

# Romania – people, culture, language

## A guide for businesses



### The country

**Overview:** 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.

After the revolution in December 1989, Romania began its transition to a market economy. This transition has proved more difficult than expected and the country has suffered greatly as a result of inflation and unemployment, removal of subsidies and the introduction of VAT. The newly elected government is actively working towards accession to the EU in 2007.

**People:** the majority of the population (89.5%) is Romanian, whilst Hungarians (Magyars) (6.6%) and Roma (2.5%) form the largest minority groups.

**Religion:** a broad range of faiths is practised. The majority (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%).



The Museum of History of Romania (1894-1900) Source: Romania Tourism

### Did you know..?

- 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'.

Information correct on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

### Business culture and etiquette

**Making initial 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.

**Building a successful working relationship:** 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 tipples. 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.

**Timing is everything:** 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.

### 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** - Sambra 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.

## Language

**Official language:** Romanian, which is spoken throughout the country. There are, however, areas of the country where Hungarian or German are spoken as the first language.

**Other languages:** English, French and German are regarded as the main international languages.

English is by far the most used language by the younger generation. German is spoken mostly in Transylvania, while French was the language of our grandparents – spoken in the mid 1930s, when Bucharest was called “Little Paris” (Micul Paris, due to a strong influence of French culture.)

**Finding translators/interpreters:** in the UK, you can find local, quality-assured providers by contacting the Regional Language Network. In Romania, translators and interpreters are readily available – the best place to enquire is at the British Embassy (see Resources section).

## Basic Romanian phrases

The positive impression you will make by learning to speak a few basic Romanian phrases cannot be overestimated. Below are some commonly-used phrases – if you are interested in learning the Romanian language, you can search for quality-assured trainers and courses at [www.blis.org.uk](http://www.blis.org.uk).

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

## Sources

Research and text: Central European Development Agency (CEDA) [www.consultceda.co.uk](http://www.consultceda.co.uk)  
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)  
Other Resources: 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)  
Photographs: [www.romaniatourism.co.uk](http://www.romaniatourism.co.uk) & [www.europa.eu.int](http://www.europa.eu.int)

## Dracula Legend

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.

The most important historical places related to Vlad Tepes are the 14<sup>th</sup>-century town of Sighisoara (Vlad's birthplace, now a restaurant and small museum of medieval weapons);



Vlad the Impaler (1431 -76)  
Source: Romania Tourism

the Snagov Monastery where, according to legend, Vlad is said to have been buried after his assassination; the village of Arefu, where many Dracula legends are still told; the city of Brasov, where Vlad led raids against the Saxon merchants; and, of course, Curtea Domneasca – Dracula's palace in Bucharest.

The 12<sup>th</sup>-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.

Source: European Commission



## Signposting and resources

- Contact the Regional Language Network to find quality-assured language trainers, interpreters, translators and cultural consultants in your area.

**RLN South West**  
Tel: 01392 264374  
[info@rln-southwest.com](mailto:info@rln-southwest.com)  
[www.rln-southwest.com](http://www.rln-southwest.com)

