

MEDIA

SUSTAINABILITY

INDEX

2005



IREX

OVERALL, THE MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX (MSI) PANEL CONCLUDED THAT THE GENERAL SITUATION FOR THE MEDIA IMPROVED DURING 2005. THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS WEAKER, LESS OBSESSED BY ITS IMAGE, AND MUCH LESS INCLINED TO DRAW UP GLOOMY STRATEGIES AGAINST MEDIA THAN ITS PREDECESSOR.

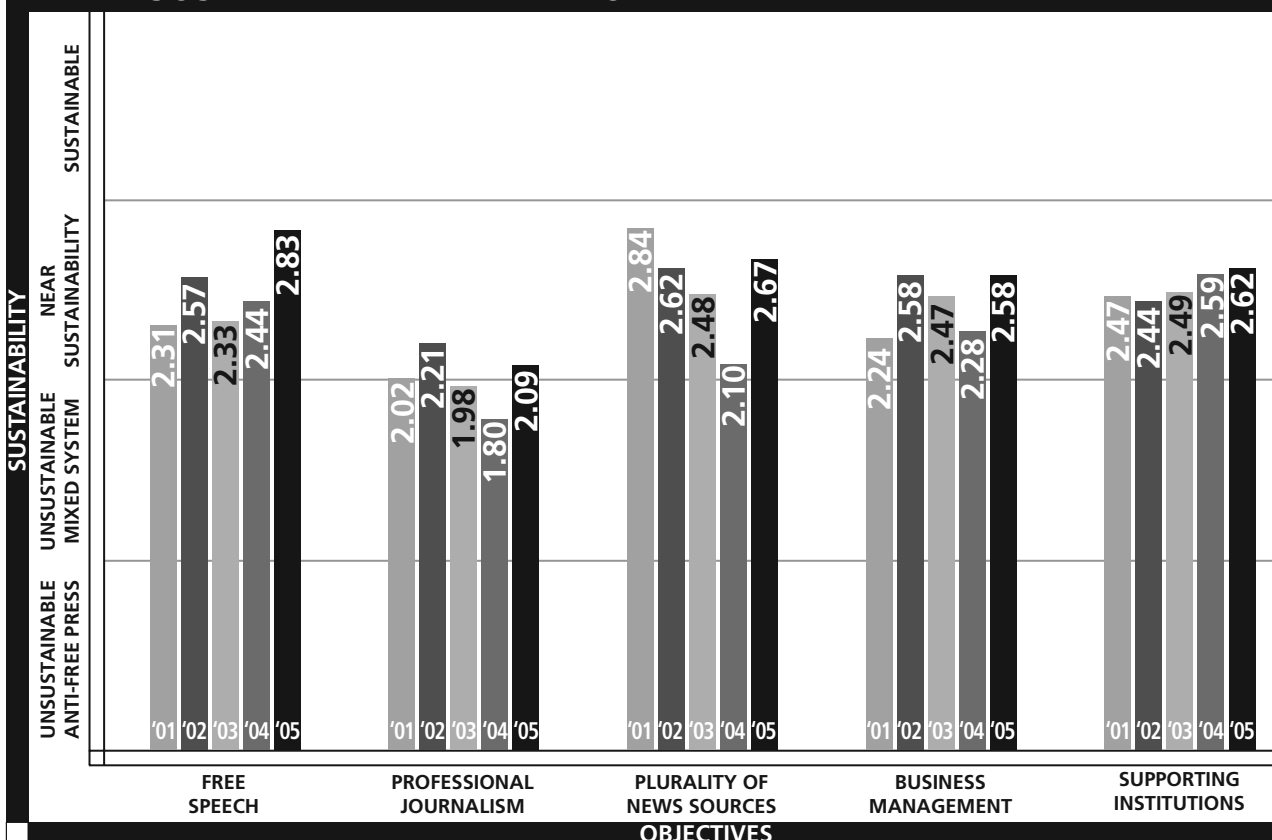


In 2000, the former communist Ion Iliescu and his Social Democrat Party (PSD) returned to power in Romania, and press freedom became a concern even as the country's post-Soviet economic growth was finally taking off. The media were especially affected by the approach of Prime Minister Adrian Nastase, who sought control using both political and economic leverage. Media independence in Romania became a focus for international organizations during 2003 and 2004. But at the end of 2004, Nastase lost the presidential race in a dramatic runoff against Traian Basescu. The new authorities pledged support for media freedom and curtailed previous practices that harmed the media market. However, conflict among the ruling coalition partners and discord between President Basescu and Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu gave the impression of a chaotic and feeble government. Criticism in the media sharply increased during 2005.

Overall, the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) panel concluded that the general situation for the media improved during 2005. The new government is weaker, less obsessed by its image, and much less inclined to draw up gloomy strategies against media than its predecessor. With political intervention no longer the main danger, the Romanian media is now addressing more systemic threats, including an opaque and concentrated ownership, a shortfall in revenues due to a poor advertising market, and the proliferation of publications and stations without clear economic resources to support them. Professional ethics remain a problem, not for lack of such codes but because they are not properly implemented. The public discussion of sensitive issues such as the relationship between journalists and media outlet owners represent important steps forward, but they still have to produce practical results.

The MSI panel reported improvement in Romania's media sector across all the objectives for 2005, with the overall evaluation progressing from 2.24 in 2004 to 2.56 in 2005. The most significant advance was registered in the increasing variety of news sources available to citizens. Specifically, the panelists noted the new law enacted in 2005 to deal with subsidies received by the media in the form of advertising contracts from government institutions that amounted to hidden leverage.

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: ROMANIA



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1): Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2): Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3): Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4): Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH

