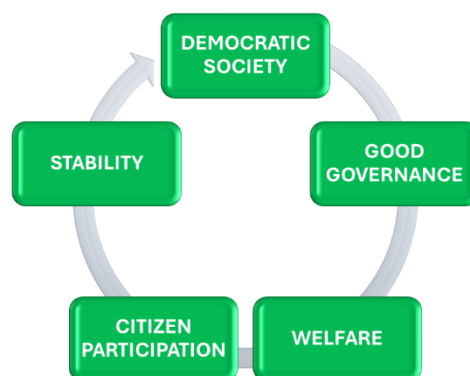


**Source:** Author

In the absence of adequate tools, society does not have effective means to make informed choices and to sanction political and administrative slippages, the citizens’ vote being affected by various messages, including fake news that overlap or replace the real image. “*Electoral misinformation, where citizens believe false or misleading claims about the electoral process, is a challenge to public confidence in elections specifically and democracy more broadly*” (Dunham *et al.*, 2024, p. 681).

The negative factors that can lead to the loss of trust come from recurrent dysfunctions, such as the opacity of the decision-making process, the phenomenon of political shifting, administrative inefficiency and corruption, elements that undermine citizens’ trust in state institutions and affect both their legitimacy and their activity or efficiency and that are faithfully reflected in all interdependent components, the relationship between them being able to generate a *virtuous circle* or a *vicious circle*.

*Figure 1. The virtuous circle*



**Source:** Author

Figure 2. The vicious circle



Source: Author

## 2. The need for a system of political accountability

In this context, the introduction of a political and administrative record, inspired by the criminal record model, could represent an innovative and necessary mechanism for increasing transparency and accountability in the exercise of public functions, since such a system would allow the documentation and highlighting of both ethical and professional deviations, as well as the performance of dignitaries and public officials, offering on the one hand to the electorate, and on the other hand, to the state institutions, a concrete tool for assessing their integrity and competence.

The political and administrative record would function as a public document that would record the relevant aspects of the activity of a politician or public official, providing verifiable information about his or her performance. Unlike the criminal record, which strictly reflects criminal sanctions, this mechanism refers to indicators and criteria of professional performance of the person evaluated. This is part of that “*new paradigm for public service management regarding the development of a new performance-oriented culture in a less centralized and resizing public sector*” (Dincă, 2018, p. 46). “*Good governance and efficiency of the public sector are topics that require in-depth analysis by scholars, politicians, officials, and entrepreneurs to identify the best policies and practices*” (Negri & Dinca, 2023, p. 1).

The main objective of such a criminal record is to increase the transparency and accountability of the political and administrative class, so that citizens can make informed decisions when voting. “*Voters may be unable to hold politicians to account if they lack basic information about their representatives’ performance. Civil society groups and international donors therefore advocate using voter information campaigns*” (Dunning et al., 2019, p. 1).

The participation of citizens through voting and civic activism in public life determines the selection of competent leaders, independent democratic institutions prevent abuses of power, and freedom of the press and the protection of fundamental rights contribute to a climate of transparency and mutual control of the authorities. Consequently, good governance ensures the stability and development of democratic society through coherent public policies, administrative efficiency, social equity and transparency, and the correct allocation of resources, investments in education, health, infrastructure and innovation, as well as a clear legislative framework foster economic and social progress.

At the same time, the well-being of citizens is both an outcome and a determinant of good governance and the consolidation of democracy, since a high standard of living leads to increased trust in institutions, active participation in democratic life, a favorable educational environment that reduces political manipulation and consolidates a stable society, while a decrease in well-being can generate electoral apathy, increasing tolerance for corruption and the erosion of the rule of law, which weakens democracy and the efficiency of governance, favoring populism, political instability and economic regression. *“The proper implementation of key components of public governance, such as transparency, accountability, and citizen participation, can act as powerful deterrents against corrupt practices”* (Mustapha *et al.*, 2024, p. 4).

### **3. Structure and content of the political and administrative record**

To be useful, the political and administrative record should include information on:

1) Political trails:

- a) The number of party changes during the mandate.
- b) The motivation for change.

2) Attendance at meetings:

- a) Percentage of participation in plenary and parliamentary committees.
- b) Unjustified absences and their justification.

