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2026 Trafficking in Persons Report: Romania

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Romania (Tier 2)

The Government of Romania does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period; therefore, Romania remained on Tier 2. These efforts included investigating and prosecuting significantly more trafficking crimes and identifying significantly more trafficking victims. The government cooperated with other governments on new joint investigation teams; granted temporary residence permits to foreign trafficking victims; and issued restitution to victims as part of criminal sentences. Additionally, Romania signed multiple bilateral agreements with other countries to improve law enforcement cooperation on trafficking cases and protect Romanians working abroad from exploitation. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Courts convicted fewer traffickers compared with years prior. Alleged complicity, misconduct, and negligence related to trafficking crimes, particularly those involving the exploitation of children, by local public sector employees and low-level officials remained a concern. The NRM did not include procedures for the referral and assistance of all adult foreign trafficking victims in country. Overall, the government continued to refer and provide services to a small proportion of identified victims, and limited availability and resources, particularly funding for victim services, significantly constrained accommodation options for victims, especially children, leaving most victims without adequate care and at risk of re-victimization. Due to inadequate screening, the government did not effectively prevent

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inappropriate penalization of potential victims solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.

Prosecution

The government increased law enforcement efforts.

Articles 210 and 211 of the criminal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of five to 12 years' imprisonment for crimes involving an adult victim and seven to 15 years' imprisonment for those involving a child. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with penalties prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape.

In 2025, authorities investigated 628 trafficking cases (528 sex trafficking, 59 labor trafficking, and 41 unspecified forms of trafficking), a significant increase from 538 in 2024. Authorities prosecuted 374 alleged traffickers (332 sex trafficking, 25 labor trafficking, and 17 unspecified forms of trafficking), a significant increase from 289 in 2024. Courts convicted 124 traffickers (104 sex trafficking and 10 labor trafficking), a decrease from 161 in 2024. The government sentenced the majority of convicted traffickers to at least one year imprisonment. The government continued robust cooperation with other governments on law enforcement operations, such as several judicial requests and seven new joint investigation teams, including one with Switzerland resulting in the arrest of 18 alleged traffickers. Romania authorities and their counterparts in France and the Republic of Moldova signed bilateral agreements to improve law enforcement cooperation on criminal cases, including trafficking.

Corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained a concern. In 2025, authorities investigated allegations of human trafficking against a police officer and an employee of the county police and prosecuted an employee of the border police. Experts expressed concern the government did not adequately document the scale of official complicity, reporting organized crime groups bribed local public sector employees and officials in exchange for protection and support. According to reports, authorities often deliberately removed or reassigned judges from trafficking cases, which caused trials to restart; experts criticized the removal and reassignment of judges as a tactic to delay trials and cause cases to reach the statute of limitations.

The organized crime and terrorism investigation directorate (DIICOT) and the department for combating organized crime (DCCO) were responsible for investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases. DIICOT maintained a dedicated anti-trafficking unit to prosecute trafficking crimes, provide training, and support prosecutors in regional offices and a specialized unit for financial investigations, including trafficking-related crimes. Similarly, DCCO operated dedicated teams of anti-trafficking police officers nationwide and a financial investigations unit to investigate organized crime, including trafficking-related crime, and confiscate assets. Both DIICOT and DCCO operated with limited staff and resources, hindering effective trafficking investigations and prosecutions. Government and NGO representatives reported a lack of technical resources and equipment, including access to modern software that could help expedite investigations and casework; an insufficient number of personnel dedicated to combating trafficking; and inadequate capacity to process all the tips received regarding online child sexual abuse. In addition, under-resourced prosecution units, the cumbersome criminal procedural code, and overburdened courts led to lengthy trials and strained victims, who were vulnerable to re-traumatization. NGOs recommended amendments to the criminal code to reduce the length of trials, particularly pre-trial case assessment. The national agency for the management of seized assets provided support for financial investigations, traced assets internationally, and maintained a national fund of confiscated criminal assets available to finance trafficking victim compensation and grants to service providers. The government, in partnership with civil society, international partners, and other governments, conducted anti-trafficking training for law enforcement personnel and other front-line workers on various topics, including trauma-informed approaches, interview techniques, and evidence collection.

Protection

The government maintained victim protection efforts.