Romania Objective Score: 2.83 / 4.00

When the new government was formed at the end of 2004, the appointment of the human-rights activist Monica Macovei as Justice Minister was a surprise. She was reputed to be one of the toughest media lawyers in the country, and she defended freedom-of-speech cases in the European Court of Human Rights. In October 2005, she proposed a new set of amendments to the penal code with positive changes for journalists, including total decriminalization of insult and libel. The draft immediately encountered significant opposition in parliament, and Ioana Avadani, the executive director of the Center for Independent Journalism, said that despite some progress in terms of laws and regulations, freedom of expression is not an established or protected social value. However, the MSI panelists saw enough progress to register an advance in the ranking for this objective.

Panelists expressed mixed opinions about the fairness of the licensing process, which is controlled by the National Council of Broadcasting (CNA), an autonomous body subordinated to the parliament. Eleven members are appointed by the president, the government, and the parliament. Iulian Comanescu, chief of the media department within the *Evenimentul Zilei* newspaper, said, "Anything can happen during the process of granting licenses. It does not inspire confidence." Mihai Vartosu, a leading advertising industry executive, said his evaluation is more positive: "The number of scandals has decreased, and I think that at least the current legislation allows a fair and apolitical granting of licenses." Ioana Avadani, executive director of the Center for Independent Journalism, noted that even applicants who had previously differed with the CNA had received licenses, although conceding that only the smaller, less attractive licenses remained on offer.

The CNA has said it would take into account some political criteria in the allocation process in order to maintain balance among various forces. However, panelists rejected this approach. Ioana Avadani said: "By attempting to do something good, the CNA takes on some political referee prerogatives not prescribed by the law."

Market entry for a media business is as difficult as it is for any other enterprise. The value-added tax (VAT) is lower for newspapers and books, and panel participants agreed that taxation does not pose a problem for media outlets.

Violent attacks against journalists raised significant concerns in 2003 due to several major cases. No new

violence was reported in 2005, although the 2003 attack on Ino Ardelean, a journalist from Timisoara in western Romania, remains unsolved. Razvan Martin, who surveys abuses of journalists for the Media Monitoring Agency, said: "There are fewer situations than last year, when there was a lot of nervousness as it was an electoral year. There were no more beating cases, but situations of harassment still occurred—including, for example, confiscations of cameras."