3) Parliamentary and administrative activity:

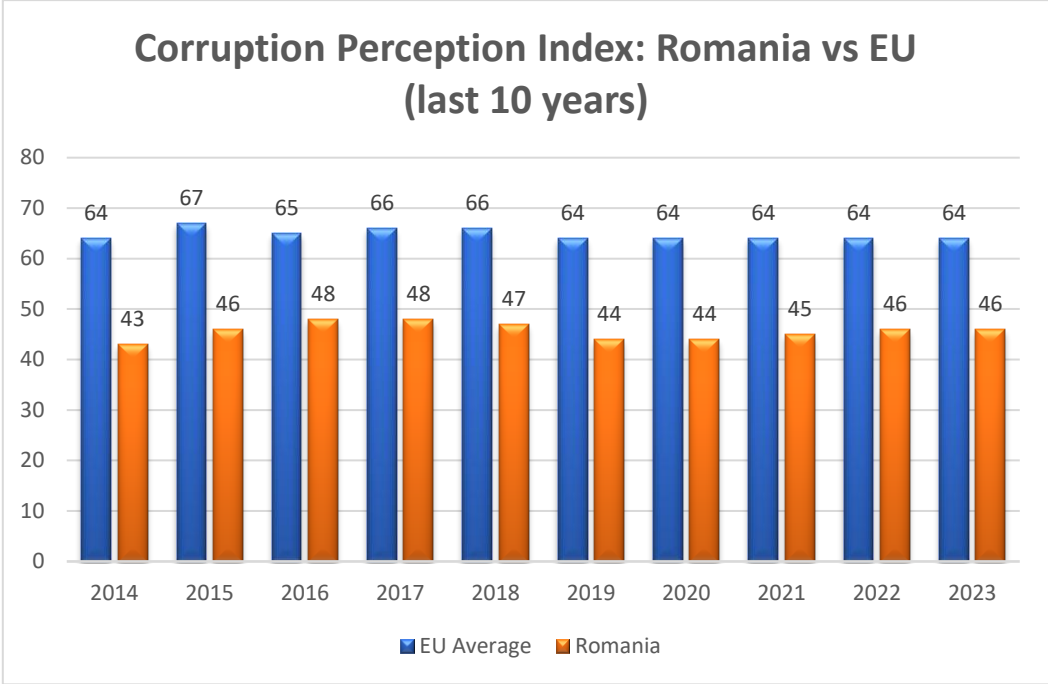
- a) The number of legislative initiatives proposed and the percentage of those adopted.
- b) Plenary interventions (number of speeches, interpellations, motions).
- c) Bills initiated with a significant impact on society.

4) Controversial decisions:

- a) Participation in legislative decisions that have generated negative reactions from society or integrity bodies.
- 5) Number of Integrity Incidents: *“Preventing and managing conflicts of interest in the public sector is crucial to help governments strengthen and enhance public integrity. Left undetected, they can undermine the integrity of public officials, decisions, agencies and governments”* (OECD, 2020, p. 32).
- a) Cases in which the National Integrity Agency (ANI) or other institutions have found various conflicts regarding the person of the parliamentarian, dignitary or public official.
- 6) Activity in public administration:
- a) How many times has a politician been appointed minister and the duration of each mandate.
  - b) How many times has it been reshuffled and the reasons for the reshuffle. *“The evidence presented underscores how parliamentarians’ defection diminishes legislative productivity, substituting particular interests for the nation’s welfare”* (Quaresima et al., 2025, p. 1).
  - c) The number of simple motions filed against it and their outcome.
  - d) Whether he was a civil servant before becoming a dignitary and how his activity was evaluated. *“Ethical misconduct, including bribery and favoritism, continues to undermine institutional effectiveness and erode public trust in government agencies. The absence of a robust meritocratic system means that recruitment and promotions are often influenced by political favoritism”* (Islam et al., 2025, p. 3).
  - e) Major projects implemented during the mandate and their impact.
- 7) Relationship with citizens:
- a) The number of meetings held with voters in their constituency.
  - b) Citizens’ complaints and how they were addressed. *“The social contract between citizens and the state depends on the ability of citizens to hold public servants accountable for their actions through various legitimate channels of influence”* (Mizrahi & Minchuk, 2025, p. 2).

For the information to be relevant, it should be centralized by an independent institution (e.g. ANI, Ministry of Justice) and validated by monitoring bodies, and the information should be updated regularly (e.g. every six months). At the same time, the document must be available online, so that it can be accessed by citizens, which should contribute to increasing the quality of their information to exercise their right to vote. The need for such a criminal record is all the greater as citizens’ perception of the level of corruption reaches a higher level. *“The growing level and quality of corruption will lead to an increase in the credibility and efficiency of*

corruption governance for the government, as public pressure compels national audit authorities to be more meticulous” (Fang et al., 2023, p. 7030).



