

# Romania – a business guide to the language, culture, economy and people



## The Country

Romania has a population of over 22.5 million, which makes it the second largest market (after Poland) in Central and Eastern Europe. The capital city, Bucharest, has a population of just over 2 million. Some 9 million Romanians live outside the country's borders in Europe, and 2 million reside in the USA and Canada.

## Geography

With a surface area of 238,391 square kilometres, Romania is the largest country in south-eastern Europe and the twelfth largest in Europe. Romania's terrain is distributed roughly equally between mountainous, hilly and lowland territories. The Carpathian Mountains dominate the centre of Romania, with fourteen of its mountain ranges reaching above the altitude of 2,000 meters. Romania has one of the largest areas of undisturbed forest in Europe and the Danube Delta, a World Heritage site, is the second largest Delta in Europe.

## Architecture

Romania is rich in World Heritage, such as the Saxon villages with fortified churches in Transylvania, the painted churches of northern Moldavia, the Wooden Churches of Maramures, the citadel of Sighişoara and the Dacian Fortresses of the Orăştie Mountains.

## People

The majority of the population (89.5%) is Romanian, whilst Hungarians (Magyars) (6.6%) and Roma (2.5%) form the largest minority groups. Population densities are naturally highest in the towns, with 5 cities (apart from Bucharest) having a population of around 300,000.

## Religion

Romania is a secular state, thus having no national religion. The dominant religion (86.7%) is Eastern Orthodox, with the Roman Catholic faith forming the largest minority (4.7%). However, there are many other religions found in Romania, including Reformed (3.2%), Greek Catholic (0.9%), Evangelical (0.2%), Unitarian (0.3%) and others (4%).

## Economy

With a GDP of around \$264 billion and a GDP per capita of \$12,285 estimated for 2008, Romania is an upper-middle income country economy and has been part of the European Union since 01 January 2007. The economy is relatively stable, characterised by high growth, low unemployment and declining inflation. The economy is predominantly based on services, which account for 55% of GDP, even though industry and agriculture also contribute.

## Politics

Romania is governed on the basis of a multi-party democratic system and the segregation of the legal, executive and judicial powers. In this semi-presidential democratic republic, executive functions are shared between the president and the prime minister. The country's entry into the European Union in 2007 has had significant influence on its domestic policy. As part of the process, Romania has instituted reforms including judicial reform, increased judicial cooperation with other member states, and measures to combat corruption.



## Business Culture and Etiquette



Romanian business culture is quite formal and hierarchical, with great importance being placed on courtesy, and on respect for older or more senior people.

### Making contact

Romanians are sociable and love to talk, so mobile phones are a must for doing business in the city. People are extremely friendly and a surprising number speak excellent English. However, Bucharest natives are also extremely formal, in the old European sense, and business visitors should respect this tradition, making appointments for meetings well in advance.

When doing business in Romania shake hands with people upon arrival and also when leaving. It is good form to wait for a woman to extend her hand; older Romanian men may still kiss a woman's hand but this practice is slowly dying out.

Titles are also very important as they demonstrate a high esteem. When doing business in Romania it is courteous to use someone's title whether academic or professional. If no title is obvious then use "domnule" for a man and "doamna" for a woman with the surname.

### Building successful business relationships

Romanians are very hospitable people. Business meetings tend to be warm and friendly, with food and drink often offered. Business lunches are common and may take two hours or more, with wine or beer the most popular tipple. Work colleagues may socialise together in the evening at a local bar, although this tends to take place more among those working in multinational companies. It is relatively uncommon for Romanians to invite foreign businesspeople to their homes.

In Romania eye contact can be very direct and is a sign of respect. If you are from a culture where intermittent eye contact is more prevalent, you may initially feel uncomfortable. Looking away will be interpreted either as lack of interest or rudeness.

### Timing

Summertime is not good for doing business as many companies wind down their operations then. Easter and Christmas are also difficult, as companies and shops close for an indefinite period. Normal business hours are 0900-1700.

