

MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT

EUROPE

Romania

Country Snapshot

Country Name:

Romania

Population:

22,329,977 (July 2005)

Government Type:

Republic

Geography:

- Located in southeastern Europe on the Black Sea.
- Bordered by Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro, and Ukraine.
- Capitol city: Bucharest (population 2.02 million)
- The geography of Romania varies widely. In southeastern Romania you will find 225 km of coastline on the Black Sea. Two major mountain ranges (the Carpathian Mountains and Transylvanian Alps) cut across the country, separated by rolling plains. The Danube River forms its southern border.
- Temperate climate, with cold, gray, snowy winters and sunny summers with frequent rain and thunderstorms.
- Romania has occasional earthquakes, usually located in the south or southwest. The last recorded earthquake was October 27, 2004.

Picture of Flag:



Official Language:

Romanian

Major Religion:

Eastern Orthodox (86.8%); The Romanian Orthodox Church (*Biserica Ortodoxă Română*) is the national church of Romania.

Other Religions:

- Protestant (7.5%)
- Roman Catholic (4.7%)

- Other (mostly Muslim) (0.9%)
- Atheist/Non-religious (0.1%)

(Statistics taken from <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/ro.html>)

Missionary Atlas Project
Central and Eastern Europe

Romania

Name: Romania

Demographics

As of July 2005 the population of Romania was 22,329,977. The population is declining slightly with a population growth rate of -0.12%.

Eighty nine percent of the population is ethnically Romanian. Romania is also home to pockets of Hungarians (6.6%), and Roma (2.5%), as well as very small segments of Ukrainians, Germans, Russians, and Turks. The ethnic minority populations of Romania are mostly located in the north and west of the country, areas formerly controlled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The median age of the population is 36.39 years with a life expectancy of 71.35 years.

Before World War II over 75% of Romania's population lived in small towns and villages. Industrialization after the war drew large numbers of people to urban centers. Romania is still moving towards urbanization but currently around 45% of the population still live in rural settings, a large percentage for a European country.

Language

The official language of Romania is Romanian, a Romance language similar in many ways to Spanish, Italian, and other Latin-based languages. Romanian has also adopted many words from Greek, Turkish, Hungarian, Albanian, and Slavic languages. Romanian uses the Latin alphabet. Hungarian and German are spoken by small minority populations. English and French are taught in schools.

Approximately 2 million Roma (gypsies) call Romania home and though they are functional in Romanian they prefer to speak their heart language, Romany. From clan to clan, different dialects of Romany are spoken and some words have been adopted from the language of the host culture.

Society/Culture

Romanian culture has been influenced by a wide array of different cultures—Roman (dating back to the early colonization of the region), Hungarian, Turkish, and Greek. In spite of these outside influences Romania has also managed to develop and maintain a rich national folk culture. The country has a rich tradition of producing art, music, and literature.

The people of Romania are survivors. They have maintained and developed their culture through multiple invasions, occupations, and dictators. Many of their cultural traditions revolve around life's most important moments—birth, marriage, and death.

Children are baptized into the church soon after they are born. At seven months old the child's future is foretold, oddly enough by the child itself. A book, a pencil, and an egg are placed before the child within its reach. It is said that the child who chooses the book will be an intellectual, the child who chooses the pencil will be an artist, and the one who chooses the egg will chase after material possessions.

Romanians typically marry in their early 20s. In some places (usually in rural settings) matchmakers are still used. If a matchmaker is not used it is customary for the young man to ask the girl's parents for permission to marry her. Most weddings are held in the fall because wine is most plentiful then. No weddings may be held during Lent (the 40 days leading up to Easter) or Advent (the 4 weeks leading up to Christmas). Wedding ceremonies are held in the church and from there guests go to the reception, which usually lasts all night.

Romanian culture views death not as the end of life but as a new beginning, the start of a beautiful journey. In villages the deceased is carried through the village in an open casket on the back of a truck as an invitation for all village residents to participate in the funeral.

Christmas and Easter are the most important holidays in Romanian culture. Christmas has only been widely observed since the fall of Communism. Preparations for Christmas begin on November 15 (the beginning of Advent). Advent is a time of spiritual preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth but also a time of preparing for the social activities associated with the holiday. Adults prepare baked goods for the season's festivities. Singing Christmas carols is an important part of Christmas in Romania. Caroling is a common holiday activity, especially among children. The Christmas celebration lasts until Epiphany (January 6).