In 2025, the government identified 697 trafficking victims (554 sex trafficking, 96 labor trafficking, and 47 unspecified forms of trafficking), a significant increase from 600 victims identified in 2024. Of the 697 victims, 285 were children (332 in 2024); 201 were girl sex trafficking victims. The vast majority of identified victims were Romanian citizens; authorities identified 16 foreign trafficking victims (23 in 2024). The government had an NRM and separate written procedures for identifying child trafficking victims. However, the NRM did not outline procedures for the referral and assistance of foreign adult trafficking victims in country without legal residency in the EU, and the government did not report what services were

available for these victims. The government provided a series of guides and conducted training on implementing the NRM to front-line personnel interacting with potential victims. The national agency against trafficking in persons (ANITP) — the government's central point for the NRM — worked with authorities to refer victims to services and consulted the general directorate of social assistance and child protection (DGASPC) if a child victim was involved. In 2025, authorities referred a limited number of victims to services — referring 244 of 697 victims (35 percent) — and only a limited number of victims received assistance from the government and government-supported NGOs — assisting 277 of the 697 identified victims (40 percent).

Romanian law did not require victims to participate in criminal proceedings to access basic assistance, but civil society reported, in practice, victims often only received government-supported assistance if they participated in criminal proceedings. The government provided counseling, medical care, legal aid, and shelter to trafficking victims, in collaboration with NGOs, through county-level directorates for social assistance and child protective services. However, the quality of and access to services differed throughout the country with reports indicating some directorates, due to limited staff, training, and funding, stopped offering services altogether. The government maintained a total of three local shelters exclusively dedicated to adult trafficking victims and a shelter in each county to assist victims. NGOs continued to report the quality of government-provided assistance, especially medical services and psychological counseling, was inadequate. The government provided insufficient specialized services and medical care support, and access to medical care and social services remained limited. Similar to previous years, the government did not report the amount allocated for victim services. Although the government continued to depend on NGOs to accommodate and assist victims, there was no functioning mechanism in place for the government to provide direct funding to civil society organizations that assist trafficking victims, resulting in insufficient government funding for victim services. Experts recommended an updated and more flexible funding mechanism.

Authorities placed child trafficking victims in need of accommodation in emergency centers for vulnerable children or foster care centers. Limited availability and resources significantly constrained accommodation options for child victims; NGOs reported the only dedicated shelter in the country for child victims closed. Services, especially counseling, in foster care centers rarely met the needs of child trafficking victims. Perpetual problems of abuse and neglect of children in government-run institutions, such as insufficient oversight and lack of proactive identification and assistance, left children in institutions vulnerable to trafficking. Experts reported some DGASPC employees who oversaw children in government-run

institutions not only neglected to prevent trafficking but were sometimes complicit in the trafficking. The general police inspectorate and the national authority for the protection of rights of children and adoption maintained an identification and referral mechanism for trafficking cases among children in government-run institutions. Observers reported authorities were reluctant to intervene when underage Romani girls were “sold” into marriage and often considered this a “cultural practice,” hindering authorities’ ability to identify victims among this vulnerable group.

The government had formal policies to provide foreign trafficking victims legal alternatives to their removal to countries where they might face retribution or hardship. The law permitted foreign victims a 90-day recovery and reflection period to decide whether to cooperate with law enforcement; foreign victims cooperating with law enforcement could receive temporary residency for up to six months. The government granted seven temporary residence permits in 2025. The government provided victim-witness assistance to support victim participation in criminal justice proceedings, including child-friendly interviewing rooms in Bucharest. DIICOT reported the need for additional child-friendly interviewing rooms, particularly at the local level. Experts noted victim participation in criminal proceedings among children and foreign nationals remained limited due to a lack of trust in the judicial system, fear of retaliation, procedural delays, and inadequate implementation of protective measures. While the government offered free legal aid to victims, court-appointed lawyers often lacked experience working on trafficking cases. The government issued restitution for 83 victims as part of criminal sentences, totaling 7.5 million Romanian lei ($1.73 million). The government did not provide data on the amount of compensation issued to victims. NGOs reported overall compensation for victims was insufficient and, in some cases, despite initial rulings providing commensurate compensation to victims, at later stages courts significantly reduced the initially approved compensation sums. Due to inadequate screening, the government did not effectively prevent inappropriate penalization of potential victims solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked. Authorities continued to fine persons in commercial sex, including children, without screening for trafficking indicators. Authorities typically dropped charges or fines once they realized a suspect was a trafficking victim, and victims could challenge fines after they were identified.

Prevention

The government maintained prevention efforts.