Source: Author based on information from

<https://www.transparency.org.ro/ro/tiropage/indicele-de-perceptie-coruptiei-2023>

**4. Advantages, objections and solutions**

The main advantages of the introduction of the criminal record are related to the increase of transparency, with voters having access to concrete data on the activity of elected officials and civil servants, and public institutions being fully aware of a possible proposal for hiring or promoting the respective person who is subject to the evaluation of the political and administrative record. *“E-governance facilitates direct citizen involvement in political activities, surpassing traditional government functions, and contributes to broader societal goals such as transparency, accountability, and citizen involvement in decision-making processes”* (Lin & Yaakop, 2024, p. 3).

At the same time, politicians, dignitaries and civil servants will have an additional incentive to carry out their duties responsibly, while the publication of performance-related information will allow the identification of unsuitable people for certain positions, thus reducing incompetence and increasing citizens’ trust in the political and administrative system. *“Disinformation campaigns are associated with less accurate and more polarized beliefs about election fairness,*

*underlining the critical importance of objective information sources for voters” (Mauk & Gromping, 2024, p. 2).*

A political and administrative criminal record could be subject to several criticisms, including the possibility of using it as a tool for political pressure or the elimination of uncomfortable opponents, the risk of stigmatizing some people for minor mistakes, the difficulty of establishing objective and fair criteria for inclusion in the criminal record, as well as the violation of the principle of rehabilitation and the right to a second chance for people who have corrected their behavior. However, these criticisms can be dismantled argumentatively through a series of solutions meant to ensure the correct and equitable functioning of such a mechanism.

To prevent the political and administrative record from being used to pressure or eliminate opponents, it should be managed by an independent, politically autonomous institution governed by clear legal rules. *“Accountability requires that public officials are accountable for their actions to citizens and supervisory bodies, and that transparency encourages public scrutiny of the public administration’s actions” (Frontiers in Political Science, 2025, p. 4).* In addition, all information included in the criminal record should be rigorously checked and based on official decisions of the courts, integrity agencies or other competent authorities, to avoid the introduction of subjective or politically motivated data.

Another relevant criticism is the one related to the possibility of stigmatizing some people for minor administrative mistakes. To mitigate this risk, records should clearly differentiate between serious misconduct and procedural administrative misconduct, as only the former significantly affects civil service integrity and competence. *“In parliamentary systems, party switching can make or break governments. Strong political parties are intrinsic to meaningful representation, being necessary for voter preferences to be efficiently aggregated and translated into public policy” (Khosla & Vaishnav, 2024, p. 403).* Provision may also be made for the possibility to challenge and revise the information included so that data subjects have the right to a defense and can correct any errors.

Another aspect that can be criticized is the difficulty of establishing objective and fair criteria for the inclusion of facts in the political record, but this problem can be solved by a clear regulation that strictly defines the categories of facts that enter the records of the criminal record and thus, any ambiguity would be eliminated, and the application of this mechanism would be uniform and predictable.

Last but not least, the criticism of the violation of the right to rehabilitation and of the possibility for certain persons to restore their image after a mistake can be countered by establishing a limitation period, after which the information from the political record is deleted, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct, allowing a balance between the public's right to have access to relevant information about the integrity of officials and the principle of social and professional rehabilitation of persons who they have shown correction. *“The disclosure of corruption information can send a positive signal about the government's checks and balances aimed at curbing the misappropriation of power, helping to maintain political trust”* (Liu et al., 2025, p. 4).

## 5. Conclusions

The establishment of a political and administrative record is a key initiative to strengthen the principles of transparency, accountability and integrity in democracy and public administration. The interdependence between democratic society, good governance and the well-being of citizens can only work effectively if citizens have clear and accessible tools to assess the performance and integrity of those in public office. The lack of such mechanisms leads to the perpetuation of political shifting, administrative inefficiency and abuses of power, which generates a vicious circle in which public trust in state institutions would constantly deteriorate.

In this respect, the political and administrative record can become a pillar of good governance, providing both citizens and public institutions with a coherent tool for analyzing the performance, ethical behavior and degree of responsibility of dignitaries and civil servants. *“More research is necessary to understand the role of accountability as an independent variable, specifically its effect on crucial aspects of democratic governance, such as government trust and service quality”* (Perez-Duran, 2024, p. 12).