### Meetings

Western business etiquette is followed. Appointments should be made in advance and checked again before the respective date. Appointments with public officials are sometimes difficult to make. It is advisable to avoid making business appointments for the months of July and August as well as around the dates of national holidays in Romania.

### Gift giving

It is not normal practice to give gifts in Romanian business culture, but if invited to a Romanian home you should take a small gift of flowers, chocolates or liquor. If you give flowers, be careful to give an uneven number; an even number of flowers is customary at funerals.

## Language



The official language of Romania is Romanian, which is spoken by around 91% of the population. There are, however, areas of the country where Hungarian or German are spoken as the first language.

English, French and German are regarded as the main international languages. Historically, French was the predominant foreign language spoken in Romania, even though English has since superseded it. Consequently, Romanian English-speakers tend to be younger than Romanian French-speakers.

Written in the Cyrillic alphabet until the 19th century, Romanian now uses the Latin alphabet.

### Basic words and phrases

	<b>Romanian</b>	<b>Pronunciation</b>
Hello	Salut	<i>sa-loot</i>
Good morning	Bună dimineață	<i>buna di-mi-nea-tza</i>
Good evening	Bună seara	<i>buna sea-ra</i>
Goodnight	Noapte bună	<i>noapte bu-na</i>
Goodbye	La revedere	<i>lah reh-veh-deh-reh</i>
Yes / no	Da / Nu	<i>da / noo</i>
Please	Vă rog	<i>vuh roh</i>
Thank you	Mulțumesc	<i>mool-tzu mesk</i>
Excuse me	Pardon	<i>par-don</i>
See you later	Pe curând	<i>peh coorand</i>
How are you?	Ce mai faceți?	<i>ch eh migh fa-chet-si</i>

### Finding interpreters and translators

You will make a very positive impression by learning a few basic words and phrases, but if you wish to translate your marketing materials or make the most out of an important business meeting you should employ the services of a professional interpreter or translator. The RLN has a quality-assured database of providers in your area. Should you wish to learn the language or improve your knowledge of Romanian business culture, the RLN also has details of language and cultural training providers in your area.

Please contact the RLN on 01332 826432 or e-mail [info@rln-eastmidlands.com](mailto:info@rln-eastmidlands.com) for more information.



## Festivals and National Days



December 1<sup>st</sup> is Romanian National Day, also known as Unification Day. This national holiday commemorates the union of Transylvania with Romania and was set after the 1989 Romanian Revolution.

### Festivals

**June** - The Traditional Crafts Fair.

**July** - Bucharest of Old (celebration of the city as it was 150 years ago).

**July** - Medieval Days.

**July** - The Maidens' Fair (*Targul de Fete*).

**August** - Dance at Prislop (*Hora de la Prislop*), a traditional celebration of ties among three of Romania's main regions: Transylvania, Moldova and Maramures.

**August** - Romania's Folk Art Festival, an insight into folk art creation.

**September** - Samba Oilor, a festival marking the return of the sheep herds from the mountains.

**October** - Wine-making festival, a celebration marking the beginning of the grape harvest.

**December** - Christmas Traditions Festival.

### Important dates

Date	Local name	English name
January 1	Anul nou	New Year's Day
January 2	Anul nou	Day after New Year's Day
February 24	Dragobetele	Similar to St Valentine's Day
March 1	Mărțișorul	Spring Festival
March 8	Ziua Femeii	Women's Day
April/May	Paștele	Easter
May 1	Ziua muncii	Labour Day
May/June	Ziua Eroilor (Înălțarea)	Heroes' Day (Ascension)
June 1	Ziua Copilului	Children's Day
June 26	Ziua Tricolorului	Flag Day
July 29	Ziua Imnului național	National Anthem Day
December 1	Ziua națională (Ziua unirii)	National Holiday (Union Day)
December 8	Ziua Constituției	Constitution Day
December 25/26	Crăciunul	Christmas

## Did you know?...



Some interesting and perhaps little known facts about Romania:

