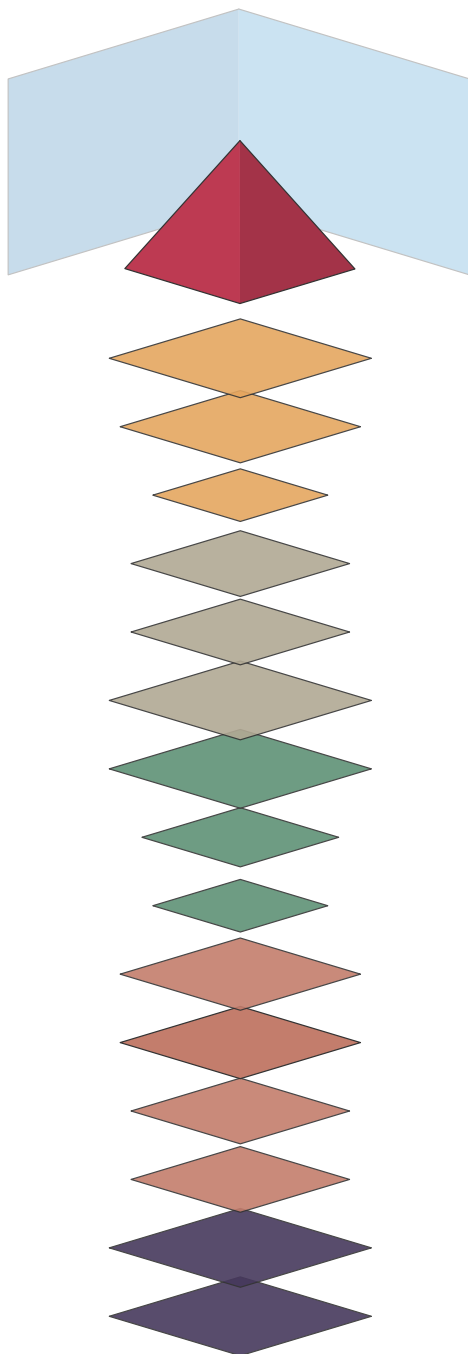




# ROMANIA



4.58

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

123<sup>rd</sup> of 193 countries

27<sup>th</sup> of 44 European countries

15<sup>th</sup> of 17 Central & Eastern European countries



## CRIMINAL MARKETS

5.27

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	5.50
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	4.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	5.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	5.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	6.00
FLORA CRIMES	6.00
FAUNA CRIMES	4.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	4.00
HEROIN TRADE	5.50
COCAINE TRADE	5.50
CANNABIS TRADE	5.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	5.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	6.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6.00



## CRIMINAL ACTORS

3.90

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	3.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	4.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	3.50



