

The State of the World's Human Rights; Romania 2023

Background

Numerous protests took place in 2023 concerning, for example, young people's right to access inclusive education without discrimination or censorship, attempts to restrict the right to protest, women's rights, teachers' low salaries, underfunding of education, and the need to tackle the climate emergency by phasing out fossil fuels. No major incidents were reported during the protests.

Romania's record on implementing judgments by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) remained the poorest in the EU, according to the European Implementation Network and Democracy Reporting International.

Discrimination

Police violence against Roma remained prevalent and procedures to investigate it were inadequate. In March, a court upheld a complaint by two Roma men tortured by police in 2021 in the city of Tulcea. In August, the relatives of a young man who died in police custody in the city of Arad filed a criminal complaint against the Romanian police with the support of NGOs. The case remained pending at the end of the year.

In August, a pregnant, deaf Roma woman was treated in a discriminatory and negligent manner after being denied medical care at a hospital in the town of Urziceni due to a lack of appropriate facilities. As a result, she had to give birth on the pavement outside. A criminal complaint was filed against the hospital and a petition alleging multiple discrimination was submitted to the National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD). The Ministry of Health condemned the incident and launched an investigation.

In August, the CNCD found that a school in the county of Vâlcea had indirectly discriminated against Roma pupils by creating separate classes based on ethnicity and residence criteria. As a result, the school was fined and given a six-month deadline to remedy the situation.

In September, the Council of Europe criticized Romania's failure to effectively protect Roma from discrimination. It deplored the prevalence of anti-Roma hate speech from politicians. It also noted little tangible progress in overcoming segregation in education and housing or in reducing the gap between Roma and the rest of the population in access to healthcare, clean water and sanitation.

LGBTI people's rights

In May, the ECtHR ruled in the case of *Buhuceanu and others v. Romania* that same-sex families needed some form of legal recognition to enable them to access equal rights.

Following the judgment, civil society organizations urged the government to adopt adequate instruments of protection and legal recognition for all families, including LGBTI-parent families. At the end of the year, however, same-sex marriage and partnership remained unrecognized.

Freedom of expression and assembly

In May, parliament adopted a legislative proposal increasing criminal penalties for acts of “outrage” against public officials and “disturbing of public order and peace”, among other offences. These criminal offences lacked legal clarity and disproportionately restricted the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Around 50 NGOs had raised concerns in an open letter when the proposal was introduced in February. The President promulgated the law in July.

Gender-based violence

Law enforcement agencies registered an increase in reported incidents of domestic violence compared with 2022.

In February, an NGO national study found that respondents increasingly disapproved of violence against women compared with 20 years before. However, one in four accepted that a woman could not go out without her male partner and 23% that he could forbid her choice of friends. Some 19% of respondents found it “not at all or slightly serious” if a woman was raped after agreeing to visit a man’s house. Women did not report violent incidents out of fear for themselves or their children, a distrust of the authorities, a lack of alternative accommodation options and feelings of shame.

Right to a healthy environment

According to a Eurostat report in January, Romania continued to rely on fossil fuels, including coal, for 72% of its energy supply. In April, a consultation started on the country’s Long-Term Strategy to achieve the decarbonization of the economy by 2050. NGOs criticized shortcomings in the implementation of Romania’s commitments to decarbonization. They also denounced projects including deforestation to enable mining works and offshore gas exploitation around the Black Sea coast.