About Romania

Romania (Romanian: România, IPA: [ro.ˈmîn.i.a]) is a country in Southeastern Europe situated in a historic region that dates back to antiquity. It shares borders with Hungary and Serbia to the west, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to the northeast, and Bulgaria to the south. Romania has a stretch of sea coast along the Black Sea. It is located roughly in the lower basin of the Danube and almost all of the Danube Delta is located within its territory.

Romania is a parliamentary unitary state. As a nation-state, the country was formed by the merging of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859 and it gained recognition of its independence in 1878. Later, in 1918, they were joined by Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia. At the end of World War II, parts of its territories (roughly the present day Moldova) were occupied by USSR and Romania became a member of Warsaw Pact. With the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, Romania started a series of political and economic reforms that peaked with Romania joining the European Union.

Romania has been a member of the European Union since January 1, 2007, and has the ninth largest territory in the EU and with 22 million people it has the 7th largest population among the EU member states. Its capital and largest city is Bucharest (Romanian: București (help·info)), the sixth largest city in the EU with almost 2 million people. In 2007, Sibiu, a large city in Transylvania, was chosen as European Capital of Culture. Romania joined NATO on March 29, 2004, and is also a member of the Latin Union, of the Francophonie and of OSCE.
Etymology

Main article: Etymology of Romania

The name of Romania (România) comes from Român (Romanian) which is a derivative of the word Romanus ("Roman") from Latin. The fact that Romanians call themselves a derivative of Romanus (Romanian: Român/Rumân) is mentioned as early as the 16th century by many authors among whom were Italian Humanists travelling in Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia. The oldest surviving document written in the Romanian language is a 1521 letter (known as "Neacșu's Letter" from Cămpulung") which notifies the mayor of Brașov about the imminent attack of the Ottoman Turks. This document is also notable for having the first occurrence of "Rumanian" in a Romanian written text, Wallachia being here named The Rumanian Land - Țeara Rumânească (Țeara (Latin Terra = land). In the following centuries, Romanian documents use interchangeably two spelling forms: Român and Rumân. Socio-linguistic evolutions in the late 17th century lead to a process of semantic differentiation: the form "rumân", presumably usual among lower classes, got the meaning of "bondsman", while the form "român" kept an ethno-linguistic meaning. After the abolition of serfdom in 1746, the form "rumân" gradually disappears and the spelling definitively stabilises to the form "român", "românesc". The name "România" as common homeland of all Romanians is documented in the early 19th century.
Prehistory and Antiquity

Main articles: Prehistoric Romania and Dacia, and Roman Dacia

In 2002, the oldest modern human (Homo sapiens sapiens) remains in Europe were discovered in the "Cave With Bones" (Peştera cu Oase) near Anina in present day Romania[^12]. The remains (the lower jaw) are approximately 42,000 years old and have been nicknamed "John of Anina" (Ion din Anina). As Europe's oldest remains of Homo sapiens, they may represent the first such people to have entered the continent.[^13] The remains are especially interesting because they present a mixture of archaic, early modern human and Neanderthal morphological features.[^14] [^15] [^16] [^17]

Dacian wars depicted on Trajan's column

The earliest written evidence of people living in the territory of the present-day Romania comes from Herodotus in 513 BC[^18]. In one of his books, he writes that the tribal confederation of the Getae were defeated by the Persian Emperor Darius the Great during his campaign against the Scythians.[^19]

Dacians (Lat. Daci, Gr. Dákai) are a branch of Thracians that inhabitanted Dacia (corresponding to modern Romania and Moldova) and parts of Moesia (mostly in northern Bulgaria) in southeastern Europe. The Dacian kingdom reached its maximum expansion during King Burebista. The region came under the scrutiny of Rome when the Roman province, bordering along the Danube, Moesia, was attacked by the Dacians in 87 AD during Emperor Domitian's reign. The Dacians were eventually defeated by the Roman
Empire under Emperor Trajan in two campaigns stretching from 101 AD to 106 AD, and the core of their kingdom was turned into the Roman province of Dacia.

Because the province was rich in ores, and especially silver and gold, the Romans heavily colonized the province, brought with them the Vulgar Latin and started a period of intense romanization (giving birth to proto-Romanian). But in the 3rd century AD, with the invasions of migratory populations such as Goths, the Roman Empire was forced to pull out of Dacia in 270 AD, thus making it the first province to be abandoned.

Middle Ages

Main articles: Romania in the Early Middle Ages and Romania in the Middle Ages

In either 271 or 275 the Roman army and administration left Dacia, which was invaded by the Goths. The Goths lived with the local people until the 4th century, when another nomadic people, the Huns, arrived. The Gepids and the Avars and their Slavic subjects ruled Transylvania until the 8th century. It was then invaded by Bulgarians, thereafter being incorporated into the First Bulgarian Empire (marking the end of Romania's dark age) where it remained a part until the 11th century. The Pechenegs, the Cumans and Uzes were also mentioned by historic chronicles on the territory of Romania, until the founding of the Romanian principalities of Wallachia by Basarab I around 1310 in the High Middle Ages and Moldavia by Dragos around 1352.

The city of Sighisoara first attested in the 12th century, is nowadays famous for its Medieval Festival.

Several competing theories have been generated to explain the origin of modern Romanians. Linguistic and geo-historical analyses tend to indicate that Romanians have
coallesced as a major ethnic group both South and North of the Danube. For further discussion, see Origin of Romanians.

In the Middle Ages, Romanians lived in three distinct principalities: Wallachia (Romanian: Țara Românească - "Romanian Land"), Moldavia (Romanian: Moldova) and Transylvania. Transylvania was part of the Kingdom of Hungary from the 10-11th century until the 16th century, when it became the independent Principality of Transylvania until 1711.