New Year's Eve and New Year's Day also carry a lot of tradition. Romanians believe that it is bad luck to spend New Year's Eve alone so they typically gather with family and friends to celebrate. On December 31 people in villages go from house to house carrying a plow and wishing neighbors a prosperous New Year. The next day children throw seeds across the thresholds of neighboring houses calling out "happy sowing". In both cities and villages it is common to see "Plugusorul", individuals in colorful costumes. No one is sure how the tradition of "Plugusorul" originated. "Plugusorul" crack whips, bang on drums, play accordions, basically anything to make a lot of noise. Why? The noise is meant to scare away ghosts of the past year and make way for a new beginning.

Along with the religious symbolism of Easter, this holiday is also seen as a symbol of renewal and rebirth in every day life. Before going to church on Easter the people bathe, put on new clothes, and clean their houses as symbols of a new beginning. Then, at midnight they go to church for a candlelight service. The lit candles guide them home after the service where they have a traditional meal of roast lamb, cheeses and cakes. Painting eggs is also a large part of the Easter festivities.

Along with these holidays, Romanians celebrate Unification Day, the day Transylvania rejoined Romania in 1918, on December 1 and Romanian Independence Day (the day Romania became a monarchy) on May 10.

Day to day life in Romania, while improving, is still a struggle. Prices remain high as the government struggles to control inflation. Romania has a very low minimum wage so the average family can afford very few luxuries. It is not uncommon for multiple generations of a family to share housing. In cities, people typically live in block Communist apartment buildings.

Romania's people are a special breed of Europeans, a Latin people in a Slavic world. They are an emotional people known for being warm, caring, intelligent, and independent. They also have tempers that flare in an instant. They greet each other warmly and are always willing to be of help to others. Women are held in high esteem and chivalry is not dead. Men still tip their hats and give up their seats. When greeting it is still common for men to kiss women's hands.

Government

Romania proclaimed its independence on May 9, 1877 but was not officially declared a republic until December 30, 1947. The first Romanian Constitution was signed on December 8, 1991 and was amended on October 19, 2003.

Romania is a republic with Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government. The Executive branch is composed of the president, prime minister, and council of ministers (appointed by the prime minister). The president is elected by popular vote to five-year terms. He is the Chief of State, the public face of the country. The prime minister is appointed by the president and is the head of government. He presides over the operations of the government.

The Legislative branch includes the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The Senate has 137 seats. Senators are elected by popular vote on a proportional representation basis. They serve four-year terms. The Chamber of Deputies has 332 seats and its members are elected in the same way as Senators. They also serve four-year terms.

The Judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court of Justice. Judges are appointed by the president upon the recommendation of the Superior Council of Magistrates (a board of 11 judges and 6 prosecutors appointed by parliament).

Everyone in the country aged 18 or older may vote.

There are 8 recognized political parties in Romania.

Romania has 41 counties and one municipality (the capitol city, Bucharest). Each county is governed by an elected county council. Towns and villages are governed by local councils and elected mayors. The county council has administrative authority over the local councils within its jurisdiction. The central government appoints a prefect for each county and the Bucharest municipality. The prefect is a representative of the central government at the local level and directs any public services of the ministries and other central agencies at the county level. A

prefect has the authority to override the actions of local authorities if he considered them unlawful or unconstitutional.

Economy

After years under Communist rule, Romania's economic transition has not been easy. In 1989 Romania's industrial base was largely obsolete and its production of goods and services could not meet the country's needs. After a time of recession in the late 1990s Romania emerged in 2000, beginning a period of strong domestic activity in construction, agriculture, and consumption. Romania is making slow but steady progress in the areas of privatization, deficit reduction, and controlling inflation. However, there are still multiple problems with the government's fiscal, wage and monetary policies and recent economic improvements have done little to address the country's widespread poverty. Also, corruption and red tape continue to be significant hindrances in the furtherance of the business world.

The basic unit of currency is the *leu* (*lei* plural) and, since 1991, its value is determined by open market. The National Bank of Romania is the bank of issue. It is also responsible for setting financial policies and overseeing the spending of various state projects.

In 2005 Romania's GDP was \$73.96 billion, a growth of 5.6% from the previous year. Romania has a labor force of 9.31 million people, the majority of which work in service industries (37.7%). In 2005 the gross monthly wage was 1121 *lei*, the equivalent of 311.38 Euro. The unemployment rate is almost 6% and 28.9% of the population lives below the poverty line.

