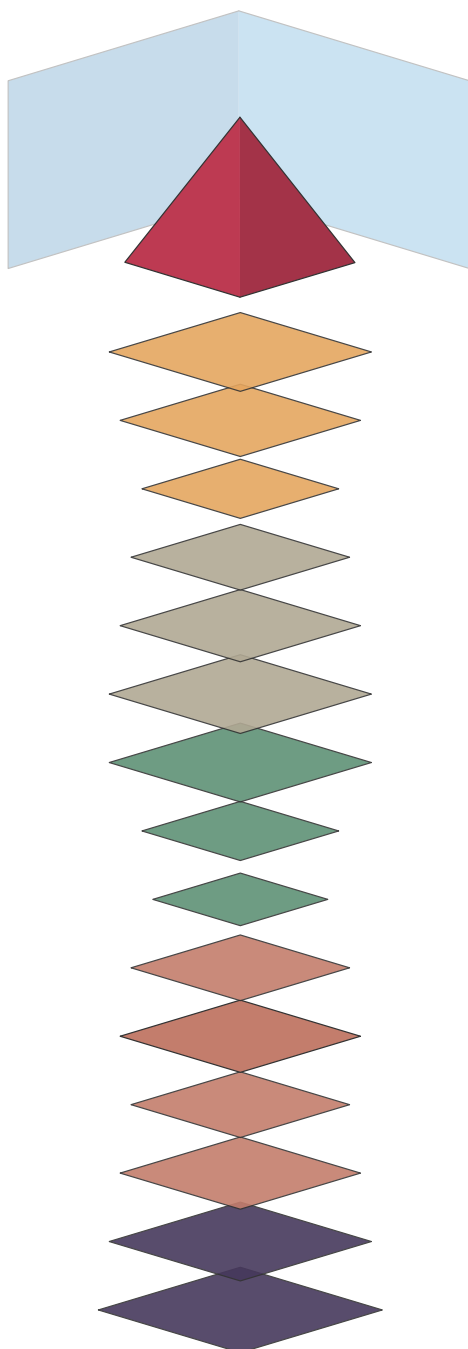


ROMANIA

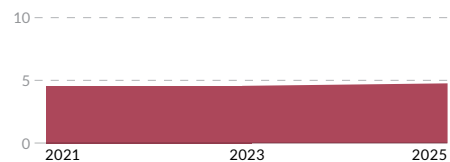


4.83 $\nearrow 0.25$ CRIMINALITY SCORE

113th of 193 countries $\nearrow 10$

22nd of 44 European countries $\nearrow 5$

12th of 17 Central and Eastern European countries $\nearrow 3$



CRIMINAL MARKETS **5.37** $\nearrow 0.10$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.00	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	5.50	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	4.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
ARMS TRAFFICKING	5.00	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	5.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	6.00	0.00
FLORA CRIMES	6.00	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	4.50	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	4.00	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	5.00	$\searrow 0.50$
COCAINE TRADE	5.50	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	5.00	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	5.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	6.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6.50	$\nearrow 0.50$



CRIMINAL ACTORS **4.30** $\nearrow 0.40$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.50	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	4.50	$\nearrow 1.00$
FOREIGN ACTORS	4.00	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	4.00	$\nearrow 0.50$



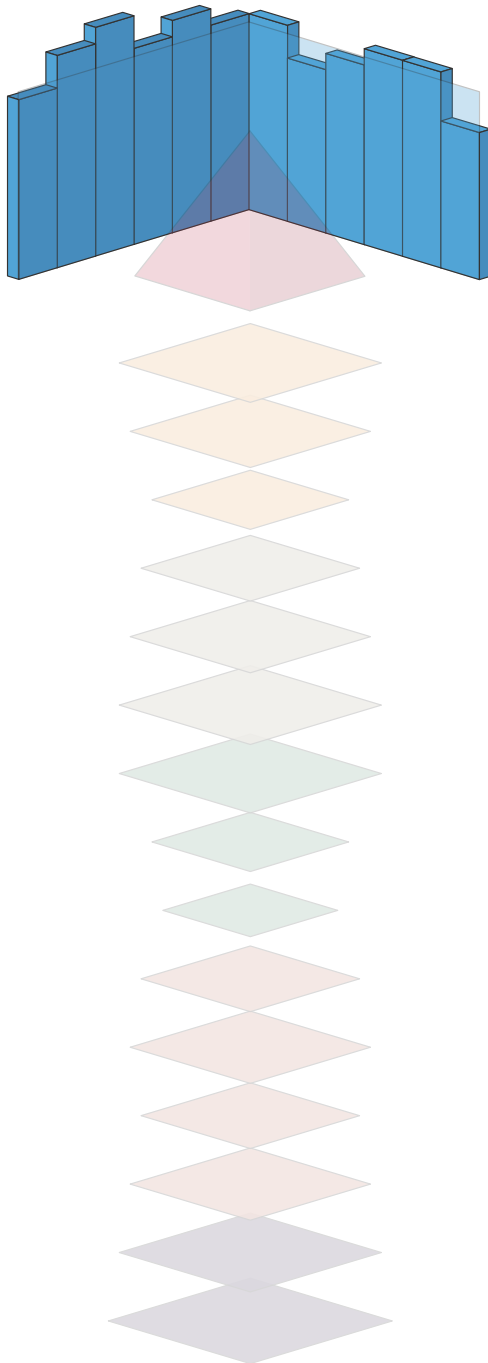
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Funded by
the European Union