Bran Castle built in 1212, is commonly known as Dracula's Castle and is situated in the centre of present-day Romania. In addition to its unique architecture, the castle is famous because of persistent myths that it was once the home of Vlad III Dracula.

Independent Wallachia has been on the border of the Ottoman Empire since the 14th century and slowly fell under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire during 15th. One famous ruler in this period was Vlad III the Impaler (also known as Vlad Dracula or Vlad Tepes, IPA: [ˈtsepeʃ]), Prince of Wallachia in 1448, 1456–62, and 1476. In the English-speaking world, Vlad is best known for the legends of the exceedingly cruel punishments he imposed during his reign and for serving as the primary inspiration for the vampire main character in Bram Stoker's popular Dracula (1897) novel. As king, he maintained an independent policy in relation to the Ottoman Empire, and in Romania he is viewed by many as a prince with a deep sense of justice and a defender of both Wallachia and European Christianity against Ottoman expansionism.

Voroneț Monastery built in 1488 by Stephen III of Moldavia (Stephen the Great) after his victory at the Battle of Vaslui.

The principality of Moldavia reached its most glorious period under the rule of Stephen the Great between 1457 and 1504. His rule of 47 years was unusually long, especially at that time - only 13 rulers were recorded to have ruled for at least 50 years until the end of 15th century. He was a very successful military leader (winning 47 battles and losing only 2), and after each victory, he raised a church, managing to build 48 churches or monasteries, some of them with unique and very interesting painting styles. For more information see Painted churches of northern Moldavia listed in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites. Stephen's most prestigious victory was over the Ottoman Empire in 1475 at the Battle of Vaslui for which he raised the Voroneț Monastery. For this victory, Pope
Sixtus IV deemed him verus christianae fidei athleta (true Champion of Christian Faith). However, after his death, Moldavia would also come under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century.

Michael the Brave (Romanian: Mihai Viteazul) was the Prince of Wallachia (1593-1601), of Transylvania (1599-1600), and of Moldavia (1600). Briefly, during his reign the three principalities largely inhabited by Romanians were for the first time united under a single rule. After his death, as vassal tributary states, Moldova and Wallachia had complete internal autonomy and an external independence, which was finally lost in the 18th century.

Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania at the end of the XVIth century

Independence and Kingdom

Main articles: Early Modern Romania, National awakening of Romania, Romanian War of Independence, and Kingdom of Romania

During the period of Austro-Hungarian rule in Transylvania, and Ottoman suzerainty over Wallachia and Moldavia, most Romanians were in the situation of being second-class citizens (or even non-citizens) in a territory where they were forming the majority of the population. In some Transylvanian cities, such as Brașov (at that time the Transylvanian Saxon citadel of Kronstadt), Romanians were not even allowed to reside within the city walls.

After the failed 1848 Revolution, the Great Powers did not support the Romanians' expressed desire to officially unite in a single state, forcing Romania to proceed alone against the Turks. The electors in both Moldavia and Wallachia chose in 1859 the same person – Alexandru Ioan Cuza – as prince (Domnitor in Romanian). Thus, Romania was created as a personal union, albeit a Romania that did not include Transylvania, where Romanian nationalism inevitably ran up against Hungarian nationalism. For some time yet, Austria-Hungary, especially under the Dual Monarchy of 1867, would keep the Hungarians firmly in control, even in parts of Transylvania where Romanians constituted a local majority.
The Palace of Culture in Iași was built in 1925 and hosts several museums.

Via a 1866 coup d'état, Cuza was exiled and replaced by Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who became known as Prince Carol of Romania. During the Russo-Turkish War, Romania fought on the Russian side;[53] in the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, Romania was recognized as an independent state by the Great Powers.[54] In return, Romania ceded three southern districts of Bessarabia to Russia and acquired Dobruja. In 1881, the principality was raised to a kingdom and Prince Carol became King Carol I.

The 1878-1914 period was one of stability and progress for Romania. During the Second Balkan War, Romania joined Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Turkey against Bulgaria. In the peace Treaty of Bucharest (1913) Romania gained Southern Dobrudja - the Quadrilateral (the Durostor and Caliacra counties). [56]

Peleş Castle, retreat of Romanian monarchs

World Wars and Greater Romania

Main articles: Romanian Campaign (World War I), Greater Romania, and Romania during World War II

In August 1914, when World War I broke out, Romania declared neutrality. Two years later, under the pressure of Allies (especially France desperate to open a new front), on August 14/27 1916 it joined the Allies, for which they were promised support for the accomplishment of national unity, Romania declared war on Austria-Hungary. [57]

The Romanian military campaign ended in disaster for Romania as the Central Powers conquered two-thirds of the country and captured or killed the majority of its army within four months. Nevertheless, Moldova remained in Romanian hands after the invading forces were stopped in 1917 and since by the war's end, Austria-Hungary and the Russian Empire had collapsed, Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania were allowed to unite with the Kingdom of Romania in 1918. By the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, Hungary renounced in
favour of Romania all the claims of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy over Transylvania. The union of Bucovina and Bessarabia with Romania was ratified in 1920 by the Treaty of Versailles.

The Romanian expression România Mare (literal translation "Great Romania", but more commonly rendered "Greater Romania") generally refers to the Romanian state in the years between the First and Second World Wars and, by extension, to the territory Romania covered at the time (see the map). Romania achieved at that time its greatest territorial extent, managing to unite all the historic Romanian lands.

