



ROMANIA

EU MEMBER SINCE 2007

OTHER MEMBERSHIPS NATO, Bologna Process

CURRENCY Leu (RON)

CAPITAL Bucharest

AREA 238,391 sq km

POPULATION 21,790,479 (July 2013 est.)

LANGUAGE Romanian

RELIGION Eastern Orthodox (including all sub-denominations) 86.8%, Protestant (various denominations including Reformed and Pentecostal) 7.5%, Roman Catholic 4.7%, other (mostly Muslim) and unspecified 0.9%, none 0.1% (2002 census)

GDP \$ 8,874 (2011)

GNI \$ 15,780 (2011)

SGI N/A

CPI 44 out of 100 (2012)

ARCHITECTURE Brancovenesc style; Constantin Brancusi, Ion Berindey

LITERATURE Mihai Eminescu, Ion Creanga, Ion Luca Caragiale, Liviu rebreanu, Camil Petrescu, Tudor Arghezi, Marin Preda, Mircea Eliade

MUSIC Doina, Romante, Romanian Folk, Taraf, Manele, Romanian House Music; George Enescu, Dinu Lipatti, Maria Tanase, Gheorghe Zamfir, Dan Spataru, Taraful de Haidouks, Mahala Rai Banda, Inna, Edward Maya and Vika Jigulina, O-zone

PAINTING Corneliu Baba, Nicolae Tonitza, Stefan Luchian

PHILOSOPHY Tristan Tzara, Nae Ionescu, Eugen Ionescu, Constantin Noica, Emil Cioran

CUISINE Sarmale (Stuffed Cabbage), Mititei (Skinless Sausages), Ciorba de burta (Tripe Soup), Mamaliga (Corn Meal), Saramura de peste (Pickled Fish), Muraturi (Various Pickled Vegetables), Salata de vinete (Eggplant Spread), Zacusca (Vegetable Spread), Bors (Sour Soup), Bulz (Corn meal with egg and cheese pocket inside), Cozonac (Sweet Bread). **Delicacies:** Toba, Muschiulet Montana Afumat (Smoked Sirloin), Creier Pane (Fried Brain)

DRINKS Tuica, Feteasca and Tamaioasa wines, Beer

CONSUMPTION 15.30 equivalent liters of pure ethyl alcohol per capita per year (WHO, 2005)

SPORTS Soccer (Gica Hagi), Gymnastics (Nadia Comaneci), Oina

Bogdan Scurtu *On Romania*

1 May 2013

Romania's official country brand is [Land of choice](#), and tourism videos don't even have to mention the country's most known host and ambassador, count Dracula.

Inhabiting a country with [breathtaking landscapes](#), Romanians are optimistic people, always ready to poke fun at their own misfortunes, including [death](#). They are hospitable and convinced foodies, favoring "slow food" regional cuisines. As a stereotype, Romanian men are said to be good at talking about three things: women, sports, and politics (with an emphasis on "talking"), and have mastered the ancient stress management technique of wasting time called *frecatul mentei*, literally translated as "mint rubbing."



The Parliament in Bucharest © EU 2013

Recent History

Romania is a relatively new state in Europe, composed of three major provinces with different historical trajectories and culture. The Southern principality of Wallachia was under Ottoman rule, while the North Eastern province of Moldavia took turns between independence, Ottoman, Polish, and Russian dominance. The two provinces merged in 1859, fueled by the romantic nationalistic discourse of the 1848 revolutions.

Ardeal, better known in the West as “Transylvania,” was a multiethnic province inhabited by Germans, Hungarians, and Romanians. It was part of the Hungarian Kingdom and the Austro-Hungarian Empire later, with short periods of “servitude” to the Ottoman Empire. Contrary to the images created by the Dracula myth, Transylvania was urbanized more than a thousand years ago with large German-style cities or “burgs” and took part in Europe’s industrialization and modernization. The province was added to Romania in 1918, in the aftermath of WWI.