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ROMANIA

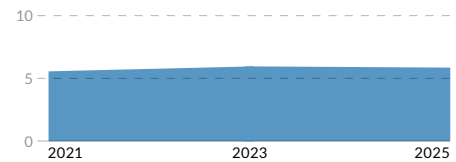


5.88 ↘0.13 RESILIENCE SCORE

39th of 193 countries ↘1

27th of 44 European countries ↘2

5th of 17 Central and Eastern European countries ↘2



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	5.50	↘0.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	6.50	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.00	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.00	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	6.50	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	6.00	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	6.00	↘0.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.00	0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.50	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	6.00	0.00
PREVENTION	6.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	4.50	↘0.50



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Romania remains a major source country for human trafficking victims across Europe, with sexual exploitation as the predominant form, followed by labour exploitation and forced begging. Reports indicate that a substantial proportion of sexual exploitation victims in Europe are Romanian, highlighting the scale of the issue. Victims are predominantly women and young girls from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, who are recruited through deceptive job offers, the 'Loveboy' method or coercion. Men are mainly subjected to forced labour in industries such as construction and agriculture. Traffickers increasingly utilize the internet to recruit victims, employ specialized personnel for managing advertisements and customer interactions. Additionally, former convicted traffickers often reinvest their illicit profits into real estate and reorganize their operations. Law enforcement crackdowns have led to large-scale arrests, though corruption within police forces and among local officials continues to hinder effective prosecution.

Romania is a transit country for human smuggling, with migrants from Asia, Latin America and Africa attempting to reach Western Europe through its territory. Criminal networks facilitate these movements by providing illegal transportation, often utilizing hidden compartments in trucks or perilous routes across rivers. Although authorities have increased border surveillance, corruption among immigration officials continues to facilitate unauthorized entries. Recent investigations have uncovered extensive smuggling networks linked to former officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, revealing how fraudulent work permits are issued to extend the stays of migrants. Law enforcement agencies have dismantled smuggling rings that transported individuals through boats and cars, generating millions in illicit profits. Despite these crackdowns, the low number of prosecutions remains a challenge.

Extortion and protection racketeering are prevalent in Romania, involving both criminal gangs and white-collar networks. Organized groups employ violence, threats and usury, while corrupt officials facilitate financial extortion schemes aimed at businesses. In urban areas, hospitality businesses are particularly vulnerable, often coerced into paying 'protection fees' to evade legal repercussions. Rural communities also endure similar challenges, with criminal groups using intimidation tactics to take over properties or agricultural land. Victims frequently comply out of fear, and cases are rarely reported due to the deep entrenchment of these networks.

TRADE

Romania serves as a transit hub for arms trafficking, with weapons smuggled from Türkiye and Eastern Europe into Western markets. Reports indicate that criminal networks operate across borders, using concealed compartments and bribery to facilitate movement through Romanian ports and border crossings. Although law enforcement has seized significant quantities of illegal firearms, widespread corruption among border officials enables traffickers to continue their operations. Blank-firing pistols, which can be easily modified into lethal weapons, remain in high demand among organized crime groups.

The counterfeit goods market in Romania is well established, with criminal networks smuggling counterfeit clothing, electronics and pharmaceuticals from China and Türkiye. The Port of Constanța serves as a major entry point, where corrupt customs officials facilitate illicit shipments. Counterfeit luxury goods are widely available in local markets and online, driven by consumer demand for low prices. Recent law enforcement operations have resulted in significant seizures, including millions of euros' worth of counterfeit designer apparel and perfumes. Illegally produced tobacco products and alcoholic beverages are also widespread in the country, posing significant risks to public health. However, high levels of corruption and the profitability of this trade continue to sustain the market.