Romanian territory during the 20th century: purple indicates the Old Kingdom before 1913, orange indicates Greater Romania areas that joined or were annexed after the Second Balkan War and WWI but were lost after WWII, and rose indicates areas that joined Romania after WWI and remained so after WWII.

During the Second World War, Romania tried again to remain neutral but in 1940, it received a Soviet ultimatum in which it agreed to cede Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia to the Soviet Union. This, in combination with other factors, prompted the government to join the Axis. Thereafter, southern Dobruja was awarded to Bulgaria, while Hungary received Northern Transylvania as result of an Axis arbitration. The authoritarian King Carol II abdicated in 1940, succeeded by the National Legionary State, in which power was shared by Ion Antonescu and the Iron Guard. Within months, Antonescu had crushed the Iron Guard, and the subsequent year Romania entered the war on the side of the Axis powers. During the war, Romania was by far the most important source of oil for Nazi Germany, which attracted multiple bombing raids by the Allies. By means of the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union, Romania recovered Bessarabia and northern Bukovina from the Soviet Russia, under the leadership of general Ion Antonescu. The Antonescu regime played a role in the Holocaust, following to a lesser extent the Nazi policy of oppression and massacre of the Jews, and Romas, primarily in the Eastern territories Romania recovered or occupied from the Soviet Union (Transnistria) and in Moldavia.

In August 1944, Antonescu was toppled and arrested by King Michael I of Romania. Romania changed sides and joined the Allies, but its role in the defeat of Nazi Germany was not recognized by the Paris Peace Conference of 1947. With the Red Army forces still stationed in the country and exerting de facto control, Communists and their allied parties claimed 80% of the vote, through a combination of vote manipulation, elimination and forced mergers of competing parties, establishing themselves as the dominant force.
In 1947, King Michael I was forced by the Communists to abdicate and leave the country, Romania was proclaimed a republic, and remained under direct military and economic control of the USSR until the late 1950s. During this period, Romania's resources were drained by the "SovRom" agreements: mixed Soviet-Romanian companies established to mask the looting of Romania by the Soviet Union.[69][60][61] A large number of people were arbitrarily imprisoned for political, economic or unknown reasons;[62] detainees in prisons or camps, deported, persons under house arrest, and administrative detainees. Political prisoners were also detained as psychiatric patients, estimations vary, from 60,000,[63] to 80,000.[64] There were hundreds of thousands of abuses, deaths and incidents of torture against a large range of people, from political opponents to ordinary citizens.[65] Political prisoners were freed in a series of amnesties between 1962 and 1964. In total, it is estimated that up to two million people have lost their lives directly because of the regime.[60][67]

After the negotiated retreat of Soviet troops, in 1958, Romania started to pursue independent policies, including the condemnation of the Soviet-led 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia (Romania was the only Warsaw Pact country not to take part in the invasion), the continuation of diplomatic relations with Israel after the Six-Day War of 1967 (again, the only Warsaw Pact country to do so), the establishment of economic (1963) and diplomatic (1967) relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, and so forth. Also, close ties with the Arab countries (and the PLO) allowed Romania to play a key role in the Israel-Egypt and Israel-PLO peace processes (intermediated the visit of Sadat in Israel[68]). A short-lived period of relative economic well-being and openness followed in the late 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. As Romania's foreign debt sharply increased between 1977 and 1981 (from 3 to 10 billion US dollars),[69] the influence of international financial organisations such as the IMF or the World Bank grew, conflicting with Nicolae Ceaușescu's autarchic policies. Ceaușescu eventually initiated a project of total reimbursement of the foreign debt (completed in 1989, shortly before his overthrow). To achieve this goal, he imposed policies that impoverished Romanians and exhausted the Romanian economy. He profoundly deepened Romania's police state and imposed a cult of personality which led to his overthrow and death in the bloody Romanian Revolution of 1989.
Present Romania

(after 1989)

Main article: Romania since 1989

After the fall of Ceauşescu, the National Salvation Front (FSN), led by Ion Iliescu, restored civil order and took partial democratic measures. Several major political parties of the pre-war era, such as the National Christian Democrat Peasant's Party (PNŢCD), the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the Romanian Social Democrat Party (PSDR) were resurrected. After several major political rallies (especially in January), in April 1990, a sit-in protest contesting the results of the recently held parliamentary elections began in the University Square, Bucharest. The protesters accused the FSN of being made up of former Communists and members of the Securitate. The protesters did not recognize the results of the election, which they deemed undemocratic, and were asking for the exclusion from the political life of the former high-ranking Communist Party members. The protest rapidly grew to become an ongoing mass demonstration (known as the Golaniad). The peaceful demonstrations degenerated into violence. After the police failed to bring the demonstrators to order, Ion Iliescu called on the "men of good will" to come and defend the Bucharest and State institutions. Coal miners of the Jiu Valley answered the call and arrived in Bucharest on June 14. Their violent intervention is remembered as the June 1990 Mineriad.

The subsequent disintegration of the FSN produced several political parties including the Romanian Democrat Social Party (PDSR, later Social Democratic Party, PSD), the Democratic Party (PD) and the ApR (Alliance for Romania). The PDSR party governed Romania from 1990 until 1996 through several coalitions and governments with Ion Iliescu as head of state. Since then there have been three democratic changes of government: in 1996, the democratic-liberal opposition and its leader Emil Constantinescu acceded to power; in 2000 the Social Democrats returned to power, with Iliescu once again president; and in 2004 Traian Băsescu was elected president, with an electoral coalition called Justice and Truth Alliance (DA). The government was formed by a larger coalition which also includes the Conservative Party and the ethnic Hungarian party. Post-Cold War Romania developed closer ties with Western Europe, eventually joining NATO in 2004. The country applied in June 1993 for membership in the European Union (EU). It became an Associated State of the EU in 1995, an Acceding Country in 2004, and a member on January 1, 2007.
Geography

Main article: Geography of Romania

Topographic map of Romania.