Public media include four channels of Romanian Television, four radio channels, and the news agency Rompres. The president, the parliament, and the government appoint the boards of national radio and television stations under a 1995 law. An intense public debate took place in 2005 about various projects to change this law. Amid accusations of political interference by the previous government, the new parliamentary majority changed the boards and the directors for public radio and television, a move that panelists supported in 2004. A dispute occurred within the government coalition on naming new members. President Basescu refused to designate representatives until the law was changed, but

Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal/social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and the offended party must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

new boards were installed by other coalition members and opposition parties.

All the stakeholders agreed that the old law has to be changed. At least three varying drafts were submitted to the parliament during 2005. The first one, proposed by the Hungarian Party, a minor coalition partner, was essentially cosmetic but was passed by the Chamber of Deputies, one of the parliament's two houses, using an emergency procedure, although it was sharply criticized by the civil society. The second one, proposed by D.A. Alliance, a major coalition partner, was debated publicly and amended by the watchdog nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Finally, the third one was submitted by the opposition PSD in order to undermine the first project. By the end of the year, the D.A. Alliance and PSD both had agreed to withdraw their projects pending negotiation of a consensus solution. Civil-society organizations urged the Hungarian Union to withdraw its project prior to it reaching the Senate floor. Ioana Avadani, representing the Center for Independent Journalism during the negotiation process, said the party's project is very weak in protecting political independence.

Mihai Vartosu, a leading advertising industry executive, said his evaluation is more positive: "The number of scandals has decreased, and I think that at least the current legislation allows a fair and apolitical granting of licenses."

The Romanian parliament adopted a new penal code that was supposed to be enforced from June 2005. It eliminated prison terms for defamation, allowing only criminal fines, decriminalized slander,

introduced good faith as a defense for journalists, and reversed the burden of the proof of truth. Dissatisfied with some provisions wishing to eliminate completely calumny from criminal penalty, the government suspended implementation of the new code and came up with another draft. As a consequence, the old, Communist-era code is still in force. Panelists disagreed about whether the new version would muster the support needed to pass. The current director of the Romanian Helsinki Committee, Diana Calinescu, observed: "There were no cases of penal sanctions for journalists, but we had judges imposing huge sums as damages for expressing opinions."

Romania adopted a Freedom of Information Act in 2001. The implementation process proved to be

difficult, with the unreformed administration, narrow-minded officials, and a "culture of secrecy" proving to be roadblocks. The law does not clearly address the so-called national companies that operate through the government budget, but the new government has said it will propose to change the law to allow greater transparency. Another issue is that the model contracts that the Public Procurement Law provides for include confidentiality clauses, Martin said.

Media outlets have unrestricted access to international news and news sources, and there is no need for a special license to practice journalism in Romania. The Romanian Press Club, an association of publishers and editors, discussed calls for issuance of certificates for journalists. Many were concerned this could mean the introduction of restrictions to entry into the profession, given the influence of the club, and the issue was not resolved.

To gain access to certain institutions, journalists need accreditation issued by the authorities. Under FOI laws, accreditation can be cancelled by the authority only if a journalist seriously disrupts an institution's activities. If the accreditation is cancelled, the outlet for which the journalist works designates a replacement. The penalty cannot be applied to the media outlet itself. Despite this clear provision, there are still cases when institutions retaliate for what they consider negative reporting by forbidding access.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Romania Objective Score: 2.09 / 4.00

The MSI participants generally expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of reporting. "The main cause is the journalists' laziness—they do not contact all the sources," said Adrian Voinea, who leads the editorial teams at two newspapers and a radio station. Others noted the continued presence of reporters' opinions in their articles.

There are professional codes developed by various organizations and associations, and during 2005, the journalism community started to debate how to adopt a unified code. The most prominent codes are those adopted by the Convention of Media Organizations (COM) and by the Romanian Press Club (CRP), and several panelists expressed optimism that the discussion would produce results. Others considered the progress too limited. Journalist Iulian Comanescu said: "The CRP's code exists, but is not well-known and even less applied. It is a common situation to give bribes to newspapers. And a lot of weaker newspapers practically live from bribes."

