



Freedom of the Press 2013 - Romania

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2013 Scores

Press Status: Partly Free

Press Freedom Score: 42

Legal Environment: 12

Political Environment: 16

Economic Environment: 14

Press freedom is protected by the constitution but weakened in practice by financial insecurity and overriding political and business interests. A series of political crises during 2012 placed additional pressures on journalists and media outlets. After a lengthy period of legal ambiguity, libel was effectively decriminalized by a 2010 Supreme Court ruling. No major civil cases were reported in 2012. Journalists use Romania's freedom of information law with decreasing frequency as cash-strapped outlets' commitment to investigative journalism dwindles, and officials sometimes obstruct access to information on corruption or other sensitive topics. Appointments to the National Audiovisual Council (CNA) are politicized, and its capacity is inadequate, resulting in biased decision-making and ineffective regulation. The current council is seen as leaning toward the center-right opposition Democratic Liberal Party (PDL) and President Traian Băsescu. An emergency decree by the government two weeks before the December 2012 elections hampered the CNA's ability to punish media violations, suspending its rulings until they could be confirmed by the courts.

The public television broadcaster, Televiziunea Română (TVR), continued to suffer from political contestation and financial trouble in 2012. In May, shortly after a PDL-led government collapsed and Victor Ponta of the Social Liberal Union (USL) was named prime minister, a USL-backed TVR board member led a vote to fire the station's editorial director, Dan Radu. Parliament approved a new board in June that did not include any representatives of the PDL; journalist Claudiu Săftoiu, a former intelligence chief, was appointed to lead the station. The National Liberal Party, part of the USL coalition, had nominated him for the post. TVR was deep in debt and announced plans in August to fire nearly a third of its staff, raising concerns about politicized dismissals.

The private media sector is dominated by powerful Romanian businessmen with political interests and holdings in other industries. Most major outlets display a strong bias toward one of the country's main political blocs. During July and August 2012, as Ponta and the USL sought unsuccessfully to oust Băsescu in a contentious impeachment referendum, government officials

and their media allies publicly smeared a number of journalists who worked for foreign outlets. The correspondents, who included both foreign citizens and Romanians, were accused of spreading negative misinformation about Romania abroad and of being paid agents of Băsescu. Senate leader Crin Antonescu, serving as interim president during the impeachment process, threatened to use the external intelligence service to investigate what he described as an organized effort to damage the country's image through the media.

Reporters sometimes face physical altercations in the course of their work. Many professional and citizen journalists were threatened or assaulted by both police and protesters during antigovernment demonstrations in January 2012. Separately, investigative reporter Dan Bucura of Realitatea TV was beaten by two assailants outside his home in May, with one of the attackers allegedly indicating that the attack was linked to Bucura's work.

In addition to the public broadcaster, a large number of private broadcast and print outlets operate in Romania. While the print sector has suffered severely since the economic downturn of late 2008, television news channels have continued to expand as political leaders and their business allies jockey for influence in the dominant medium. Romania's leading television stations include Pro TV, owned by the Bermuda-based Central European Media Enterprises (CME), and Antena 1, owned by politician Dan Voiculescu. Another notable politician and business magnate, Dan Diaconescu, controls the controversial tabloid-style station OTV. Some of the larger private media conglomerates have been shaken by the perennial legal and financial difficulties of their owners in recent years. For example, although tycoon Dinu Patriciu was cleared of fraud and money-laundering charges in August 2012, his insolvent Adevărul group was sold to businessman Cristian Burci a few weeks later. The *Adevărul* newspaper had helped drive many other papers out of business thanks to heavy subsidies from its owner, but it shrank rapidly after the financial support from Patriciu ended in 2011. Foreign media conglomerates maintain a presence in the country, though some have withdrawn due to the difficult economic environment. Individual journalists suffer from low pay and are susceptible to various forms of financial and editorial pressure from owners and advertisers.

Close to 50 percent of the population used the internet in 2012. Access is widely available, with no reports of government interference. However, online news outlets often lack the revenue needed to conduct original reporting.

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