With a surface area of 238,391 km², Romania is the largest country in southeastern Europe and the twelfth-largest in Europe. A large part of Romania's border with Serbia and Bulgaria is formed by the Danube. The Danube is joined by the Prut River, which forms the border with the Republic of Moldova. The Danube flows into the Black Sea on Romanian territory, forming the Danube Delta, the largest delta in Europe, which is currently a biosphere reserve and World Heritage-listed site due to its biodiversity. Other important rivers are the Siret, running north-south through Moldavia, the Olt, running from the oriental Carpathian Mountains to Oltenia, and the Mureș, running through Transylvania from East to West.

Romania's terrain is distributed roughly equally between mountainous, hilly and lowland territories. The Carpathian Mountains dominate the center of Romania, with fourteen of its mountain ranges reaching above the altitude of 2,000 meters. The highest mountain in Romania is Moldoveanu Peak (2544 m). In south-central Romania, the Carpathians sweeten into hills, towards the Bârăgan Plains. Romania's geographical diversity has led to an accompanying diversity of flora and fauna.

Lake Bucura in the Retezat Mountains
Environment

Main article: Protected areas of Romania

A high percentage of natural ecosystems (47% of the land area of the country) is covered with natural and semi-natural ecosystems. Since almost half of all forests in Romania (13% of the country) have been managed for watershed conservation rather than production, Romania has one of the largest areas of undisturbed forest in Europe. The integrity of Romanian forest ecosystems is indicated by the presence of the full range of European forest fauna, including 60% and 40% of all European brown bears and wolves, respectively. There are also almost 400 unique species of mammals (of which Carpathian chamois are best known), birds, reptiles and amphibians in Romania.

There are almost 10,000 km² (almost 5% of the total area) of protected areas in Romania. Of these, Danube Delta Reserve Biosphere is the largest and least damaged wetland complex in Europe, covering a total area of 5800 km². The significance of the biodiversity of the Danube Delta has been internationally recognised. It was declared a Biosphere Reserve in September 1990, a Ramsar site in May 1991, and over 50% of its area was placed on the World Heritage List in December 1991. Within its boundaries is one of the most extensive reed bed systems in Europe. Besides the delta, there are two more biosphera reserves: Retezat National Park and Rodna National Park.

Climate

Typical landscape in the Danube Delta

Main article: Climate of Romania

Owing to its distance from the open sea, Romania has a moderate continental climate. Summers are generally very warm to hot, with summer (June to August) average maxima in Bucharest being around 28 °C, with temperatures over 35 °C fairly common in the lower-lying areas of the country. Minima in Bucharest and other lower-lying areas are around 16 °C, but at higher altitudes both maxima and minima decline considerably. On the Romanian seaside the climate is slightly warmer (in annual average) and also less prone to extreme phenomena like summer heatwaves and winter severe cold spells. Winters are cold, with average maxima even in lower-lying areas being no more than 2 °C (36 °F) and below -15 °C (5 °F) in the highest mountains, where some areas of permafrost occur on the highest peaks.
Precipitations are average over 750 mm per year only on the highest western mountains - much of it falling as snow which allows for an extensive skiing industry. In the southern parts of the country (around Bucharest) the level of precipitation drops to around 600 mm, while in the Danube Delta, rainfall levels are very low, and average only around 370 mm.

**Demographics**

*Main article: Demographics of Romania*

According to the 2002 census, Romania has a population of 22,680,974 and, similarly to other countries in the region, is expected to gently decline in the coming years as a result of sub-replacement fertility rates. Romanians make up 89.5% of the population. The largest ethnic minorities are Hungarians, who make up 6.6% of the population and Roma, or Gypsies, who make up 2% of the population. By the official census 535,250 Roma live in Romania. Hungarians, who are a sizeable minority in Transylvania, constitute a majority in the counties of Harghita and Covasna. Ukrainians, Germans, Lipovans, Turks, Tatars, Serbs, Slovaks, Bulgarians, Croats, Greeks, Russians, Jews, Czechs, Poles, Italians, Armenians, as well as other ethnic groups, account for the remaining 1.4% of the population. The population density of the country as a whole has doubled since 1900 although, in contrast to other central European states, there is still considerable room for further growth. The overall density figures, however, conceal considerable regional variation. Population densities are naturally highest in the towns, with the plains (up to altitudes of some 700 ft) having the next highest density, especially in areas with intensive agriculture or a traditionally high birth rate (e.g., northern Moldavia and the “contact” zone with the Subcarpathians); areas at altitudes of 700 to 2,000 feet (600 m), rich in mineral resources, orchards, vineyards, and pastures, support the lowest densities. The number of Romanians and individuals with ancestors born in Romania living abroad is estimated at around 12 million.