Journalism meets professional standards of quality.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

This situation is not limited to print media. The well-known OTV station presents shocking material virtually nightly, promoting an extremist and rather paranoid view through its unbalance coverage. Fines by the Broadcasting Council have had no effect, as the owner of the station is financed by various sponsors—obscure or controversial businessmen who pay in exchange for being invited often to the studio where they can talk for hours without being interrupted. In June 2005, the extremist politician C.V. Tudor acknowledged at a party meeting that he paid OTV for making “propaganda.” Ioana Avadani, who defended the station in 2003 when authorities abruptly withdrew its license, said that in 2005, “everybody can live on the market, if the market sustains them. The problem with OTV is not that the programs are bad, but that it has no legitimate means to live from.”

By contrast, in October 2005, Mihai Munteanu, a journalist at *Evenimentul Zilei* newspaper, publicly denounced the attempt by a businessman to offer him gifts so that he would not write about the man’s controversial dealings with state institutions. The case was particularly significant because the man’s wife was an aide to the president, and she ultimately had to resign. The same *Evenimentul Zilei* published an article accusing Justice Minister Monica Macovei of drinking excessively at a public meeting. As the article lacked evidence and the witnesses denied the allegation, Mrs. Macovei, a popular minister, was defended by public opinion. Pressed also by

the Romanian Press Club, *Evenimentul Zilei* conducted an internal investigation and in August published another piece recognizing the mistake and apologizing.

In August 2004, President Basescu appeared on public radio accusing “one journalist” of threatening him with negative coverage. This blackmail was motivated by the prosecution of a business partner of the respective journalist. The president’s statement created an uproar, and everybody recognized the “anonymous” journalist as Sorin Rosca Stanescu, a media mogul controlling three newspapers. The president confirmed that he was referring to Stanescu, who later said the interaction was just a friendly conversation. The Romanian Press Club issued a statement saying that it could not take a position due to lack of evidence.

Panelists agreed that 2005 saw a change in the situation regarding self-censorship. “The taboo subjects seem to have disappeared, the multitude of current subjects concerning the government are public, and there is a clear difference from the former PSD government, which imposed silence on many issues,” Ioana Avadani said. Problems remain, however. On many occasions, the interest of the owner is visible in the content’s biases. However, Brindusa Armanca, a reporter for *Ziua* newspaper, also sees signs of journalists’ good faith, albeit a bit oddly manifested: “A journalist that knows a certain subject cannot appear in his newspaper gives it to another journalist from a paper which will print it.”

Razvan Martin said advertisers also try to influence coverage: “I had discussions with editors, and almost all of them mentioned pressures made upon them by advertisers. For example, Porsche organized a test drive during which an accident occurred. Phone calls were made so that this did not appear in the media.” But Mihai Vartosu said he had not heard of such cases “where actually there is a direct correlation between reporting and the granting of advertising budgets. It is very risky to do that. It is an issue of public image.”

Mihai Vartosu says he is a content consumer: “I think what I read is in correlation with my image of Romania.” But other panelists are less satisfied. “Here are still subjects that are not dealt with, discussions are not documented regarding important issues like European integration or NATO,” Razvan Martin said. Ioana Avadani said this resulted from “the poor training of journalists to comprehend and properly cover these issues.”

In September 2005, the Romanian Press Club started a debate on regulating the relations between journalists and owners. Pay levels remain unsatisfactory, panelists said. Because advertising is a better-paid industry, Mihai Vartosu says that a lot of journalists are being hired at

his firm: "I have the conviction that all those leaving their profession do it because of the money or the manner they are forced to work in." Other panelists observe the difference between the Bucharest-based media and local outlets, while Iulian Comanescu said there is a real gap because "journalists between 25 years and 35 years cannot be easily found in the media. The middle-aged journalists, who joined the profession in their early years, left to work in other fields."