Romania's agricultural products include wheat, corn, barley, sugar beets, sunflower seed, potatoes, grapes, eggs, and sheep. Its primary industries are textiles and footwear, light machinery and auto assembly, mining, timber, construction materials, metallurgy, chemicals, food processing, and petroleum refining.

Romania is scheduled to enter the European Union in 2007 or 2008.

Literacy

Romania claims a literacy rate of 98.4% (99.1% among men, 97.7% among women). This may be true among ethnic Romanians. However, a 1998 United Nations Development Programme survey found that, among the Roma (gypsy) population of Romania, approximately 30% of the totally population was illiterate.

Land/Geography

Romania is located in southeastern Europe on the Black Sea. It is bordered by Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro, and Ukraine.

The capitol of Romania is Bucharest (population 2.02 million). Other major cities include Iasi (350,000), Constanta (344,000), Timisoara (327,000), Cluj-Napoca (334,000), Galati (331,000), Brasov (316,000).

The geography of the Romania varies widely. In southeastern Romania you will find 225 km of coastline on the Black Sea. Two major mountain ranges (the Carpathian Mountains and Transylvanian Alps) cut across the country, separated by rolling plains.

Romania's climate is temperate, with cold, gray, snowy winters and sunny summers with frequent rain and thunderstorms.

Romania also has occasional earthquakes, usually located in the south or southwest. The last recorded earthquake was October 27, 2004.

History

The country we now call Romania has been inhabited for thousands of years. Concrete facts about the earliest inhabitants of this region are hard to come by.

In 3000 B.C. Thracian tribes began to migrate from Asia and populate the area. These tribes soon began to increase in number, drawing the interest of the Roman government. Romans called the inhabitants of this region "Dacians".

In 700 B.C. Greeks began to arrive in the region and populate the area around the Black Sea. They founded cities that still exist today and, under their influence, Western-style civilization began to develop significantly.

Beginning in 70 B.C. with Dacian king Burebista the territory of Romania was part of a strong Dacian empire. It continued to grow until it reached its peak in 100 A.D. Rome attacked the Dacian Empire in 101 A.D. By 106 A.D. the area was a Roman province and the Dacians had adopted their conqueror's language. Dacia remained a Roman province until 274 A.D. when Rome abandoned Dacia after heavy fighting with the barbarian Goths.

From the 4th to the 10th centuries the people of Romania were constantly under attack. They fended off invasions by Goths, Visigoths, Huns, Slavs, and Magyars. By the 11th century northeastern and central Romania were firmly under the control of Hungary (the Magyars).

In the 13th century Romania formally divided into three principalities: Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania, with Transylvania still remaining under Hungarian rule, although now as an autonomous principality, until 1526. Hungarian forces made several unsuccessful attempts to gain control of Wallachia and Moldavia.

The Ottoman Empire began its expanse across Europe in the 14th century. Romania was soon under its influence. In the 16th century all three Romanian provinces began to pay the Ottomans tribute so that they were able to remain autonomous.

Mihai Viteazul, prince of Wallachia, briefly united all three Romanian provinces in the 17th century. This unity only lasted a year before Turkish and Hapsburg forces attacked.

Transylvania once again fell under the Hungarian (now Hapsburg Dynasty) control and became part of the Hapsburg Dynasty. Wallachia and Moldavia continued to pay tribute to Turks.

After centuries of being held under the thumb of different empires, Romania was ready for a national revival. In 1859 Alexandru Ioan Cuza was elected to the thrones of Moldavia and Wallachia and in 1862 those two provinces united to form a national state: Romania. In 1866 Carol I succeeded Cuza as king of Romania and in 1881 Romania became a kingdom.

In 1914 Romania entered World War I as an ally of the Triple Entente (Great Britain, France, and Russia) with the goal of regaining its lost territories. (Transylvania still remained under Hapsburg rule and two of its other regions, Bessarabia and Bukovina, had been lost as well.) Romania succeeded and in 1918 Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina declared union with Romania.