The official language of Romania is Romanian, an Eastern Romance language related to Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Catalan. Romanian is spoken as a first language by 91% of the population, with Hungarian and Romani being the most important minority languages, spoken by 6.7% and 1.1% of the population, respectively. Until the 1990s, there was also a substantial number of German-speaking Transylvanian Saxons, even though many have since emigrated to Germany, leaving only 45,000 native German speakers in Romania. In localities where a given ethnic minority makes up more than 20% of the population, that minority's language can be used in the public administration and justice system, while native-language education and signage is also provided. English and French are the main foreign languages taught in schools. English is spoken by 5 million Romanians, French is spoken by 4-5 million, and German, Italian and Spanish are each spoken by 1-2 million people. Historically, French was the predominant foreign language spoken in Romania, even though English has since superseded it. Consequently, Romanian English-speakers tend to be younger than Romanian French-speakers. Romania is, however, a full member of La Francophonie, and hosted the Francophonie Summit in 2006. German has been taught predominantly in Transylvania, due to traditions tracing back to the Austro-Hungarian rule in this province.
Religion

Putna Monastery, the burial site of Stephen the Great is now a famous pilgrimage place.

Main articles: Religion in Romania and Romanian Orthodox Church

Romania is a secular state, thus having no national religion. The dominant religious body is the Romanian Orthodox Church; its members make up 86.7% of the population according to the 2002 census. Other important religions include Roman Catholicism (4.7%), Protestantism (3.7%), Pentecostal denominations (1.5%) and the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church (0.9%). Romania also has a historically significant Muslim minority concentrated in Dobrogea, who are mostly of Turkish ethnicity and number 67,500 people. Based on the 2002 census data, there are also 6,179 Jews, 23,105 people who are of no religion and/or atheist, and 11,734 who refused to answer. On December 27, 2006, a new Law on Religion was approved under which religious denominations can only receive official registration if they have at least 20,000 members, or about 0.1 percent of Romania's total population.

Largest cities

Main article: List of cities in Romania

Bucharest is the capital and the largest city in Romania. At the census in 2002, its population was over 1.9 million. The metropolitan area of Bucharest has a population of about 2.2 million. There are several plans the further increase its metropolitan area to about 20 times the area of the city proper.

There are 4 more cities in Romania, with a population of around 310,000 that are also present in EU top 100 most populous cities. These are: Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Constanța
and Iași. Other cities with a population of at least 200,000 people are Craiova, Galați, Brașov, Ploiești, Brăila and Oradea. There are 25 cities with a population of at least 100,000. Until now, several of the largest cities have a metropolitan area: Constanța (550,000 people), Brașov, Iași (both with around 400,000) and Oradea (260,000) and several others are planned: Timișoara (400,000), Cluj-Napoca (400,000), Galați-Braila (600,000), Craiova (370,000), Bacau and Ploiești.[85]

Education

Since the Romanian Revolution of 1989, the Romanian education system has been in a continuous process of reformation that has been both praised and criticised. According to the Law on Education adopted in 1995, the Educational System is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Research. Each level has its own form of organization and is subject to different legislations. Kindergarten is optional between 3 and 6 years old. Schooling starts at age 7 (sometimes 6), and is compulsory until the 10th grade (which usually corresponds to the age of 17 or 16). Primary and secondary education are divided in 12 or 13 grades. Higher education is aligned onto the European higher education area.

Aside from the official schooling system, and the recently-added private equivalents, there exists a semi-legal, informal, fully private tutoring system (meditații). Tutoring is mostly used during secondary as a preparation for the various examinations, which are notoriously difficult. Tutoring is wide-spread, and it can be considered a part of the Education System. It has subsisted and even prospered during the Communist regime.

In 2004, some 4.4 million of the population was enrolled in school. Out of these, 650,000 in kindergarde, 3.11 million (14% of population) in primary and secondary level, and 650,000 (3% of population) in tertiary level (universities).[86] In the same year, the adult literacy rate was 97,3% (45th worldwide), while the combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools was 75% (52nd worldwide).[87] The results of the PISA assessment study in schools for the year 2000 placed Romania on the 34th rank out of 42 participant countries with a general weighted score of 432 representing 85% of the mean OECD score.[88] According to the Academic Ranking of World Universities, in 2006 no Romanian university was included in the first 500 top universities world wide.[89] Using similar methodology to these rankings, it was reported that the best placed Romanian university, Bucharest University, attained the half score of the last university in the world top 500.[90]
Tower Center International in Bucharest is the tallest building in Romania

With a GDP per capita (PPP) of $10,661 estimated for 2007, Romania is considered an upper-middle income economy and has been part of the European Union since January 1, 2007. After the Communist regime was overthrown in late 1989, the country experienced a decade of economic instability and decline, led in part by an obsolete industrial base and a lack of structural reform. From 2000 onwards, however, the Romanian economy was transformed into one of relative macroeconomic stability, characterised by high growth, low unemployment and declining inflation. In 2006, according to the Romanian Statistics Office, GDP growth in real terms was recorded at 7.7%, one of the highest rates in Europe. Unemployment in Romania was at 3.9% in September 2007 which is very low compared to other middle-sized or large European countries such as Poland, France, Germany and Spain. Foreign debt is also comparatively low, at 20.3% of GDP. Exports have increased substantially in the past few years, with a 25% year-on-year rise in exports in the first quarter of 2006. Romania's main exports are clothing and textiles, industrial machinery, electrical and electronic equipment, metallurgical products, raw materials, cars, military equipment, software, pharmaceuticals, fine chemicals, and agricultural products (fruits, vegetables, and flowers). Trade is mostly centred on the member states of the European Union, with Germany and Italy being the country's single largest trading partners. The country, however, maintains a large trade deficit, importing 37% more goods than it exports.