The panelists uniformly complained about the increased quota of entertainment in media products. "The news isn't news anymore; anecdotes are what is demanded," Iulian Comanescu said. However, a good sign is that three televisions specializing in news are present on the market.

Panelists did not perceive the technical capacity of media as a problem, given the broad access to high technology in Romania. However, Adrian Voinea said the majority of newsrooms do not have legal software.

The market of niche publications is developed and continues to grow. Specialized magazines for IT, autos, women, fashion, and pets are strongly market-oriented and flourish.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Romania Objective Score: 2.67 / 4.00

There are an increasing number of news sources available to Romanians, and the MSI panelists registered the continued growth during 2005. More than 15 Bucharest-based daily newspapers are on the market, and the kiosks in main cities generally offer three to four dailies. The state television network has four channels, and private broadcasters have opened since 1993. Three television stations specialize in news, although their audiences are quite small. Urban areas are well serviced by cable systems offering a wide range of channels, and the firms have begun to penetrate the rural areas as well, with European Union (EU) data for 2005 showing that 58 percent of the population can access cable television. In addition, satellite transmission is increasingly reaching rural areas at prices comparable to cable subscriptions.

Concentration of media ownership is a concern, however, according to the MSI evaluators. For example, Dan Voiculescu, owner of Antena 1, the second-largest commercial television station, also leads the small Conservative Party, which depends on its presence in the media industry to maintain its place in the alliance with the former and current governments, the panelists said. Recently, Voiculescu launched an additional television station specialized in news programs. Three

Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

other major media holdings have developed around other controversial figures such as Adrian Sarbu, Cristian Burci, and the Micula brothers. In addition, in 2004, a powerful trade union created its own media empire, buying the most prominent news television station, a radio station, and two dailies.

The 2005 EU study of Romania's television sector concurred that the lack of transparency regarding the capital behind the stations is a major problem. For example, an investigation questioned cash transfers allegedly from the Romanian state budget to the media mogul Cristian Burci. The same report also said that an increasing number of media outlets have registered under offshore jurisdictions where ownership is difficult to uncover, apparently to conceal their ownership more effectively. "There are serious suspicions that the true owners are hiding behind fictitious names that appear in the offshore ownership of some newly arrived broadcasters, such as Realitatea TV, Global Media, or Radio Kiss FM," the EU report said.

President Basescu participated in a September meeting with the Convention of Media Organizations and stated there that the Romanian media are controlled by various interest groups. The MSI panelists differed on whether this and other discussion of the issue

represented progress during 2005. George Ene, general secretary of the Romanian Press Club, said the president's statement "shows that, actually, the ownership in media is transparent, because we know who holds what. It's a first step—anyway more than last year." Others were less optimistic, suggesting that no steps were being taken to remedy the situation.

Panelists agreed that consumer access to media in Romania is not a problem. The legislation sets no restrictions on foreign news, with access limited only by high prices. About 19 percent of the population has access to the Internet, according to 2005 data from the EU.

Despite the failure to reform the law on public radio and television, the panelists noted some progress during 2005 on the editorial side of both networks. Razvan Martin, who monitors editorial independence of television stations, said opposition voices had a greater presence on state television during the year, compared with 2004. "There is a more solid balance between political actors, especially if we look at the subjectivity factor," he said. "We prepared a report, 'Televisions Grew Teeth,' in which we show that criticism regarding the current regime on television has increased compared with last year."

The new governing coalition formed a parliamentary committee to investigate the situation at public outlets. The final report issued in May 2005 concluded that from 2000 to 2004, public radio and television both failed to ensure a plurality of views within their news reports and manipulated reporting to eliminate negative coverage of the government led by Adrian Nastase. The report also observed the "anticipative obedience" of journalists whose work indicated they were trying to anticipate what the government would like to see broadcast. The representative of Nastase's party boycotted the committee meeting and refused to accept its report, which was not followed by any measures or punitive steps against the management of the two networks.