Illicit trade in excise consumer goods, particularly tobacco, is a lucrative market for organized crime in Romania. The country has one of the highest rates of contraband cigarette consumption in the EU, with smuggling routes originating from neighbouring Moldova, Ukraine and Bulgaria. Reports indicate that organized crime groups operate with the protection of political figures and law enforcement, ensuring minimal disruption to their activities. Record seizures in recent years highlight the scale of operations, but prosecutions remain low. Alcohol smuggling is another concern, with illicit production and tax evasion schemes further fuelling the underground market.

ENVIRONMENT

Illegal logging is one of the most pressing environmental crimes in Romania. Corrupt officials and criminal networks exploit regulatory loopholes to facilitate timber smuggling, often laundering illicitly sourced wood through the use of fake documentation. Bribes are commonly used to ensure minimal oversight, allowing illicitly sourced timber to be laundered through counterfeit documentation and shell companies. High-profile cases have implicated major timber companies in illegal deforestation, with bribes ensuring

minimal oversight. The destruction of Romania's forests has severe ecological consequences, including habitat loss for wildlife and increased soil erosion.

Fauna crimes, particularly poaching and illegal fishing, are persistent issues. The illegal caviar trade, driven by the poaching of wild sturgeon in the Danube for export worldwide, remains a significant threat to biodiversity. Despite a fishing ban, the demand for black-market caviar continues to incentivize poaching. Law enforcement agencies have seized large quantities of illegally caught fish; however, lenient penalties and corruption undermine their enforcement efforts.

Romania also plays a role in non-renewable resource crimes, particularly in the smuggling of petroleum products and coal. Recent investigations have uncovered large-scale fuel tax evasion schemes, with criminal groups operating illegal refineries and storage facilities. Additionally, the exploitation of coal mines without proper permits has also been reported, highlighting regulatory weaknesses.

DRUGS

Romania is a key transit country for heroin smuggling along the Balkan route. Heroin originating from Afghanistan is trafficked through Romania to Central and Western Europe. Criminal networks, including foreign actors, remain actively involved, using both overland and maritime routes through the Black Sea to transport shipments. Heroin flows originating from Afghanistan and Iran that transit through Romanian ports usually do not adhere to pre-determined paths; instead, they often mutate and split into sub-flows.

The country serves as a transit hub for cocaine smuggling, with the Port of Constanța playing a central role. Criminal organizations employ concealment methods, such as camouflaging cocaine within food shipments. A recent crackdown dismantled a sophisticated network that was smuggling large quantities of cocaine into Romania for distribution throughout Europe. Cocaine consumption is on the rise, particularly among young people, as organized crime groups increasingly target urban areas.

Cannabis remains the most widely used drug in Romania, with both domestic production and imports from Albania, Spain and the Netherlands. Authorities have discovered large-scale cultivation sites, often concealed within agricultural fields. Recent cases also indicate that cannabis sometimes being replaced by synthetic cannabinoids, which further complicates enforcement efforts.

Synthetic drugs, including MDMA and methamphetamine, primarily originating from the Netherlands and Belgium, are increasingly trafficked through Romania. Criminal networks operate sophisticated supply chains, utilizing dark web marketplaces and courier services to distribute these synthetic substances. Recent operations have uncovered large-scale

synthetic drug trafficking networks, resulting in seizures of ecstasy, amphetamines and fentanyl-laced substances.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Romania has experienced a surge in cyber-dependent crimes, including DDoS attacks, ransomware incidents and hacking activities causing both public and private institutions, as well as political figures, thousands of dollars' worth of financial losses. These offences are perpetrated by a mix of foreign actors and well-organized Romanian cybercrime groups that exploit security vulnerabilities to execute data breaches and ransomware schemes.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crime remains a persistent challenge in Romania, characterized by sophisticated schemes and the growing use of technology. Large-scale tax evasion, VAT fraud and the embezzlement of EU funds remain prevalent, often facilitated by organized crime groups with strong ties to political and public institutions. These transnational offences frequently involve collusion among criminal networks, corrupt officials and private-sector actors. Cyber-enabled financial crimes are particularly prevalent, with Romanian organized crime groups recognized for their expertise in ATM and point-of-sale skimming. Phishing and spear-phishing attacks are common, along with other methods such as Remote Desktop Protocol exploitation, integration into bot networks and credential theft, including banking information. Spoofing, where fraudulent SMS messages or emails impersonate trusted entities to solicit sensitive information, also remains a prevalent tactic.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Mafia-style groups, commonly referred to as 'Clanuri Interlope' or 'Brigazi,' exert some influence over Romania's criminal landscape. These groups, often comprising moderate to large memberships, have expanded their operations across the EU, particularly in Italy, Spain and the UK. Domestically, they maintain control over various cities and districts, operating under a hierarchical structure. While inter-group rivalries are prevalent, strategic alliances may form when advantageous. Although these groups use firearms selectively, their operations frequently involve violent crimes such as kidnappings, extortion, contract killings and targeted assaults. Mafia groups in Romania have been linked to real estate corruption, voter mobilization for local politicians and collusion with law enforcement, thereby ensuring their continued influence over legal and political structures.