After a series of privatisations and reforms in the late 1990s and early 2000s, government intervention in the Romanian economy is somewhat lower than in other European economies. In 2005, the government replaced Romania's progressive tax system with a flat tax of 16% for both personal income and corporate profit, resulting in the country having the lowest fiscal burden in the European Union, a factor which has contributed to the growth of the private sector. The economy is predominantly based on services, which account for 55% of GDP, even though industry and agriculture also have significant contributions, making up 35% and 10% of GDP, respectively. Additionally, 32% of the Romanian population is employed in agriculture and primary production, one of the highest rates in Europe. Since 2000, Romania has attracted increasing amounts of foreign investment, becoming the single largest investment destination in Southeastern and Central Europe. Foreign direct investment was valued at €8.3 billion in 2006. According to a 2006 World Bank report, Romania currently ranks 49th out of 175 economies in the ease of doing business, scoring higher than other countries in the region such as Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. Additionally, the same study judged it to be the world's second-fastest economic reformer in 2006. The average gross wage per month in Romania is
1411 lei as of September 2007, equating to €403.3 (US$597.3) based on international exchange rates, and $1001.1 based on purchasing power parity. The percentage of computers connected to the internet in the country reaches almost 70% and more than 50% have broadband connections reaching a 4 Mbit/s (megabits per sec) average. From this aspect, Romania is the 10th country in the world with a bigger percentage of people connected to the internet than the USA.

**Romania's Road Network**

**Transportation**

*Main article: Transport in Romania*

Due to its location, Romania is a major crossroad for international economic exchange in Europe. However, because of insufficient investment, maintenance and repair, the transport infrastructure does not meet the current needs of a market economy and lags behind Western Europe. Nevertheless, these conditions are rapidly improving and catching up with the standards of Trans-European transport networks. Several projects have been started with funding from grants from ISPA and several loans from International Financial Institutions (World Bank, IMF, etc.) guaranteed by the state, to upgrade the main road corridors. Also, the Government is actively pursuing new external financing or public-private partnerships to further upgrade the main roads, and especially the country's motorway network.

World Bank estimates that the railway network in Romania comprised in 2004 22,298 km of track, which would make it the fourth largest railroad network in Europe. The railway transport experienced a dramatic fall in freight and passenger volumes from the peak volumes recorded in 1989 mainly due to the decline in GDP and competition from road transport. In 2004, the railways carried 8.64 billion passenger-km in 99 million passenger journeys, and 73 million metric tones, or 17 billion ton-km of freight. The combined total transportation by rail constituted around 45% of all passenger and freight movement in the country.

Bucharest is the only city in Romania which has an underground railway system. The Bucharest Metro was only opened in 1979. Now is one of the most accessed systems of the Bucharest public transport network with an average ridership of 600,000 passengers during the workweek.
Tourism

Main article: Tourism in Romania

The official logo of Romania, used to promote the tourist attractions in the country

Tourism focuses on the country’s natural landscapes and its rich history and is a significant contributor to the Romania's economy. In 2006, the domestic and international tourism generated about 4.8% of gross domestic product and 5.8% of the total jobs (about half a million jobs). Following commerce, tourism is the second largest component of the services sector. Tourism is one of the most dynamic and fastest developing sectors of the economy of Romania and characterized by a huge potential for development. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, Romania is the fourth fastest growing country in the world in terms of travel and tourism total demand with a yearly potential growth of 8% from 2007-2016. Number of tourists grew from 4.8 million in 2002 to 6.6 million in 2004. Similarly, the revenues grew from 400 million in 2002 to 607 in 2004. In 2006, Romania registered 20 million overnight stays by international tourists, an all-time record, but the number for 2007 is expected to increase even more. Tourism in Romania attracted €400 million in investments in 2005.

Over the last years, Romania has emerged as a popular tourist destination for many Europeans (more than 60% of the foreign visitors were from EU countries), thus attempting to compete with Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Spain. Romania destinations such as Mangalia, Saturn, Venus, Neptun, Olimp, Constanta and Mamaia (sometimes called the Romanian Riviera) and are among the most popular attraction during summer. During winter the skiing resorts along the Valea Prahovei and Poiana Brasov are booming with visitors. Several cities in Transylvania, such as: Sibiu, Brasov, Sighisoara, Cluj-Napoca and several others have become important touristic attractions for foreign tourists. Attractions include medieval their medieval castles. Rural tourism with its folklore and traditions has become a major part for the authorities in order to promote such sites as Bran with its Dracula's Castle, the Painted churches of Northern Moldavia, the Wooden churches of Maramures and the Merry Cemetery in Maramures County. Natural attractions include: Danube Delta, Iron Gates (Danube Gorge), Scărișoara Cave and several other caves in the Apuseni Mountains.
Medieval city of Sibiu, European Capital of Culture in 2007

Culture

Main articles: Culture of Romania, Folklore of Romania, and Romanian cuisine

The culture of Romania is rich and varied. Like Romanians themselves, it is fundamentally defined as the meeting point of three regions: Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans, but cannot be truly included in any of them. The Romanian identity formed on a substratum of mixed Roman and quite possibly Dacian elements (although the latter is controversial), with many other influences. During late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the major influences came from the Slavic peoples who migrated and settled in nearby Bulgaria, Serbia, Ukraine and eventually Russia; from medieval Greeks and the Byzantine Empire; from a long domination by the Ottoman Empire; from the Hungarians; and from the Germans living in Transylvania. Modern Romanian culture emerged and developed over roughly the last 250 years under a strong influence from Western culture, particularly French and German culture.