- Traian Vuia was the first person in the world to take off in an 'airplane' powered exclusively by its engine, nearly 100 years ago in 1906.
- Romania is home to the largest population of bears and wolves in Europe, having more than the rest of Europe put together.
- Romania has its own Robin Hood legend, in the form of a well-loved outlaw called Pinteia, who lived in Baia Mare and robbed the rich nobles to give to the poor. Pinteia died fighting for freedom and in his memory, the Romanian people have written many ballads about 'Pinteia the Brave'.
- The 12th-century fortified town of Sighisoara, in the Transylvania region (350 km north of Bucharest), is the oldest Romanian town. Germanic by origin, it is still inhabited by local people.
- Count Dracula, a fictional character in the Dracula novel, was inspired by one of the best-known figures of Romanian history: Vlad Dracula, nicknamed Vlad Tepes ('Vlad the Impaler'), who ruled Wallachia from 1456-1462.
- A producer of grain and oil, Romania—so named because it was a colony of imperial Rome—is also a favored Black Sea vacation spot.
- The Transylvanian city of Sibiu, with its medieval centre and ethnically mixed population, was named European Capital of Culture 2007.
- According to legend, the lost children of Hamelin emerged from the "Almasch" cave into Transylvania, somewhere close to Sibiu.
- The most popular sports in Romania are soccer, handball, gymnastics, aquatics, tennis, volleyball, basketball, water polo, shooting, boxing and athletics.
- Gheorghe Marinescu (1863-1938), the professor of Neurology at the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest, was the first to see living nervous cells with a microscope.
- If you are driving or out late at night it is a good idea to carry at least a photocopy of your passport and driving licence as it is the law to have some form of ID on you at all times.

**Currency:** Leu (currency code RON)      **Time zone:** GMT + 2 hrs (+ 3 hrs in daylight saving)

## Further information



For further information on language and cultural matters, including sourcing Romanian language trainers, interpreters or translators, please contact the RLN on 01332 826432 or e-mail [info@rln-eastmidlands.com](mailto:info@rln-eastmidlands.com).

### Podcasts

The RLN has a range of free downloadable resources, including a cultural briefing on Romania and a podcast guide to Central Europe. Visit the RLN Podcast website [www.rlnpodcast.com](http://www.rlnpodcast.com), where you can download these and other resources free of charge.

### Other sources of information

Foreign & Commonwealth Office London [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)  
Explore Romania – Agency for Governmental Strategies: [www.publicinfo.ro](http://www.publicinfo.ro)  
Investing in Romania – [www.voicufilipescu.ro](http://www.voicufilipescu.ro)  
British Embassy in Romania [www.britishembassy.gov.uk](http://www.britishembassy.gov.uk)  
Romanian Business News [www.zf.ro/zf\\_english.html](http://www.zf.ro/zf_english.html)  
Business Romania [www.businessromania.com](http://www.businessromania.com)  
Hot News (Romania – Business) [www.english.hotnews.ro/business](http://www.english.hotnews.ro/business)  
Invest Romania [www.investromania.ro](http://www.investromania.ro)  
Romanian Business News [www.romanian.biz](http://www.romanian.biz)

### Useful contacts

British Embassy in Romania [www.ukinromania.fco.gov.uk/en](http://www.ukinromania.fco.gov.uk/en)  
Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania  
[www.ccir.ro/ccirweb/menuHome/PageHome.aspx?submenu\\_id=26](http://www.ccir.ro/ccirweb/menuHome/PageHome.aspx?submenu_id=26)

### Sources used in compiling this guide

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Euro Information Centre [www.euro-info.org.uk](http://www.euro-info.org.uk)  
International House [www.ihworld.com](http://www.ihworld.com)  
UK Trade and Investment [www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk](http://www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk)  
Kwintessential Cross Cultural Solutions [www.kwintessential.co.uk](http://www.kwintessential.co.uk)

Guide compiled by Regional Language Network East Midlands

Tel: 01332 826432

E-mail: [info@rln-eastmidlands.com](mailto:info@rln-eastmidlands.com)

Website: [www.rln-eastmidlands.com](http://www.rln-eastmidlands.com)