In the years preceding World War II other European countries began exerting control over Romania. In 1939 Germany demanded a monopoly on Romania's major exports (oil, lumber, and agricultural products) in exchange for guaranteeing Romania's borders. In 1940 the Soviet Union annexed Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. Germany and Italy also forced Romania to cede northern Transylvania to Hungary and southern Dobrogea to Bulgaria. This upheaval prompted nation-wide demonstrations against King Carol II. Marshall Ion Antonescu forced King Carol II to abdicate his throne to his son, Michael. Antonescu imposed a military dictatorship in 1941. Later that year, under Antonescu's leadership, Romania joined Germany in the war against the Soviet Union with the goal of regaining Bessarabia. In 1944 King Michael was finally able to overthrow Antonescu. Romania changed sides for the end of the war, uniting with the Soviet Union against Germany. At the Yalta Conference at the end of World War II it was decided that Romania should be made part of the Soviet system. King Michael was forced to abdicate his throne in 1947 and Romania became a People's Republic.

Romania began to distance itself from the Soviets in the 1950, especially after Stalin's death. Romania's Communist leader, Nicolae Ceausescu, assumed de facto power in 1965 and soon gained recognition and support from the West for his outspoken condemnation of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. Ceausescu continued to grow in power, eventually rising to a position of absolute authority and dictatorship. In the 1980s Ceausescu became obsessed with repaying Romania's massive national debt. He also had a vision for relocating thousands of rural residents into urban housing complexes in Romania's cities. To fund these projects Ceausescu ordered a ban on importation of any consumer products and commanded the exportation of all Romanian-produced goods except the minimum necessary food supplies. He also began to impose severe civil rights restrictions. All religion was outlawed and any person who spoke against the government was deported. Protesters were shot.

Ceausescu's wife, Elena, also instituted several repressive projects designed to increase Romania's birthrate. She succeeded. However, the country was unprepared to handle the growing number of children, resulting in thousands of children being surrendered to state-run orphanages. Growing unhappiness with Ceausescu culminated with public protests in December of 1989 that resulted in the ousting of Ceausescu and his cabinet. Ceausescu and his wife were privately tried and executed by Romanian resistance forces on the morning of December 22, 1989.

Romania is still recovering from its almost 50 years under Communism, first under Soviet control, then under the Ceausescu dictatorship. Governmental corruption is still rampant, although they are making strides. Romania adopted a new Constitution in 1991 and joined NATO in 2004. Romania has signed a treaty to enter the European Union sometime in 2007 or 2008.

Christian History

Christianity had its beginnings in Romania during its early colonization by Rome. However, Christian tradition states that the Apostle Andrew was the first to bring the message of Christ to the region. We know that there was a fairly strong Christian presence in Romania by the beginning of the 3rd century and that Romanians were among the martyrs of Emperor Diocletian's persecution in the early 300s. When the Catholic Church split in the 4th century, Romania came to be under the umbrella of Constantinople and the Eastern Orthodox Church in Romania was born. The Orthodox Church grew strong, rejecting the Catholic influences of Hungarian and Polish immigrants in the 13th century. As the Turks began to physically pull out of its Balkan territories the Orthodox Church began to succumb to the pressures of other invaders like Austria, Hungary, and Russia. Many of the churches in Transylvania became Uniate churches (a member of one of the Eastern Christian Churches that recognize papal supremacy, but keep their own liturgy, language, and canon law). By 1733 there were 2,294 Uniate priests in Transylvania as opposed to 458 Orthodox priests and by 1750 there were over half a million Romanian Uniate church members as opposed to 25,000 Orthodox Church members. The Orthodox Church still remained strong in all other parts of Romania (Moldavia and Walachia) but was still under Turkish control. When Moldavia and Walachia declared independence from Turkey in 1856, the Romanian Orthodox Church declared itself autonomous. The Romanian Orthodox Church has remained strong since that time and is still the national church of Romania.

There is now a significant Catholic population in Romania, mostly comprised of Romania's Hungarian minority. The Catholic Church in Romania is introverted, focused mainly on survival, and cut off from the Catholic world outside Romania.

Protestant church membership accounts for 7.5% of the population, the largest group being the Reformed Church of Romania, which had its beginnings in 1554 as the Reformation began to spread. Also, Lutheranism was introduced in 1519 and spread rapidly, especially among German immigrants living in Transylvania.

The first Baptist congregation was established in Budapest in 1856. The membership was entirely German until the early 1900s. The Baptist Church grew rapidly during the beginning of the 20th century. A Baptist seminary was built in 1920 but, beginning in 1930, the Baptist church was subject to 14 years of state persecution. The Nazi's dissolved the Romanian Baptist Church during World War II and even after the Romania Baptist Convention was reformed in 1945, the church suffered greatly under Communism. Today the Baptist Church is growing and is officially recognized by the government.