Romania became one of Europe’s poorest countries during communist rule, which was “sponsored” by the Soviet Union between 1948 and 1989. The last communist dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu was shot in December 1989 after a popular uprising that resulted in over a thousand deaths. Contrary to what one would expect, another Russian-friendly communist, Ion Iliescu, seized power after 1989. With the help of illiterate miners, he brutally squashed an occupy-style movement led by students and intelligentsia in 1990 who wanted to rid the country of neo-communism. [Estimates](#) of deaths range from 6 to 100.

Two years ago, in 2011, the government issued a [public call](#) for foreign managers (perceived as less corruptible) to run some of the public administration agencies. This is nothing new, Byzantine political practices have previously called for new blood (the plot thickens, Bram Stoker!). In 1866, exasperated by the corruption of the domestic political class, the Romanian intelligentsia invited a Western prince, Carol von Hohenzollern to rule the newly formed Romanian state (1859).

Corruption and Iliescu’s squashing of the occupy movement caused an estimated 12 million Romanians out of 21 to leave the country after 1990. In a [2012 survey](#), the political class scored a ten percent public trust score.

The EU Connection

The country joined the European Union in 2007 with virtually no inside opposition, the Romanian parliament voting 434 to zero in favor of European integration. All political parties supported the EU membership, differing only on the methods used to achieve that. Last minute concerns from the EU almost blocked the country’s accession due to corruption concerns. A weak justice system and [corruption](#) are still worrisome for the European Commission. EU Energy Commissioner [Guenter Oettinger](#) said in May 2013, Romania “fundamentally, [is] almost impossible to govern” along with Bulgaria and Italy.

Cultural Traits

Byzantine Orthodox mysticism and Middle Eastern Ottoman elements combined with Western idioms (particularly German) to shape Romania’s music, architecture, cuisine, and other cultural forms.

“High Art” musicians such as George Enescu and Paul Constantinescu got their inspiration from the country’s folklore. Famed conductor of Berlin and München Philharmonics, Sergiu Celibidache, was influenced by Zen Buddhism. Sculptor Constantin Brancusi got his inspiration from Romanian folklore and mythology, as well as Taoism, Tibetan Buddhism, and African Art.

Popular music of the communist era included official [San-Remo](#) style *muzica usoara* (light music) sang by [Dan Spataru](#),

[Mirabela Dauer](#) and others, as well as banned ethno rock-and-roll bands such as [Phoenix](#). Post-1990 popular music included the controversial Turkish derived *manele* genre sang by superstar [Adrian Copilul Minune](#) (Adrian, the wonder child), “Gipsy” folk bands such as [Taraful de Haidouks](#) and ethno-pop artists such as [Loredana](#) or [Radio 21](#). Recently, Romanian house music has found new fame across the world with bands such as [O-Zone](#), [Edward Maya](#), and [Inna](#).

Just like the rest of Europe, soccer is the king of sports with superstars such Gheorge Hagi and Adrian Mutu. Gymnastics is also popular; and [Nadia Comeneci](#) showed that perfection was possible in Olympic gymnastics.

Food and Wine

Traditional cuisine includes a variety of *ciorbe* (soups) that are typically sour, with the tripe soup being among the favorites. Cold cuts are based on pork and include *toba* (thick sausage with pork jelly), *slanina* (smoked bacon), and other sausages, such as *Salam de Sibiu* (also known as Hungarian Salami). *Mamaliga* (corn meal) accompanies main courses such as *ciulama* (mushroom or other meats stew) or *sarmale* (stuffed pickled cabbage). *Salata de vinete* (eggplant spread), *icre* (caviar spread), *salata de boeuff* (diced vegetables with mayonnaise) and *zacusca* (vegetable spread) are popular aperitifs. *Mititei* (skinless sausages) accompany beer at barbecues and beer festivals. Desserts include *papanasi* (sweet cheese balls), *cozonaci* (sweet bread), and *lapte de pasare* (literally meaning “bird’s milk”) among others.

Romanian wines are on the sweet side, beer is very popular, and hard liquors include fruit made *rachiu*, *tuica* and *palinka*. Drinks such as *afinata* and *zmeurata* are delicious sweet liquors made with berries.

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