Ioana Avadani, who had sharply criticized Romanian state television for political bias, was part of a jury that selected a new chief of its news department in 2005. She said the process showed institutional transparency had improved. "I was a member of this jury, and nobody called me to indicate a direction," she said. This was the first time this important position was filled using an open procedure, and, as a result, the outcome won widespread acceptance. The panelists expressed hope that the selection mechanism would become permanent.

The state-owned Rompres news agency is controlled by the parliament, but its market position is poor. The most important agency is the privately owned Mediafax, controlled by Adrian Sarbu but with a company registered in Holland with secret shareholders as the formal owner. Some panelists expressed doubts about Mediafax's professionalism, suggesting it is connected to the former ruling party. "It is very biased," said journalist Iulian Comanescu. "They make pro-PSD analyses and distribute them to other media outlets."

All television stations produce their own news programs, as do most radio stations. One panelist said there had been some reduction in local news production because of the affiliation of local stations to national ones. Most local stations produce only two hours of their own programming daily.

There are no restrictions on coverage of social issues, "except the journalists' lack of appetite for these subjects," Ioana Avadani said. However, Razvan Martin said there are "ignored categories: rural areas, women, older people, teenagers. The way the first Romanian gay parade was reflected in the media was as a sensational scoop."

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Romania Objective Score: 2.58 / 4.00

Romanian media are gradually but steadily becoming more and more market-oriented, the MSI participants agreed. Only a few newspapers function as real businesses, however, and public television and radio are historically badly managed. All print media have problems with inefficient service from the Romanian Post Company, which handles subscription-based distribution. For direct sales distribution, the market is still dominated by the formerly state-owned company Rodipet, which still delays payments even after being privatized in 2003. Despite the problems, however, George Ene said the general impression that the media industry does not offer opportunities for profit is incorrect: "In 2004, a single newspaper reported a profit of \$1 million!"

The print media depend too much on sales. The situation is better for the large newspapers in Bucharest, where the advertising market is more developed. But the panelists estimated that the portion of revenues raised from sales, as opposed to advertising, was at 60 to 80 percent for most papers. The state radio and television stations have three sources of funding: state subsidies covering the cost of transmitters and relays, compulsory subscriptions, and advertising.

Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

Many international advertising agencies are active in Romania, including McCann Ericsson, Saatchi & Saatchi, and Young and Rubicam, and they handle about 80 percent of advertising spending despite the large number of indigenous agencies. The overall market remains poor in comparison with Western Europe. Mihai Vartosu estimates total advertising revenues at about €200 million, with €130 million going to television, €40 million to print, €10 million to radio, and €20 million to other venues. The Bucharest-based media traditionally received almost all the big advertisers' business, but panelists said the situation has been improving during the past two years for local media. Adrian Voinea said the local newspaper he manages has seen ad revenues increase during the past two years from about \$16,000 to \$80,000.

There are no direct subsidies for media outlets in Romania. There have traditionally been two types of hidden subsidies—advertising paid by state institutions and the rescheduling of debt owed to the state budget—but panelists said progress had been made on both during 2005. The new government stopped the informal policy of buying good coverage through advertising contracts and invited a group of NGOs to develop proposals for better regulation. The Center for Independent Journalism led this coalition in pressing successfully for amendments to the Public Procurement Law, creating special procedures for public advertising contracts that are more transparent

and accountable. The European Commission commended these changes as the key advance for freedom of expression in Romania during 2005.

Many state entities that used to spend a lot of money for advertising campaigns with no clear outcome stopped this practice. This has had economic repercussions for some media outlets and led to concern that the government was not putting its case forward, unleashing unjustified criticism. Ioana Avadani rejected this suggestion: "Since so many public institutions lived an entire year without advertising, it means that it was not bought for its purpose but it was a form of subvention of the media ... Where there was the case, advertising continued to be made—for example, the campaign for the new fiscal code or for social tariffs for holidays."

