

Romania

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1) What is the basic political system in your country (e.g. democratic, semi-authoritarian, authoritarian or other type of hybrid regime)?

Romania is a semi-presidential republic, governed within the framework of a constitutional democracy.

2) What are the main features of your media landscape? (private/public, print/broadcast/internet usage, ownership concentration, government control, etc.)

Media has been a very dynamic sector of the Romanian economy since the early 90s, after the country ditched communism in December 1989. The first years of the decade were dominated by the public broadcaster and by numerous newspapers, but most of them had a very short life. Some commercial broadcasters made their first investments. The beginning of the next decade brought the real interest in the media market: several private investors came to Romania (Ringier, EMI, Sanoma Hearst, Inform Media, Goldbach Media Group, WAZ, Edipresse Axel Springer), local businessmen invested in media outlets, and the commercial broadcasters launched one channel after another, so the market grew rapidly.

The second decade also brought more interest in the media from rich Romanians. Some of them had begun the development of their companies in the 90s, but in the last ten years, their activity grew stronger: Dan Voiculescu (Conservative Party President and Intact Group owner - 4 TV, 3 radios, 9 print titles and 1.600 employees), Dinu Patriciu (the richest Romanian, oil billionaire, former leader of the Liberal Party and owner of the Adevarul Group - 18 print titles, 1 online TV, 2 radio stations), Adrian Sarbu (non-political, actually Central Media Europe CEO, sold his TV station, Pro TV, to CME but still owns the Mediafax Group, a print and online media company), and Zoltan Teszari (businessman, owner of RCS&RDS, cable TV and internet provider, and the RCS&RDS TV network: 5 national and 8 local). They are now the most important employers in the media and the most influent media owners.

The most popular national channels are commercial stations: ProTV (CME), Antena 1 (Intact), Acasa TV (CME), Realitatea TV (Realitatea-Catavencu), Prima TV (ProSiebenSat1), as well as the public channel TVR 1. They are also the channels getting most of the advertising, accounting for about 60 % of the total.

The public television has five national channels an international channel and regional stations. Public television has come under criticism over the years for two main reasons: it is still politically controlled, with its president and administrative council named on political criteria; and it enjoys a hybrid 3-way financing system, which means it gets money from the state budget, from a special TV tax, and also from advertising.

There are about seven million households with TV sets in Romania. Television is still the most popular means of entertainment. The most popular TV shows are football games,

Romanian soap operas, prime time news, entertainment shows and international contests. Almost 50 TV stations distributed nationwide are registered under the National Study of TV Audience, including general audience and specialised channels. There are also numerous local stations.

The radio scene is dominated by private FM stations, with more than 700 licences for FM radio stations issued by the National Broadcasting Council by 2009. Radio Romania, the public radio company, includes five national stations, an international station and a regional network of 12 stations.

In 2007, there were almost 300 publishers of newspapers (159 dailies, plus newspapers appearing once or several times a week, and papers with no specific frequency), and over 350 publishers of magazines.

Over 35,000 journalists are currently employed in media organizations, but the number used to be higher before the economic downturn in 2008. The first victims of the crisis were quality newspapers. The newspaper which used to have the best readership – *Adevarul* – went from a circulation of 120,000 to 50,000 in less than two years. Other well-known newspapers, such as *Evenimentul Zilei*, *Romania Libera* or *Gandul*, dropped to under 20,000 copies or went out of the market. In the last 10 years tabloids became the most popular newspapers, but since the crisis deepened, their share of the market increased as the quality newspapers and other media products lost popularity. *Click*, a tabloid launched by *Adevarul* Holding in 2006, distributed more than 236,000 copies daily in June 2009. Another tabloid put on the market recently, *CanCan*, sold about 80,000 copies a day in the same month. The former market leader, *Libertatea*, sells around 200,000 copies a day, a drop compared to 2006 and 2007, when it distributed 250,000-300,000 copies every day.

Two segments of the market are still doing well: the sports dailies (*Gazeta Sporturilor*, ~ 67,000 copies a day, and *ProSport*, ~ 45,000 copies each day) and the business press (*Ziarul Financiar*, ~ 15,000; *Forbes*, ~ 30,000; *BUSINESS Magazin*, ~ 12,000; *Money Express*, ~ 8,000).

3) *Where does your country come in the rankings of Freedom House (on freedom of the press) and Reporters without Borders?*

42nd and 52nd

4) *Would you broadly agree with their characterisation of your situation?*

Largely, yes. Political influence is not the biggest problem facing the media in Romania. Rather they are the lack of media legislation, employer's practices and the lack of experience and ethics among the editors.

5) a) *what are the main challenges facing the media in your country in the next five years (economic, political, technological etc)?*

The most important problems will be economic. We are now expecting two electoral years (2012 and 2013), when probably there will still be interest in investing in the media; if the economy doesn't recover by then, 2014 will see another downturn for the media. As for political challenges, there will still be a problem while some of the biggest broadcasters and print companies are owned or strongly influenced by politicians. On the other hand, the rise

of these “moguls” did not allow strong foreign investors to build local companies, so probably this landscape will not change too fast.

b) what are the main limits on the practice of a free press in your country, based on your own practical experience of working there?

he most important limits are, in most media companies, “subjects we don’t touch” – that can relate to business friends or areas that are not comfortable for the owner. The most severe limit happens in strongly politicized media companies, where the message to be transmitted by journalists comes from the owner.

6) What are the main roles that new media play in your country?

Romania was very fast in adapting to the new media market. In times when it was too difficult or expensive to invest in print products, the online sector became very active. Now, almost 20% of the advertising budgets in Romania go to online products, while print media only gets about 15%. 288 online newspapers are now active in Romania, according to the National Online Audience Bureau (SATI). The rise of the internet became stronger during the economic crisis, due to a very rapid growth in the number of internet users (which can be explained through the fact that more people tried to find means of being entertained at home, but also through the decrease of newspapers’ circulations). In March 2009, Romania was ranked among the top 10 countries in Europe for the number of Internet users, with 7.4 million users, according to InternetWorldStats.com.