The mechanism must ensure fairness, objectivity, and protection of fundamental rights to prevent abuse or political misuse. Criticism of stigmatization, the difficulty of setting objective criteria or the violation of the right to rehabilitation can be addressed through appropriate measures, such as the management of this system by an independent institution, the application of rigorous standards for the verification of information, the clear differentiation between serious misconduct and minor administrative errors, and the establishment of a limitation period for the elimination of disproportionate penalties.

Also, such a tool must be accessible and regularly updated, so as to reflect the political and administrative reality in real time, providing citizens with a clear and unaltered image of the activity of those in public office.

Therefore, a political and administrative record is not a bureaucratic innovation, but a fundamental mechanism for modernizing the public administration and increasing the quality of the electoral process, and the adoption and implementation of such a system would be an important step towards increasing citizens' trust in state institutions, transforming transparency and accountability into a standard of political and administrative life, and not in an exception. "MPA programs forgo their responsibility to teach the next generation of public servants why merit-based civil service is crucial to a functioning democracy. Job protections are the bedrock of good government" (Guy & Zavattaro, 2023, p. 2).

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## Appendix 1. Example Model of Political and Administrative Record

1

National Integrity and Transparency Agency  
Political and Administrative Record, Issue Date: January 29, 2025

### I. Personal Information

- **Full name:** Ion Popescu
- **Date of birth:** 15.06.1975
- **Current position:** Member of the Romanian Parliament
- **Current political party:** National Reformist Party
- **Electoral district:** Bucharest

### II. Political Affiliation Evolution

No.	Year	Initial Party	Final Party	Official Reason	Observations
1	2016	Christian Social Democratic Party (PCSD)	Independent	“Doctrinal divergences”	Voted with PCSD after departure
2	2018	Independent	Liberal Democratic Party (PLD)	“Need for a reformist vision”	PLD offered him a vice-president position
3	2022	PLD	National Reformist Party	“Support for a new political project”	PLD merged with PRN

### III. Attendance at Sessions

Year	Plenary sessions	Attendance (%)	Unjustified absences	Committee sessions / Attendance (%)
2020	100	78%	5	50 / 70%
2021	120	82%	2	55 / 75%
2022	110	69%	8	48 / 68%
2023	95	72%	6	50 / 71%

#### IV. Parliamentary Activity

No.	Legislative proposals	Current status	Co-initiators	Observations
1	Law on digitalization of public administration	Adopted	12	Unanimous vote
2	Draft law on eliminating special pensions	Rejected	25	Blocked in committee
3	Tax Code Amendment	Under debate	15	Controversies on progressive taxation

Plenary interventions:

- Supporting speeches: 23
- Questions addressed to the Government: 12
- Motions signed: 3

#### V. Controversial Votes

No.	Bill	Date of vote / Cast vote	Observations
1	Increase in MPs' salaries	15.07.2022 / For	Criticized by press and NGOs
2	Amendment to public procurement law	20.10.2022 / Abstention	Conflict of interest flagged
3	Increase in child allowances	10.02.2023 / Against	Justification: "Budgetary constraints"

#### VI. Conflicts of Interest and Sanctions

No.	Incident	Date / Sanction	Oversight institution
1	Contracts with related companies	2021 / Warning	ANI
2	Nepotism in appointing advisors	2022 / Ongoing investigation	DNA

### VII. Administrative Activity

No.	Public office	Mandate period	Performance evaluation	Dismissals / Simple motions
1	Minister of Development	2019-2020	Average	1 (dismissed) / 2 (both rejected)
2	Minister of Transport	2021-2022	Satisfactory	1 (dismissed) / 1 (approved)

Reasons for dismissals:

- 2020: Lack of progress in attracting EU funds.
- 2022: Criticism regarding management of infrastructure projects.

### VIII. Relationship with Citizens

Year	Meetings with citizens	Petitions received	Official responses provided (%)
2020	10	120	75%
2021	15	200	80%
2022	8	150	60%
2023	5	100	50%

### IX. Conclusions and General Assessment

Indicator	Performance
Attendance at sessions	Average
Legislative activity	Good (23 speeches, 12 questions, 3 motions)
Controversial votes	3 flagged
Conflicts of interest	2 cases investigated
Administrative activity	Dismissals and simple motions
Relationship with citizens	Declining

Overall score: 6/10 (Evaluation based on transparency, activity, and integrity)