Romania is home to a variety of loosely organized but highly active criminal networks, particularly along the northern Balkan trafficking route. These groups, primarily composed of Romanian nationals, engage in human smuggling,

document forgery and money laundering, while concealing their activities behind investments in shell companies and real estate. Criminal subcontractors are often employed to handle illicit operations, allowing for greater flexibility and enhancing their ability to evade detection by law enforcement.

State-embedded actors play a significant role in organized crime in Romania, facilitating corruption that allows criminal groups to operate with impunity. Investigations have revealed instances where high-ranking officials obstruct law enforcement efforts, as seen in cases involving the General Directorate for Internal Security. Corrupt officials have been implicated in awarding public contracts to businesses with ties to organized crime, thereby bypassing established legal regulations. The customs sector, judiciary and procurement processes are particularly vulnerable to corruption, enabling organized crime to evade regulatory oversight. While the extent of intelligence agency involvement remains unclear, there is evidence suggesting that certain elements within the state apparatus engage in criminal activities.

Foreign criminal groups operate within Romania, contributing to both human smuggling and trafficking networks. Chinese criminal groups have been implicated in high-profile exploitation cases, such as the 'Shanghai dossier,' which involved the trafficking of underage girls. Reports indicate that law enforcement has failed to take action against key perpetrators, raising concerns about the systemic

protection of such networks. Additionally, Turkish, Ukrainian and Western Asian criminal groups are active in Romania, capitalizing on the country's strategic location. Italian mafia groups, including the 'Ndrangheta, Camorra and Cosa Nostra, engage in money laundering, environmental crimes and cyber fraud. However, their influence in Romania is less pronounced compared to other Eastern European nations, as their operations focus more on financial crime than on territorial control.

Private-sector actors play a crucial role in facilitating organized crime in Romania, particularly within the real estate and financial services sectors. Reports have linked Romanian businesses and individuals to financial misconduct, including those implicated in the Panama Papers. The 'timber mafia' remains one of the most influential criminal enterprises in the country. Organized groups exploit weaknesses in the national tracking system to circumvent regulations, contributing to large-scale environmental crimes. Additionally, ties between officials and the timber industry enable illegal deforestation to persist despite official efforts to curb the practice. Real estate corruption is another significant issue, with criminal groups utilizing fraudulent construction permits and illicit land acquisitions to accumulate wealth. These cases highlight the deep entrenchment of business entities in Romania's organized crime landscape.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Romania's government acknowledges the existence of organized crime, but efforts to combat it remain inconsistent. The Ministry of Justice has issued guidelines aimed at intensifying the fight against organized crime, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs has announced plans to strengthen cooperation with Italy on this issue. However, a lack of coordinated responses, coupled with persistent corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies, undermines these efforts. The public remains largely distrustful of the government, with surveys indicating low levels of confidence in political institutions. Corruption is particularly evident in sectors such as healthcare, where funds intended for infrastructure improvements are often misappropriated by companies with political connections.

The National Anticorruption Directorate plays a crucial role in combating corruption, having successfully prosecuted high-level officials, including members of parliament, mayors and judges. Despite these efforts, high-profile corruption cases

continue to surface, and concerns regarding transparency and accountability persist. The National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2021–2025 aims to enhance legal enforcement; however, gaps in addressing conflicts of interest and enforcing accountability persist as significant challenges.

Romania is actively engaged in international cooperation to combat organized crime, participating in extradition agreements and utilising the European arrest warrants. However, it lacks treaties with certain jurisdictions, which limits its ability to secure the return of fugitives. The country is a founding member of INTERPOL and has a long history of engaging in international police cooperation. Nevertheless, recent cases of failed extradition requests highlight existing limitations.

