



ROMANIA

EurOMo Country Report 2025

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Introduction

The Romanian media landscape is dominated by television & online media, with news consumption being led by several large news televisions and their respective news websites and social media accounts. Based on data compiled for the Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2025) and data from the Romanian Transmedia Audit Bureau – BRAT, our sample included the following media outlets: *PRO TV*, *stirileprotv.ro*, *Europa FM*, *Antena 1*, *observatornews.ro*, *Antena 3*, *CNN*, *hotnews.ro*, *Adevărul*, *Click*, *Libertatea*, *evz.ro*, *Digi24*, *Digi24.ro*, *România TV*, *Kanal D*, *B1 TV*, *Realitatea Plus*, *TVR 1*, *Radio România Actualități*, *Radio Zu*, *Stiripesurse.ro*, *Gandul Romania* (TikTok channel), *Realitatea Plus* (TikTok channel), *Știrile ProTV ro* (TikTok channel), *Robert Turcescu Oficial* (TikTok channel), *Euronews România* (TikTok channel), *Epoch Times Romania* (Facebook page), *Gen*, *știri* (TikTok channel), *Cristian Tudor Popescu* (Facebook page), *Marius Tucă* (Facebook page), *Recorder* (YouTube channel), *Romania Fast-Forward* (TikTok channel).

Outlets and Owners

The Romanian Audiovisual Law requires that audiovisual media service providers disclose their shareholder structure, and this information has been made available on the site of the National Audiovisual Council (CNA) in 2022, after being taken down in 2019 citing GDPR concerns. Direct owners are generally mentioned on the websites or imprints of outlets in our sample, except for social media accounts, where information mostly needs to be inferred. Beneficiary owners mostly require secondary public sources, especially for print or online outlets, which do not hold audiovisual licenses. Among the owners of these outlets, we find both large international actors like Ringier, Dogan Media, or CME Media Enterprises, Romanian companies, as well as companies established abroad by Romanian nationals. Among emergent news outlets that operate exclusively on social media & short vertical video platforms, some (like Romania Fast Forward) provide no transparency information. Some media outlets in our sample have foundations as their owners which carry the names of founders, without these persons appearing as shareholders, like Romanian businessman and politician Dan Voiculescu. Other outlets are owned by newly established companies, further limiting transparency (on the limited transparency of ownership see also the Media Pluralism Monitor, Toma et al., 2024, and the European Commission Rule of Law Report, European Commission, 2025).

In terms of non-media ownership, almost half of the owners in our sample are connected to non-media economic activities, from financial services to wired telecommunications and real estate. It is notable that several companies list their main economic activity as public relations and communication, media representation, market research and public opinion polling.

Even though analysts dispute whether the practice of financing information and communication campaigns from public money, sometimes with the declared aim of helping the media in times of crisis should be regarded as subsidies (Toma et al., 2022), observers recurrently note that there are media outlets receiving large amounts of undisclosed government spending: “The widespread practice of diverting public funds to the media, in a non-transparent manner, distorts the market and undermines the media’s watchdog function.” (RSF, 2025; see also Toma et al., 2024). Media expenses, including political advertising but also materials not marked as paid advertising amount for the largest category in the expenditures of political parties – over 40 million euros in 2024 (Pârvu, 2024), but such data is only available to varying levels of detail for the parties, not the media outlets, a major risk to transparency. The first round of presidential elections, of November 2024, were annulled by the Constitutional court partly with reference to the undeclared sources of

funding for the presidential campaign, particularly on social media (Constitutional Court of Romania, 2024).

The absence of self-regulation, enforcement mechanisms, and protective legislation undermines editorial and newsroom independence, professionalism, and public-interest orientation (Toma et al., 2022). The media sector in Romania is governed by general laws and regulations, such as the Law on Audiovisual Services, which provides a framework for broadcasting and electronic media, but Romania does not have specific media newsroom councils or editorial statutes at the national level. Media owners are not among the members of councils, and they have neither voting rights nor editorial responsibilities, because media councils do not exist in the Romanian media system. There is no information available about PEP in Romanian official documents and registers. However, there are some initiatives and organisations that play a role in addressing issues related to press freedom, media practices and journalists' rights, such as the Romanian Press Club (Clubul Român de Presă) and the Romanian Union of Journalists (Sindicatul Român al Jurnaliștilor MediaSind – SRJ MediaSind).

Distribution

According to 2023 data, television dominated as the primary news source (with 79% of survey respondents indicating TV as the most accessed source of news), 8% above the EU average, according to the 2023 Media & News Eurobarometer Survey. TV (most used by all age groups) is followed by social media (48%), online news platforms (47%), radio (33%), video platforms (31%), messaging apps (20%), print news (19%), podcasts (12%) and blogs (8%) (EP Media & News Survey, 2023). The internet penetration is 89% in 2025. (Newman et al., 2025.)