The Pentecostal Church began in 1922 and now has over 320,000 members.

In recent years, the Protestant church in Romania has shown the most growth among Gypsies. They are responding in large numbers and churches are being planted in their communities.

No one has ever ventured to write a history of the relationship between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Protestant Church in Romania but, with just a little bit of digging, it is easy to see that there is a long history of antagonism. The Orthodox Church views Protestant Churches as shameless proselytizers and Orthodox priests strongly discourage their parishioners from having any contact with Protestants. Protestant Evangelicals are still a minority in Romania but in recent years there has been an increased interest in Protestant theology among a small group of Orthodox leaders as well as among young people.

The Christian church in Romania struggled during Communism. The Orthodox Church was controlled by the state and other religious groups suffered persecution. With the collapse of Communism the church has had a resurgence and it can be expected that Christians will account for 90% of the population by 2025 and that the percentage of non-religious/atheistic persons will decrease to less than 5% of the population by 2050.

Religion

Non Christian

Eastern Orthodox

Eastern Orthodox is the primary religion in Romania (86.8%). The Romanian Orthodox Church the second-largest Orthodox Church in world (behind Russia).

Roman Catholic

Roman Catholic Church makes up 4.7% (mostly made up of the Hungarian population).

Islam

Islam makes up less than 0.9% of the population who come from small groups of peoples from around the Black Sea. These peoples claim to have Turkish or Tatar roots.

Non Religious

0.1% claim to be either atheist or non-religious

Protestant or Evangelical Christians

Seven and a half percent (7.5%) of the population claim to be Protestant (this includes all Protestant denominations from Reformed to Pentecostal. .

People Groups

899

Romanians (17,420,852)

The primary religion of this people group is Eastern Orthodox. More than 2% of Romanians are evangelical Christians.

890

Roma/Gypsies (2,000,000)

The primary religion of this people group is Animism. Less than 2% of Roma are evangelical but there has been widespread church planting among them in the last 2 years.

896

Hungarian (1,430,074)

The primary religion of this people group is Roman Catholic. Less than 2% of this people group is evangelical. There are been initial efforts at church planting among this population in the last 2 years.

900

Deaf Romanians (113,000)

The primary religion of this people group is Eastern Orthodox. Less than 2% of deaf Romanians are evangelical. There are been initial efforts at church planting among this population in the last 2 years.

903

Ukrainian (60,908)

Less than 2% of this population is evangelical. There are a few evangelical resources available for this people group but there have been no active church planting efforts in the last 2 years.

895

German (60,088)

Greater than 5% of the population is evangelical.

902

Turkish (56,562)

The primary religion of this people group is Islam. Less than 2% of the population is evangelical and there have been no church planting efforts in the last 2 years.

895

English (4,000)

Greater than 10% of this population is evangelical.

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should develop methods for sharing the Gospel with persons in the Orthodox Churches and train believers in Romania to use the methods to evangelize the Orthodox members in Romania
2. Evangelical Christians and churches should emphasize evangelism among the 2 million Roma. At this time, probably the most strategic place to invest missionary personnel in Romania is among the Roma. There are over 2 million Roma in Romania and although less than 2% are evangelical, there have been widespread church planting efforts among the Roma in the last 2 years and thousands of Roma are responding.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to build relationships with Orthodox Church leaders to secure more religious freedom. The opportunities for these dialogues is present in spite of the hostility between Orthodox and Protestant groups
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should recognize the many physical and social problems that exist in Romania and seek ways to alleviate these problems. Poverty still plays a large part in the daily life of many Romanians. There is a large homeless population and thousands of children roam the streets daily begging for money. Almost 30% of people in Romania live below the poverty line and the unemployment rate is 6.5%. Humanitarian projects would be very successful in this context and would provide possibilities for sharing the Gospel.
5. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to contribute to the Romanian emphasis on the family. The family unit is a central part of Romanian culture. A smart way to approach ministry in Romania would be a holistic, family-focused approach. There is increasing curiosity about Protestantism in this country and the potential is there to see large numbers of households, not just individuals, come to Christ.

<http://www.globalvolunteers.org/1main/romania/romaniaculture.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanian_Orthodox_Church

<http://www.ortho-logia.com/English/statusofemergingdialogue.htm>