National policies and laws have been amended to increase penalties for human trafficking offences, particularly those involving child victims. However, inconsistencies in legal definitions between trafficking and related crimes, such as pimping, have resulted in the misclassification

of cases. Additionally, recent legal amendments that decriminalize tax evasion under certain conditions have raised concerns about potential loopholes that could be exploited. Furthermore, Romania also lacks comprehensive legislation addressing wildlife crime, with penalties often limited to illegal possession rather than trafficking offences.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Romania's judicial system is hierarchical; however, it faces challenges such as understaffing, slow case processing and bureaucratic inefficiencies. While specialized courts and prosecutors are designated to handle organized crime cases, heavy caseloads and administrative hurdles often result in significant delays. The Council of Europe has criticized Romania's detention facilities for issues such as overcrowding, poor conditions and inadequate prisoner welfare. While some lower-security prisons offer work programs, systemic problems persist within the broader penitentiary system. Law enforcement is organized into specialized units, such as the Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism and the General Directorate for Countering Organized Crime. These agencies focus on combating human trafficking, drug trafficking and cybercrime. However, reports indicate that corruption within law enforcement continues to be an obstacle, with allegations of police complicity in trafficking cases and misconduct. Instances of police brutality and negligence have also been reported, leading to ongoing investigations into abuses within law enforcement. Furthermore, the early retirement policy for law enforcement officials resulted in a wave of retirements, contributing to significant staffing shortages within the force. The Border Police and cybersecurity agencies are responsible for overseeing Romania's territorial integrity. Despite advancements in cyber defence strategies, vulnerabilities persist, and the country continues to encounter challenges in preventing illegal border crossings. Reports indicate that corruption within border agencies has allowed smuggling networks to operate with impunity, resulting in the arrest of multiple border officers on bribery charges. Furthermore, key drug entry points for both the country and the EU – such as the Port of Constanța – lack effective and up-to-date surveillance systems, limiting their ability to address the growing volume of drug trafficking through these gateways. Although efforts to modernize border surveillance systems are underway, enforcement gaps persist.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Romania's anti-money laundering framework has been strengthened through legal and institutional measures; however, enforcement remains inconsistent. Although authorities have enhanced their capacity to freeze and seize criminal assets, prosecutions related to money laundering remain limited. Investigations primarily concentrate on predicate offences such as corruption and tax evasion, rather

than specifically targeting the laundering of proceeds from human and drug trafficking. The Financial Action Task Force and other oversight bodies have urged Romania to enhance its financial investigations and improve the monitoring of illicit financial flows. Additionally, cryptocurrencies remain largely unregulated, with few cases involving virtual assets being prosecuted, despite their increasing use in illegal transactions.

Economic regulatory capacity has been strengthened through the adoption of EU-aligned financial standards. However, corruption remains a significant concern, particularly regarding land and property rights, where local authorities have been accused of enabling illegal deforestation for financial gain. Multiple high-profile scandals have plagued the financial sector, raising concerns about the effectiveness of regulatory oversight. Tax evasion continues to lead to significant revenue losses, with ongoing efforts to modernize the fiscal administration agency's IT infrastructure making slow progress.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victim and witness support services in Romania are present, with reports indicating an increase in the protection for victims testifying in organized crime cases. The European Court of Human Rights has criticized Romania for its failure to protect child victims of sexual abuse. Although emergency voucher systems and victim assistance programs have been introduced, their availability remains limited. Human trafficking victims receive inconsistent support, and drug rehabilitation services are severely lacking, with few state-funded treatment facilities.

Prevention efforts in the country include national anti-trafficking awareness campaigns, though the messaging tends to be punitive rather than supportive. Police have increasingly conducted awareness programs on organized crime and related offenses in schools and universities. However, prevention remains fragmented and lacks coordination across institutions. Recent campaigns have focused more on vulnerable communities, yet significant challenges persist, including limited resources, weak enforcement, insufficient support for vulnerable groups and inadequate data to evaluate impact. While some initiatives aim to deter drug use, they offer little focus on harm reduction or rehabilitation.

Investigative journalism is vital for exposing corruption and organized crime, yet journalists frequently encounter legal harassment and intimidation. Civil society organizations function in a restrictive environment, with many NGOs struggling to secure funding and facing pressure from authorities. The media landscape in Romania is shaped by political and economic pressures, with journalists investigating corruption and organized crime frequently facing defamation lawsuits and physical threats. Instances of intimidation against journalists highlight the risks encountered by independent media. Although legal protections for press freedom are

in place, their enforcement is inconsistent, resulting in self-censorship and a decline in investigative reporting. Despite these challenges, Romania boasts a robust network of investigative journalists and civil society organizations dedicated to transparency and anti-corruption initiatives.

This summary was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.