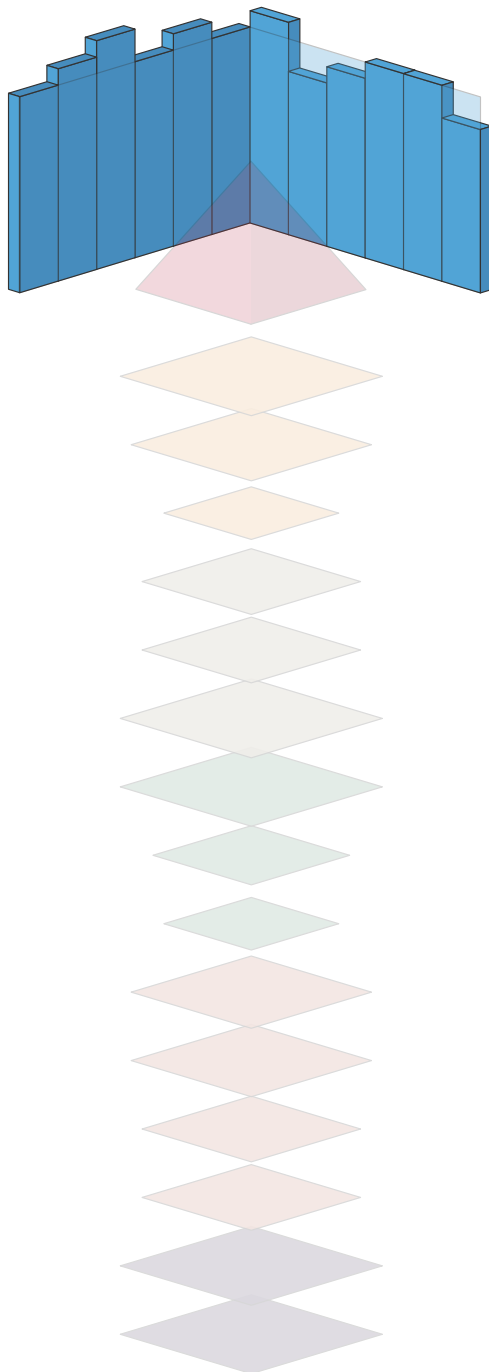
6.00

## RESILIENCE SCORE





# ROMANIA



## 6.00

### RESILIENCE SCORE

38<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries

25<sup>th</sup> of 44 European countries

3<sup>rd</sup> of 17 Central & Eastern European countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	6.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	6.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	6.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	6.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	6.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	6.00
PREVENTION	6.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	5.00



## 4.58

### CRIMINALITY SCORE



**CRIMINAL MARKETS** 5.27



**CRIMINAL ACTORS** 3.90



# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Romania is a major country of origin and destination for human trafficking and remains among the top five in the EU for the number of victims concerned. People who become involved in human trafficking rings are usually exploited in the sex industry, agriculture, construction, domestic service, hotels, or for forced begging and theft, in Romania as well as other European countries. However, in recent years, owing to efforts by the government to investigate more cases and convict more traffickers, the impact of the market has slightly decreased. Nevertheless, the involvement of complicit low-level officials in trafficking cases continues to be an issue. Furthermore, children of Romani origin continue to be vulnerable, particularly to sex trafficking, forced begging, and forced stealing. Push factors, such as extreme poverty and a lack of education in rural areas, enable human trafficking to remain among the most prolific criminal markets in Romania.

Romania is part of the Eastern European border route used by criminal networks for human smuggling. These networks smuggle migrants from Ukraine, Turkey, and Afghanistan into or through Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria or Poland. Most smugglers hail from Southern and Eastern Europe, and a large number of the trucks involved are registered in the name of Turkish companies. The western border of Romania has seen increased activity by organized crime groups intent on smuggling migrants from Asian countries, such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, to countries in Western Europe. These groups usually comprise Romanian and foreign nationals, although most facilitators of migrant smuggling by land are of Romanian nationality. The extortion and protection racketeering market in Romania is limited in scope. However, some instances of groups operating transnational businesses have been detected, as in the recent case of a criminal network, primarily composed of Romanian nationals, found to be involved in extortion targeting elderly men in Italy. Extortion in the form of blackmail targeting institutions and companies has also been reported.

### TRADE

Romania is a transit hub in Eastern Europe for illegal arms destined for the wider continent. The geographical position of the country makes it vulnerable to firearms trafficking, especially from the south and the east. Seizures usually involve low-calibre weapons such as Flobert firearms or gas pistols. Recent firearm seizures in Romania suggest an increase in trafficking activity. For the most part weapons

are sourced from Turkey. Romania is also becoming part of one of the main routes for weapons being brought in and out of Ukraine. Albanian-speaking organized crime groups, along with Balkan, Russian, Georgian, and Turkish organized crime groups, are known to have trafficked weapons into Romania. In organized crime group transactions, firearms can be exchanged for other expensive and lucrative goods such as drugs and grenade launchers.

Romania is an entry point into the EU for counterfeit goods such as automotive spare parts and accessories, toys, clothing and fashion goods, and cosmetics. Counterfeit clothes and auto products predominate in the Romanian counterfeit market, while fake luxury goods, such as watches or perfumes, are found on a lesser scale. Some counterfeit goods are also sold in Romania through resale platforms. In terms of the illicit trade of excise goods, illicit tobacco products are widespread in Romania. In fact, there is a high demand for these products, as the country has a significantly low-income population, and the price of smuggled cigarettes is up to three times cheaper than those on the legal market. That results in a significant annual loss in tax revenue. There has also been an increase in the online trade of illicit cigarettes, beginning at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the cigarettes produced in Romanian-based factories are sold to territories affected by war or civil unrest.

### ENVIRONMENT

Illegal logging continues to take place on a large scale in Romania. The Environmental Investigation Agency has stated that more than half the wood harvested in Romania each year is done so illegally. This illicit market is probably one of the most substantial in the EU, given that the country is home to one of the largest remaining forests in the region. Most of Romania's forests are in private ownership, and the involvement of private corporations in the illegal logging industry, often in collusion with organized crime groups, has been documented. Additionally, the forestry sector is plagued by corruption, with the police working with illegal loggers and rangers in a system of blind complicity.

