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## Freedom Of The Press - Romania (2011)

**Status: Partly Free**  
**Legal Environment: 13**  
**Political Environment: 15**  
**Economic Environment: 14**  
**Total Score: 42**

Press freedom is protected by the constitution and is generally respected by the government. The Constitutional Court struck down legislation that decriminalized libel in 2007, but the parliament failed to implement the ruling with a new law, and local judges had reportedly disagreed on whether libel remains a criminal offense until the Supreme Court ruled in favor of decriminalization in 2010. No major civil or criminal defamation cases were reported in 2010. Journalists regularly use Romania's freedom of information law to obtain public records, but bureaucratic obstacles and uneven enforcement have been reported. Appointments to the National Council of Broadcasting are politicized, resulting in ineffective regulation and biased decision-making.

The public television broadcaster, TVR, is headed by a former official of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), and staff members have complained of political control over editorial matters. Three of the five conglomerates that dominate the private media landscape are controlled by powerful Romanian businessmen—Sorin Ovidiu Vantu, Dan Voiculescu, and Dinu Patriciu—whose political and economic interests are reflected in their outlets' reporting. The other two leading media groups are linked to foreign firms: Ringier of Switzerland and the Bermuda-based Central European Media Enterprises (CME). In September 2010, Vantu was temporarily detained in connection with a Ponzi scheme that had collapsed in 2000, and he claimed that the case was motivated by his media group's attacks on President Traian Basescu, particularly during the presidential election in late 2009. Basescu's reelection campaign had faced concerted opposition from many of the major news outlets, and he reportedly limited his contact with the press after winning reelection.

While no cases of serious violence against journalists were reported in 2010, some politicians displayed hostility toward critical outlets. In April, Prime Minister Emil Boc seized a microphone from a reporter with Vantu's Realitatea television station and accused it and Voiculescu's Antena 3 of skewed coverage. Boc's Democratic Liberal Party subsequently instructed members not to participate in the stations' programs. Separately, a study approved by the Supreme Council for National Defense in June identified lobbying and smear campaigns by large media groups as a threat to state institutions, prompting objections from press freedom advocates. Over the course of 2010, the European Court of Human Rights ruled against Romania in three decade-old cases involving journalists.

TVR holds roughly a fifth of the television market, and benefits from state financing as well as advertising revenue.

The top private stations include CME's Pro TV and Acasa TV, Voiculescu's Antena 1, and Realitatea. The public broadcaster similarly competes with private networks in the radio sector, and the major Romanian and foreign conglomerates have considerable holdings in the print sector as well. A number of print outlets have closed since the economic downturn in late 2008, and many others survive on infusions of cash from their owners, who use them to advance political and business interests. Journalists have also suffered from the poor economic environment, and are susceptible to various forms of financial and editorial pressure.

Access to the internet is widely available, with no reports of government interference. Close to 40 percent of the population used the internet in 2010. However, online news outlets and blogs are still poorly developed, with most users obtaining news from the web versions of established newspapers and television stations.