According to the National Regulatory Authority in Communications – ANCOM 2024 Report, in 2022, the total number of subscribers to TV retransmission services is 7.83 million (90% CATV, 10% DTH and IPTV below 0.01%). The TV distribution market is dominated by Digi (74.8%), followed by Orange (13.3%) and Vodafone (9.2%). The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) of market concentration is 5.871, indicating high concentration.

Romania ranks 13th globally (2nd in Europe) in fixed broadband internet speed (247.12 Mbps) and 52nd in mobile internet speed (74.88 Mbps) due to infrastructure differences between rural and urban areas. Internet services are affordable. Internet traffic is 87% fixed broadband and 13% mobile connections, with a 3% increase of mobile since 2022.

According to the National Regulatory Authority in Communications – ANCOM 2024 Report, Digi dominates the ISP fixed internet market with 71.9% of connections, followed by Orange (16%) and Vodafone (10.3%). The mobile internet market share distribution is significantly different with Orange leading (35.3%), followed by Digi (30.2%), Vodafone (22.3%), and Telekom mobile (12.2%). The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) of market concentration is 5530 (fixed) and 2941 (mobile) indicating high concentration on both markets.

The 2025 Digital News Report shows that 25% of Romanian respondents use TikTok as a news source.

The radio market is diverse, but radio broadcasting is analogue. According to the National Authority for Communications (ANCOM) 2022 Report, the 2020 national strategy for digital audio broadcasting implementation was not yet approved.

The circulation numbers of major paid print publications have dropped by roughly 35% to 45% between Q2 2022 and Q2 2025, according to Transmedia Audit Bureau Data on major print news publications.

Relevant non-linear distributors

According to the Digital News Report 2025, 24% of Romanian respondents share news via social media, messaging apps and email. The same source lists the top social media and messaging apps (Newman et al., 2025) with Facebook in a clearly dominant position for news-related use. Compared to previous years, TikTok has seen a significant increase in use as a news source (and overall).

Platform	For News	For All
Facebook	50%	73%
YouTube	31%	65%
TikTok	25%	42%
WhatsApp	22%	66%
Instagram	13%	34%
Facebook Messenger	10%	38%

Furthermore, with around 690 million monthly visits, Google is the most accessed website and search engine in Romania (with *google.com* and *google.ro*), followed by YouTube and Facebook (in the websites ranking) and Bing and DuckDuckGo (in the search engines ranking), respectively. Google holds 96% of the Romanian search market.

Main risks to transparency

The Digital News Report 2025 data shows that online news websites, apps and video networks (70%) rank above TV news (60%) and social media (46%) as a news source.

The dominant distributor on the ISP and Cable TV market (Digi) owns 12 TV licenses and 79 radio licenses (according to the National Audiovisual Council): *Digi24* news television and online news website (included in the sample) and ProFM Radio Network and *DigiFM* Radio Network (not included in the sample) are part of the RCS&RDS ownership structure. The Romanian “must-carry” list for 2025 includes 60 TV channels. According to the National Regulatory Authority in Communications – ANCOM 2022 Report, there are only isolated cases of net-neutrality infringement – disputed zero-rating offers in the case of mobile internet service providers and access problems due to technical/configuration errors.

Facebook dominates public news sharing practices in Romania. In terms of curatorial practices, Facebook lists European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN) as third-party independent fact-checking partners for Europe, with Funky Citizens/*Factual.ro* the only verified member from Romania, according to EFCSN (<https://members.efcsn.com/signatories>).

Although Google News ranks among the top apps, the Digital News Report survey does not indicate any relevant aggregator app. Google News Showcase is a global content licensing programme through which Google pays participating publishers to curate content. It was launched in Romania in June 2022 with 16 partner publications: *Adevărul.ro*, *Agerpres.ro*, *Descoperă.ro*, *Digi24.ro*, *Edupedu.ro*, *G4Media.ro*, *Gandul.info*, *Hotnews.ro*, *iDevice.ro*, *Mobilissimo.net*, *News.ro*, *Newsweek.ro*, *Profit.ro*, *Startu.tc*, *Stirileprotv.ro*, *Wall-street.ro*, *Digisport.ro*, *Paginademedia.ro*, *Ziarulfinanciar.ro* and *Libertatea.ro*. The news agencies *Agerpres* and *Mediafax* are also present in the Google News Showcase in 2023.

All relevant intermediaries in Romania either provide no information or disclose general criteria on pages that cannot be reached from the content area. Though some intermediaries inform that paid content might get prioritized, they do not promise to disclose the existence of commercial agreements behind this content.

Legal Framework

The Constitution guarantees freedom of the press in Romania. Freedom of the press also presupposes the freedom to set up publications. According to the Constitution, it is provided that the law may impose on the media the obligation to make public the source of the funding (specifically for public funding and electoral campaign funding).

In Romania, no press law was adopted, and the constitutional provisions on the freedom of the press, including the freedom to set up publications, their ownership and funding, were detailed by several laws, either by laws of a special nature (audiovisual field - Law 504/2002, as well as public television and radio – Law 41/1994) or by general laws, those applicable to any type of business. The latter are specific to the printed press.