Arts

Main articles: Literature of Romania, Music of Romania, and List of Romanian Artists

Mihai Eminescu, national poet of Romania and Moldova

The older classics of Romanian literature remain very little known outside Romania. Mihai Eminescu, a famous 19th century Romanian poet is still very much loved in Romania (especially his poems), along with several other classics like George Cosbuc and Ioan Slavici. The revolutionary year 1848 had its echoes in the Romanian principalities and in Transylvania, and a new elite from the middle of the 19th century emerged from the revolutions: Mihail Kogălniceanu (writer, politician and the first prime minister of
Romania), Vasile Alecsandri (politician, playwright and poet), Andrei Mureșanu (publicist and the writer of the current Romanian National Anthem) and Nicolae Bălcescu (historian, writer and revolutionary). Other classic Romanian writers whose works are still widely read in their native country are playwright Ion Luca Caragiale (the National Theatre Bucharest is officially named in his honor) and Ion Creangă (best known for his children's stories).

In the period between the two world wars, authors like Tudor Arghezi, Lucian Blaga or Ion Barbu made efforts to synchronize Romanian literature with the European literature of the time. Gellu Naum was the leader of the surrealism movement in Romania. In the Communist era, valuable writers like Nichita Stănescu, Marin Sorescu or Marin Preda managed to escape censorship, broke with "socialist realism" and were the leaders of a small "Renaissance" in Romanian literature.

Romanian literature has recently gained some renown outside the borders of Romania (mostly through translations into German, French and English). Some modern Romanian authors became increasingly popular in Germany, France and Italy, especially Eugen Ionescu, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica, Tristan Tzara and Mircea Cărtărescu. Other literary figures who enjoy broad acclaim outside of the country include poet Paul Celan and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, both survivors of the Holocaust.

Probably the best known Romanian musician George Enescu, a 20th century composer, violinist, pianist, conductor, teacher, and one of the greatest performers of his time. George Enescu Festival, an annual classical music festival held in Bucharest, is named after him. Other Romanian musicians are Ciprian Porumbescu, a 19th century composer, Gheorghe Zamfir, a virtuoso of the pan flute that is reported to have sold over 120 million albums worldwide, and the folk artist Tudor Gheorghe.

Constantin Brâncuși is an internationally renowned Romanian sculptor, whose sculptures blend simplicity and sophistication that led the way for modernist sculptors. As a testimony to his skill, one of his pieces, "Bird in Space", was sold in an auction for $27.5 million in 2005, a record for any sculpture.
Hunyadi Castle, 1419, with its impressive size and architectural beauty sets it among the most precious monuments of medieval art. It was the home of one of the greatest Hungarian kings, Matthias Corvinus (reigned from 1458-1490), son of the Romanian Iancu de Hunedoara.

Monuments

See also: List of castles in Romania, List of religious buildings in Romania, and UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Romania

The UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites includes Romanian sites such as the Saxon villages with fortified churches in Transylvania, the Painted churches of northern Moldavia with their fine exterior and interior frescoes, the Wooden Churches of Maramures unique examples that combine Gothic style with traditional timber construction, the citadel of Sighisoara and the Dacian Fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains. Also, in 2007, the city of Sibiu famous for its Brukenthal National Museum is the European Capital of Culture alongside the city of Luxembourg.

Science and technology

Main article: Science and technology in Romania

Traian Vuia 1, world's first fully self-propelled aircraft flew in March 1906.

On May 14, 1981 Romania became the 11th country in the world to have an astronaut in space. That astronaut, Dumitru Prunariu is today's president of Romanian Space Agency. On March 18, 1906 Traian Vuia became the first person to have flown a self-propelling, heavier-than-air aircraft - he is also only the second person to have taken off with a powered airplane. His flight was performed in Montesson near Paris and was about 12 meters long. Henri Coandă was another Romanian inventor and pioneer of aviation. He
built the world's first jet powered aircraft, the Coanda-1910 and brought it at the Second International Aeronautical Exhibition in Paris around October 1910.

Coanda-1910, world's first jet-propelled aircraft built by Henri Coanda

George Emil Palade is a Romanian cell biologist who won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1974 for his study of internal organization of such cell structures as mitochondria, chloroplasts, the Golgi apparatus, and for the discovery of the ribosomes. He also won the National Medal of Science in 1986.

At the beginning of the 2000s, there was a boom in Romania in the number of computer programmers. Romania is reported to be among the countries with the highest number of computer programmers in the world. Some examples of successful software include RAV (Romanian AntiVirus) which was bought in 2003 by Microsoft for use in their development of Windows Defender, or BitDefender which is considered the number one antivirus software and internet security software at TopTenReviews.
Government

Politics

Main article: Politics of Romania

The Palace of the Parliament, the seat of Romania's bicameral parliament. Built in 1984, it is the largest building in Europe and the world's second largest administrative building by surface area of its floors, just behind the Pentagon[^127] and 10% larger by volume than the Great Pyramid of Giza.[^128]

Romania is a semi-presidential democratic republic where executive functions are shared between the president and the prime minister. The president is elected by popular vote, and resides at Cotroceni Palace. Since the constitutional amendment of 2003, the president's term is five years (previously it was four). The Romanian Government, which is based at Victoria Palace, is headed by a prime minister, who appoints the other members of his or her cabinet and who is nearly always the head of the party or coalition that holds a majority in the parliament. If, however, none of the parties hold 50% + 1 of the total seats in parliament, the president will appoint the prime minister. Before beginning its term, the government is subject to a parliamentary vote of approval.

The legislative branch of the government, collectively known as the Parliament (Parlamentul României), consists of two chambers – the Senate (Senat), which has 137 members, and the Chamber of Deputies (Camera Deputaților), which has 332 members. The members of both chambers are elected every four years under a system of party-list proportional representation.