The government maintained an interagency monitoring committee chaired by the prime minister's office and implemented its national strategy for 2024-2028. ANITP acted as the national rapporteur, coordinating, evaluating, and monitoring anti-trafficking efforts nationwide. It published an annual report with information on trends, statistics, and efforts to combat trafficking. The parliament maintained a special anti-trafficking committee focused on analyzing the causes of human trafficking and drafting relevant legislation. The government did not report the amount allocated solely for prevention efforts. The government conducted, sometimes in collaboration with NGOs, awareness campaigns and educational projects, targeting youth, migrant workers, and Romanian diaspora. Romania and the United Kingdom (UK) maintained a bilateral partnership addressing shared priorities on trafficking, including initiatives to prevent the crime, improve law enforcement cooperation, and support effective reintegration of victims. ANITP managed a dedicated hotline, available in multiple languages, to assist potential trafficking victims and staffed an operator during regular business hours. The government made efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts by conducting an awareness campaign.

The government regulated labor recruiters but inconsistently held them civilly and criminally liable for fraudulent recruitment. The law prohibited Romania-based recruitment companies from charging recruitment fees and facilitating the exploitation of citizens abroad; violations were considered a misdemeanor and punishable by a civil fine. ANDPDCA monitored and coordinated all programs for the prevention and elimination of child labor and investigated child labor abuse reports, including potential forced child labor. The ministry of labor could impose fines and close businesses where it found exploitation of child labor. However, the government did not effectively enforce child labor laws in rural areas where social welfare services lacked personnel and capacity to address violations. Government efforts focused on reacting to reported cases, and ANDPDCA directed its limited resources to prevention programs. Observers believed incidents of forced child labor were much higher than official statistics indicated. To overcome labor shortages, the government previously approved an admission quota of 100,000 non-EU foreign workers, most of whom worked in the construction and hospitality industries and were at particular risk of trafficking because of the lack of access to information in their native language and deceptive employment practices. Experts raised concerns the government did not effectively implement the law in labor trafficking cases and lacked an understanding of the scale of the problem. Experts also raised concerns about the insufficient efforts by the labor inspectorate to identify illegal work practices, including trafficking. The government maintained a missing child alert system and a national hotline dedicated to child abuse, including trafficking. Romanian and German officials

signed a declaration protecting Romanians working in Germany, including initiatives to prevent abuse and exploitation.

Trafficking Profile

This section describes the nature and scope of trafficking based on recent government and civil society reporting. Human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Romania, and traffickers exploit victims from Romania abroad. The majority of identified victims are women and girls exploited in sex trafficking in Romania and other European countries, including Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and the UK. Populations vulnerable to trafficking include children in or aging out of government-run institutions, children whose parents travel abroad for work, members of the Romani community, women from vulnerable socioeconomic backgrounds, and migrant workers. Reports indicate the exploitation of the elderly and persons with disabilities in government-funded residential treatment facilities by complicit officials and employees, who in some cases subject victims to years of sexual abuse, forced labor, domestic servitude, and violence. Reports indicate Romanians are among the main actors in some of the most dangerous human trafficking networks in the EU. Typically, traffickers are Romanian and operate based on familial ties. Traffickers recruit and control victims, particularly acquaintances, neighbors, or relatives, through blackmail, emotional manipulation, and violence and increasingly use romance scams to deceive victims. Trafficking networks tend to specialize in a range of criminal activities, including economic and financial crimes, drug trafficking, or online crime. Traffickers increasingly use technology, such as social media and messaging applications, to recruit victims, particularly children. Children continue to remain among the most vulnerable to trafficking in Romania. Children in government-run institutions, particularly girls living in homes and placement centers for persons with disabilities, are at risk of sex trafficking. NGOs and media report cases of Roma girls and boys, as young as 11 years old, “sold” into marriage, which may include further exploitation in sex or labor trafficking, by their families. Traffickers subject Romanian children and adults to labor trafficking in agriculture, construction, and hospitality, as well as forced begging and theft in Romania and other countries, including Greece, the United States, and the UK. The government reported a rise in migrant workers seeking employment in Romania; migrants from Asia and Tiirkiye, who work in construction, hospitality, and domestic service, are at a particular risk of trafficking due to the lack of access to information in their native language and deceptive practices by employers. Traffickers exploit migrants from Africa, South Asia, and Europe in sex and labor trafficking in Romania. Refugees fleeing the Russia-Ukraine war are

highly vulnerable to trafficking though the number of reported Ukrainian victims remains low. Government corruption in law enforcement and the judiciary continues to enable some trafficking crimes, and officials have been investigated for suspected involvement in trafficking.

TAGS

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