Audiovisual Law No. 504/2002 contains concrete provisions on the definition of participants in the audiovisual market, the regime of ownership, its transparency, the shareholding structure, anti-concentration provisions, licenses and their public record keeping, the prohibition of censorship, the recognition of editorial independence. Dominant position in terms of forming public opinion is not allowed, for this purpose it has been regulated that a market participant should not exceed a market share of 30%. The shareholding structure is public and accessible, being displayed on the National Audiovisual Council’s website. In the past, there have been controversies over the publication of

shareholding lists, which were not always public or up to date, despite legal provisions to this effect. However, the list is now updated and published.

Law 504/2002 also regulates the establishment, organisation and duties of the National Audiovisual Council, which is an independent regulatory body under parliamentary control responsible for the audiovisual field.

AVMSD has been transposed into Romanian law. Its provisions are currently being incorporated into Law 504/2002, which concerns the audiovisual market and contains general provisions regarding intermediary service providers.

Public television and radio services are well regulated and have their own specific law (Law 41/1994) regarding their organisation and functioning. The majority of their financing comes from the state budget, with the remainder coming from funds attracted from the advertising market. Public television and radio are editorially independent autonomous services operating under parliamentary control.

Both the audiovisual regulatory body and the public radio and television services have a leadership appointed by the public authorities, parliament, government, president and, although the nominees do not necessarily belong to a political party, decisions can sometimes be influenced politically, depending on the different majorities or coalitions that are formed at the political level.

The funding regime is not always public in the audiovisual field, with transparency provisions only with regards to public funds and electoral campaign.

Print media is less well regulated. It is organised and operates based on the general business law, Companies' Law no. 31/1990, Trade Register Law no. 265/2022, Competition Law no. 21/1996 and Civil Code. The shareholding structure can be known, but only indirectly, by means of a paid request for the communication of extracts from the business register.

Funding is also not transparent in the field of print media. Only public funds can be traced, but only indirectly, through requests addressed to public authorities according to the Public Information Law no. 544/2001 or following the revenue and expenditure budgets of public authorities and not from companies holding printed publications.

The editorial responsibility belongs to each journalist and there are no content regulations or supervisory bodies, the only legal requirements being to respect public order and morals, and in case of violation, only civil sanctions can be applied, and only by a court of law.

As for digital platforms and the video sharing on platforms, regulations also exist in Law 504/2002, which also contains the transposition of the AVMSD, but these are minimal and generally specific to all audio-visual communications. They include the requirement to draw up an updated record of the providers of video-sharing platforms established or considered to be established on the territory of Romania. The body responsible for drawing up and publishing the list is the National Audiovisual Council. The law establishes a general obligation for platforms to protect minors and the general public from programmes and user-generated videos that incite violence or hatred based on different grounds of discrimination. This obligation also applies to user-generated videos and commercial communications whose dissemination constitutes public incitement to commit criminal offences.

Content regulations for digital publications have become more precise following the Digital Services Act, the new audiovisual code, and Law 50/2024. Law 50/2024 established ANCOM's competence as the coordinator of digital services in Romania. ANCOM is responsible for monitoring and ensuring compliance with the provisions of the DSA.

Platforms and intermediary service providers are required to communicate their data to the National Audiovisual Council, but we couldn't find a public list of these, as in the case with broadcasting services.

The ownership of digital publications can still be determined only indirectly, by consulting public registers.

The new regulations adopted in compliance with the DSA regulate direct sanctions against platforms, content distributors or users that can be applied, in the sense of fines and removal of illegal content or restrict access to it, or to disable the user's account. Service providers that provide storage space for video-sharing platforms may be required to remove, disable or restrict access to a video-sharing platforms. Registry operators that allocate domain names to video-sharing platforms may be required to remove the respective platform's domain name. There are no other local regulations specific to digital content and the DSA and AVMSD are currently in effect. Therefore, a number of decisions have already been implemented.

Conclusion

The Romanian news market is diverse in terms of brands and ownership. However, lack of transparency and public accountability regarding funding mechanisms as well as lack of strong professional associations that could exert control through self-regulatory mechanisms leaves room for questionable practices. The large amounts of public funds available to political parties and spent on media expenses, the exact details of which are not publicly available, continue to constitute a main risk to both transparency and independence.

Full ownership information is publicly available for broadcasters and intermediary services providers, not for the print press companies and online content distributors. Content distributors on online platforms, even if they operate as a press institution or provide services similar to those specific to mass media, only have the status of users and are not subject to any registration, their only record being available to just the platform.

The implementation of DSA in Romania highlights not only the passivity of institutions with diverse areas of competence but also a reactive and incoherent approach. European regulations will not have a decisive impact if they are not properly implemented and if national authorities do not clarify their roles and ensure precise and effective communication among themselves.

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