The justice system is independent of the other branches of government, and is made up of a hierarchical system of courts culminating in the High Court of Cassation and Justice, which is the supreme court of Romania. There are also courts of appeal, county courts and local courts. The Romanian judicial system is strongly influenced by the French model, considering that it is based on civil law and is inquisitorial in nature. The Constitutional Court (Curtea Constituțională) is responsible for judging the compliance of laws and other state regulations to the Romanian Constitution, which is the fundamental law of the country. The constitution, which was introduced in 1991, can only be amended by a public referendum; the last amendment was in 2003. The Romanian Constitutional Court structure is based on the Constitutional Council of France, being made up of nine judges who serve nine-year, non-renewable terms. Following the 2003 constitutional amendment, the court's decisions cannot be overruled by any majority of the parliament.

The country's entry into the European Union in 2007 has been a significant influence on its domestic policy. As part of the process, Romania has instituted reforms including judicial reform, increased judicial cooperation with other member states, and measures to combat corruption. In 2006 Brussels report, Romania along with Bulgaria were described as the two most corrupt countries in the EU.[^129]
Counties

Main article: Administrative divisions of Romania

Romania is divided into forty-one counties (județe), as well as the municipality of Bucharest (București), which is its own administrative unit. Each county is administered by a county council (consiliu județean), responsible for local affairs, as well as a prefect, who is appointed by the central government but cannot be a member of any political party.

Alongside the county structure, Romania is also divided into four NUTS-1 level divisions (Romanian:Macroregiunea) and eight development regions corresponding to NUTS-2 divisions in the European Union. These divisions have no administrative capacity and are instead used for co-ordinating regional development projects and statistical purposes. The NUTS-3 level divisions reflect Romania's administrative-territorial structure, and correspond to the 41 counties and the Bucharest municipality.

Map of the 8 development regions. The 41 local administrative units are also highlighted.

- Macroregiunea 1:
  - Nord-Vest (6 counties)
  - Centru (6 counties)
- Macroregiunea 2:
  - Nord-Est (6 counties)
  - Sud-Est (6 counties)
- Macroregiunea 3:
  - Sud-Muntenia (7 counties)
  - București-Ilfov (1 county and Bucharest)
- Macroregiunea 4:
  - Sud-Vest Oltenia (5 counties)
  - Vest (4 counties)

The country is further subdivided into 2686 communes, which are rural localities, and 265 towns. Communes and towns have their own local councils and are headed by a mayor (primar). Out of these, 103 of the larger and more urbanised towns have the status of municipality, which gives them greater administrative power over local affairs.
Foreign relations

Main article: Foreign relations of Romania

Since December 1989, Romania has pursued a policy of strengthening relations with the West in general, more specifically with the United States and the European Union. It joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on March 29, 2004, the European Union (EU) on January 1, 2007 and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in 1972, and is a member of the World Trade Organization.

The current government has stated its goal of strengthening ties with and helping other Eastern European countries (in particular Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia) with the process of integration with the West. Romania has also made clear over the past 10 years that it supports NATO and EU membership for the democratic former Soviet republics in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. In December 2005, President Traian Băsescu and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signed an agreement that would allow a U.S. military presence at several Romanian facilities primarily in the eastern part of the country.

Romania also declared its public support for Turkey, Croatia and Moldova joining the European Union. Romania shares a privileged economic relation with Turkey. Romania has developed strong relations with Hungary, with the latter playing a key role in supporting Romania's bid to join the EU.

Relations with Moldova are rather special, considering that the two countries share the same language, and a fairly common historical background. Signs in the early 1990s that Romania and Moldova might unite after both countries achieved emancipation from communist rule quickly faded when a pro-Russian government was formed in Moldova. Romania remains interested in Moldovan affairs, but the two countries have been unable even to reach agreement on a basic bilateral treaty; Romania is insistent (against determined Moldovan resistance) that such a treaty would have to refer to Romania and Moldova's 'special relationship'. For more information see Movement for unification of Romania and Moldova.
Sports

Main article: Sport in Romania

In the 1976 Summer Olympics, the gymnast Nadia Comăneci became the first gymnast ever to score a perfect "ten". She also won three gold medals, one silver and one bronze, all at the age of fifteen. Her success continued in the 1980 Summer Olympics, where she was awarded two gold medals and two silver medals.

Football (soccer) is popular in Romania, the most internationally known player being Gheorghe Hagi, who played for Steaua București (Romania), Real Madrid, FC Barcelona (Spain) and Galatasaray (Turkey), among others. In 1986, the Romanian soccer club Steaua București became the first Eastern European club ever, and only one of the two (the other being Red Star Belgrade) to win the prestigious European Champions Cup title. In 1989, it played the final again, but lost to AC Milan. Other important Romanian football clubs are Dinamo București, Rapid București, FC Progresul București, FCU Politehnica Timișoara, FC Universitatea Craiova, CFR 1907 Cluj-Napoca, FC Oțelul Galați, Sportul Studentesc, FC Farul Constanța, etc. Romanian National Football Team has taken part 7 times in the Football World Cup, and it had a very successful period through the 1990s, reaching the quarter-finals in the 1994 World Cup in USA, when the "Golden Generation" was at its best.

Ilie Năstase, the tennis player, is another internationally known Romanian sports star. He won several Grand Slam titles and dozens of other tournaments and was the first player to be ranked as number 1 by ATP from 1973 to 1974; he also was a successful doubles player. Romania has also reached the Davis Cup finals three times. Virginia Ruzici was a successful tennis player in the 1970s.

Though maybe not the force they once were, the Romanian national rugby team has so far competed at every Rugby World Cup.

Maybe slightly surprising for a country of its size, Romania has been one of the most successful countries in the history of Summer Olympic Games (15th overall) with a total of 283 medals won throughout the years, 82 of which of gold medal.
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