Romania is an important destination, transit, and source country for wildlife trafficking, a situation confirmed by seizures of wildlife products by customs officials in other countries. The illegal trade in caviar and sturgeon from Romania is highly profitable. Some illegal caviar is laundered into captive bred legitimate caviar. Sturgeon poaching is facilitated by corruption, while organized crime and a lack of alternative means of income for fishing communities add to beluga sturgeon poaching. In 2021, Romania has banned the fishing and sale of wild sturgeons indefinitely to ensure their conservation and prevent their extinction.

Additionally, the illegal bird trade in Romania is significant, typically facilitated by Italian networks that hunt the birds and smuggle them into Italy.

Romania's key natural resources include petroleum, gas, coal, salt, and uranium. Although sporadic cases of fuel theft occur, there is no evidence of the widespread involvement of organized crime. Romania is potentially vulnerable to the development of shadow economies, as cases of corruption have come to light involving big gas reserves.

## DRUGS

Romania forms part of the north Balkan route that is used for heroin smuggling. Heroin is trafficked from Georgian ports on the Black Sea by ferry to Odessa, or other destinations in the EU such as Romania or Bulgaria, after which it enters the eastern branch of the main Balkan route for trafficking onward to the Netherlands and other countries in West and central Europe. High-profile criminal networks are known to establish legal logistical trade infrastructure to facilitate their large-scale drug trafficking activities, indicating criminal infiltration of legitimate business structures. A number of companies across the EU have been used to conceal these illicit activities.

Romania has also become a highway for drugs from South America. The criminal infrastructure that was developed to traffic large amounts of heroin or synthetic drugs is now also used to traffic cocaine. This infrastructure is disguised as legal in order to analyze the risk and scrutiny of authorities. Romanian citizens living in South America, as well as South Americans in Romania, create stable links for organized crime groups interested in developing new alternative routes. In recent years, Balkan criminal groups, such as Albanian, Serbo-Montenegrin and Bulgarian groups, have been increasingly involved in smuggling cocaine on maritime routes and into Black Sea ports in Bulgaria and Romania. Although the country serves as a transit hub for the cocaine trade, there is not a large domestic market; local demand is low owing to the drug's high street price.

While cannabis is imported into Romania from Spain and the Netherlands, most of the substance seized in the country is domestically produced. Cannabis is trafficked from Serbia to Romania near the Vatin/Stamora Moravita border crossing. There has been a recent upward trend in cannabis trade, and it continues to be the most commonly used drug in the country, mainly by young adults. There is an ongoing debate in Romania over the legalization of cannabis and cannabinoid substances for medical purposes. However, the government and the Ministry of Health are openly opposed to the suggestion. Moreover, the synthetic drug market in Romania is expanding. There has been an increase in the production of amphetamines and ecstasy in recent years, and a decrease in prices, although data shows that these drugs are still more expensive in Romania than in Western Europe. An increase in synthetic drug use

has been reported in locations such as university centres and the capital, Bucharest. Ecstasy (MDMA) is mainly trafficked to Romania from Germany and the Netherlands, and amphetamines from Germany, Belgium, and Bulgaria.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crime in Romania has been on the rise in recent years. The latest cyber threats faced by the country are malware distribution and ransomware attacks. Ransomware attacks tend to target a certain profile of victim in order to maximize profit. For instance, government and private sector organizations, including critical infrastructure as well as hospital services, are increasingly being targeted. Cybercrime is relatively low profile for perpetrators and results in huge gains, making it especially appealing for organized crime groups. Shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine, Romania experienced a spike in the number of cyberattacks on infrastructure.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Although Romania is not a major financial centre, it is vulnerable to financial crime. Cases of online financial fraud have been reported in the country, and the number of organized crime groups specialising in direct and complex attacks of ATM or banking systems is trending upwards. Phishing scams as well as tax evasion are also increasingly becoming prevalent in the country.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Numerous domestic organized crime groups operate within Romania, many of them increasing in hierarchical structure, specialization, and the ability to recruit highly professional members, but very few fit the definition of mafia-style groups. In the capital city, there are criminal groups, some of which exhibit mafia-style traits, that control real estate. Loose criminal networks seem to be widespread and present at the country's entry and exit points, especially along the north Balkan trafficking route, and are suspected of being involved in human smuggling and trafficking. These groups are made up of Romanian nationals, and have a hierarchical structure with clear tasks and competencies. They tend to conceal their activities behind investments in screen companies or real estate, and operate through corruption, document forgery, and money laundering. They are also known to outsource illicit operations to criminal subcontractors. The foreign diaspora is involved in facilitating human trafficking and smuggling activities in and out of Romania. Criminal networks specializing in the smuggling of migrants are extremely diverse, and typically consist of members from both source and transit countries. In addition, Balkan, Russian, Georgian, and Turkish organized crime groups have been active in Romania's arms trafficking market. A recent study also revealed the presence of Italian mafia

