

# Hybrid politicization of top-level bureaucrats in Romania

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**Abstract:** The goal of the paper is to analyze the practices for the appointment of general secretaries at the ministerial level in Romania, the termination of their mandates, as well as their profile. The general secretaries are senior civil servants and should be appointed by competition or examination, based on professionalism criteria. They ensure the stability of the ministry's operation, the continuity of management, and the establishment of functional links between the structures of the ministry, as well as with the other authorities and bodies of the public administration. The occupation of these positions can be done by contest, mobility (from the body of senior civil servants), temporary exercise, and redistribution from the reserve body of civil servants. The decision regarding the choice of the way of occupying the position of general secretary belongs to the prime minister upon the proposal of the head of the public institution (meaning the minister) within which the vacant position is located.

A preliminary analysis of the appointments of general secretaries for the past three years (November 2021 and October 2024) showed that most frequently they are temporarily appointed for 6 months from among the directors of a ministry, or they are temporarily appointed through detachment from other institutions. Even though, according to the legislation, general secretaries are supposed to be senior civil servants (which is a very small group of civil servants), in reality, they are top civil servants temporarily appointed to these positions. A preliminary analysis of their profile showed some traces of politicization of these positions. Even though general secretaries are not members of political parties, the trust of the ministers seems to be important for their appointment. The analysis we conducted showed that the turnover of general secretaries is higher when ministers are replaced. The temporary appointment of general secretaries makes them easy to replace as the people occupying these positions return to their previous positions.

We aim to expand the analysis of general secretaries' appointments by including the 2010-2021 period. We will analyze the methods for their appointment and termination of their contracts, and we will try to identify any traces of politicization of these appointments. In addition, we will look at the positions occupied previously by individuals appointed as general secretaries. We will also correlate the appointment of general secretaries with the appointment of ministers, to identify any connections between individuals occupying these positions. The goal of this paper is to better analyze the degree and form of politicization of this category of civil servants.