groups in the country. Italian mafia clans have established legitimate businesses and exercise socio-economic rather than territorial influence in Romania.

Additionally, state-embedded actors have a limited, but functional, influence on Romanian society and state structures. State-embedded actors are known to have been involved in financial crime and corrupt practices at border areas controlled by the Romanian Border Police. However, Romanian authorities have been increasing efforts to

investigate these illicit activities. Private sector actors are allegedly involved in illegal logging in the country. Although there is no indication of transnational links between private sector actors when it comes to environmental crime in Romania, the private industry operating in the forestry sector is susceptible to corruption and illicit activities. Private entities, especially in certain sectors such as real estate, are known to be used by organized crime groups to conceal their illicit activities and revenue.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Organized crime in Romania does not seem to exert power or influence on the democratic process, either at the national or local level. However, corruption within the government and political parties, proceeding from the economic and moral degradation of the state that occurred after the fall of communism, is the main issue occupying national debate. Over the years, confidence in authority has been corroded, evolving from fear during dictatorship to disrespect during the process of rebuilding the state. During the war in Ukraine, many voices have raised doubts about Romanian authorities' capacity to deal with the substantial number of refugees and to protect people from traffickers and criminal networks. That being said, the country has seen a strong improvement in its overall governance in recent years. In terms of corruption, one of the most vulnerable areas over the past year was public procurement and the country is still ranked among the most corrupt in the EU. However, while serious concerns remain, both nationally and internationally, Romania has made significant progress in this field. Recently, some major political figures were ousted from their positions following investigations that proved they had misused their power to serve their own interests. In addition, after 20 years of activity, during which time its impact has been perceived as sorely inadequate, the Anti-Corruption Directorate, the country's core institution for tackling corruption that weakens state power, has looked reinvigorated. Moreover, the Romanian government adopted a 2021–2025 National Anti-Corruption Strategy, which aims to enhance measures to combat corruption in a number of areas, particularly the health sector and environmental protection, as well as a National Strategy Against Human Trafficking for 2018–2022.

Romania has ratified several international conventions related to criminal activities. Additionally, the country has and abides by extradition treaties with both the EU and other countries. In recent years, the country has made efforts to strengthen international cooperation

in the fight against organized crime, specifically human smuggling, financial crime, and cybercrime. Romania's domestic legal framework includes legislation covering most criminal activities, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, the smuggling of migrants, arms trafficking, money laundering, tax evasion, and cyber-dependent crime. More importantly, the country has adopted the complete set of legal dispositions criminalizing the main offences derived from and related to organized crime and organized criminal activity at the national level, and continues in its law-making efforts to combat organized crime. Though a legal framework exists for each type of criminal activity related to organized crime, the impetus of political will to address challenges remains of the utmost importance.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Romania's judicial system imposes severe penalties for involvement in illicit markets, and law enforcement agencies have demonstrated success in disrupting smuggling activities. The courts dealing with organized crime contain experienced judges. Despite judicial reforms, there have been concerns raised over the independence of the Romanian judiciary and the compatibility of these reforms with EU law in recent years. Where the detention system is concerned, the European Convention on Human Rights regularly condemns the country's inadequate detention conditions and inhumane treatment of prisoners, including continuing harsh conditions and overpopulation. Pre-trial detentions are common, and their length is still well above the European average.

The responsibility for tackling organized crime lies with a range of agencies, each dedicated to a specific area. Although law enforcement officers, especially within the Border Police, are still perceived as largely inefficient and susceptible to corruption, partly due to their low salaries, among other things, there have been considerable efforts made to combat organized crime. For instance, a dedicated unit for prosecuting human trafficking crimes began its

operations in April 2021, and a growing commitment to the fight against cyber and financial crimes has been noticed, with more investigations and follow-up actions.

Romania has approximately 3,150 kilometres of borders, a sizeable area that presents a wide variety of problems related to illegal cross-border activities. Romania is an EU member state but is not part of the Schengen Area. There is also a risk associated with its borders with Ukraine and Moldova, both being fragile states with high levels of organized crime. Romania's geographical position, at the crossroads of major trade routes from Eurasia towards Western Europe, also increases its vulnerability to organized crime, especially smuggling. Where cybercrime is concerned, the Romanian government has made efforts to improve its infrastructure and resilience to infiltration. The CyberEast project, funded by the EU and the Council of Europe and implemented by the latter through its Cybercrime Programme Office, based in the Romanian capital of Bucharest, aims to strengthen the cyber resilience of countries in the Eastern Partnership region.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Although Romania has made efforts to increase its resilience to money laundering and terrorist financing, certain gaps remain in its AML/CFT regulations. With the support of the European Commission, Romania has been conducting a money laundering and terrorist financing national risk assessment. However, taking into consideration the large amount of money obtained by organized crime groups through criminal activity, the number of money laundering cases is estimated to be much higher than those recorded. Recently, the European Commission initiated an infringement procedure against Romania for incorrectly implementing its Fourth AML Directive, emphasizing that the country failed to address the proper exchange of information with financial intelligence units, the requirements of customer due diligence, and the transparency of the beneficial ownership registers.

Romania's position at the edge of the EU makes it a target for illicit financial flows. When added to possible VAT fraud (specifically missing trader intra-community fraud) and other emerging financial crimes, the country's treasury suffers serious losses. Furthermore, the cash-intensive nature of Romania's economy facilitates the injection of illicit proceeds and the purchase of goods and services for money laundering purposes. Romania has, however, limited the permitted number of cash payments made or received by professional entities, with the introduction of a threshold on business-to-business transactions. Favourable investor residency and citizenship schemes, so called 'golden visas', also increase the attraction for criminals from developing countries keen to inject illicit money into the economy.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victims of crime in Romania are entitled to free legal aid, financial compensation from the state, and the right to protection, including physical protection. Victims who provide decisive information for the identification and conviction of perpetrators may also be entered into the country's witness protection programme. Social service providers in the public or private sectors, or both in partnership, assist victims by providing information and social counselling, accommodation in shelters administered by NGOs or the state, support for basic needs, healthcare, psychological and professional counselling, judicial assistance, and financial and material assistance. Overall, although several shortcomings exist within the system, there is a robust framework in place to support vulnerable people who have been victim to various types of crime in Romania. Among the gaps, there appears to be a lack of adequate protection of child victims of trafficking, especially poor specialized training in psychological trauma, and insufficient measures in place to ensure the right to the protection of personal data for victims of organized crime. Moreover, according to certain NGOs, authorities continue to fine or charge people involved in commercial sex without screening for trafficking indicators. Despite that, the country has consistently demonstrated overall increasing efforts, even considering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity. These efforts included investigating more trafficking cases, prosecuting and convicting more traffickers, and implementing a pilot program that authorized funding at the local level to an NGO for victim services. Romania has also taken steps to enhance the protection of whistleblowers over the past year.

The country's preventive approach aims to raise public awareness and reduce demand, as well as to reduce the vulnerability of target groups, enhance their capacity to protect themselves and promote relevant hotlines through which people can report their suspicions and/or receive support. The state often implements its preventive activities in partnership with the private sector and civil society organizations. A number of civil society organizations are involved in tackling organized crime, including human trafficking as well as flora and fauna crimes, and assisting victims. However, their effectiveness is diminished by three factors: the lack of freedom to operate, an inability to sustain themselves financially, and frequent attacks on their public image. Even though they are free to operate without major formal restrictions, civil society organizations are often intimidated by politicians and other actors, and also suffer from funding shortages. NGOs have hardly any access to EU structural funds, primarily owing to poor fund management by the government. Press freedom is characterized by growing political censorship as well as an increase in self-censorship, and there is little government consideration for journalists and the media. The media is

often denounced as a propaganda tool, media ownership information is hidden from the public, and funding mechanisms are often corrupt. Assaults on journalists, forest rangers, and environmental activists have become a systematic problem in Romania in recent years.

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