In 2003, the Ministry of Finance published a list of companies owing money to the state that showed all the national television stations carried debt, either directly or through other companies with the same owners. The 2005 numbers published by the ministry showed that only the owner of Prima TV, the third commercial television station, remained in debt but had signed a rescheduling agreement. The Romanian Press Club, which includes all the major media outlets, changed its internal regulations during 2005 to require each member to make a statement about any debt to the state. Members that owe money but do not agree on a payment schedule would be suspended from the association, but the first filings indicate no major problems, George Ene said.

Market research is available, albeit at a price too high for some outlets and not put into practice at others, the panel agreed. The Romanian Audit Bureau of Circulation (BRAT) was founded in 1998 as an independent, non-for-profit organization. Many advertising agencies have a certificate issued by BRAT as a recondition for allocating any advertising to a print outlet. Through the broadcast law adopted in 2002, the state intervened in the broadcast rating system by allowing the CNA to select a single rating system, which is currently in place. The system functions as a private association of television stations and advertisers, and only its members have full access to the collected data.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Romania Objective Score: 2.62 / 4.00

Although the journalistic community in Romania remains generally skeptical of joining a union, important steps were made in 2004 and 2005. MediaSind, a federation of unions with more than 8,500 members including not only journalists but also

technical staff from state radio and television and printing facilities, has become increasingly active. In 2004, it signed a collective labor agreement for the media industry that establishes the clause of conscience—a special regulation that should allow journalists to obey only their consciences and to refuse owners’ interventions—as one of the fundamental labor rights for journalists. One panelist questioned whether the contract is applied across the industry, and another said that MediaSind puts itself in a “delicate position” by protecting so-called journalists working at, for example, the Ministry of Transportation.

The CRP gathers the most important media owners, publishers, and media directors. It also has a section for individual journalists, but this is less visible. CRP collaborates with watch-dog NGOs on shared concerns, such as regulating government advertising and advocating for a new law on public media. Another important actor is the Association of Local Press Editors (APEL), which brings together the regional outlets not represented in the CRP. Broadcasters have their own organization called ARCA, but it does not deal with editorial matters.

The most important NGOs are the Center for Independent Journalism (CJI), the Media Monitoring Agency (MMA), the Romanian Helsinki Committee, and the Pro Democracy Association. They act as an informal coalition to defend press freedom, keep international observers

informed, and place media concerns on the agenda of donor and multilateral organizations.

From this has emerged the Convention of Media Organizations in Romania (COM), including 40 organizations from across the country. “We are still very few,” Razvan Martin said. “In the advocacy campaign for a new law for public television, our lack of power was obvious.”

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There are 20 journalism university programs across Romania, private and state. The average number of students per class is 60, so a huge number of graduates flood the market every year. “As long as the law regarding education ties the funds received from the state to the number of students, we will have diploma factories,” Ioana Avadani said. Students do not receive sufficient hands-on training, despite a required annual three-week “practical training” at professional newsrooms. “There is a gap between universities and the industry,” said Iulian Comanescu. “Universities look with disdain upon the industry, and the latter with skepticism on the universities.”

After the 2001 closing of an institute run by the BBC, the CJI remained the only short-term training provider. CJI provides courses for journalists and journalism students, but also for students in related fields such as political science, economics, and law. It also provides targeted assistance to media outlets and hosts visiting professionals from abroad. More than 5,000 journalists and other media professionals and students have attended CJI programs since November 1994. The MediaSind union announced in late 2005 its intention to start a journalism institute. “There are no internal trainings within the companies, though there are a lot of people in newsrooms that don’t even know how to write in Romanian,” Iulian Comanescu said.

Panelists agreed that newsprint and printing facilities are widely available. Most of the newspapers own presses to reduce costs. A single newsprint factory exists in Romania, owned by a high-profile businessman and politician, but the panel did not consider this a problem because it is run as a straightforward business.

Kiosks for media distribution are, in principle, independent and free. The largest print media distribution company, the former state-owned Rodipet, remains inefficient and has delayed payments to media outlets often. Some panelists expressed concern regarding the concentration of Internet providers and cable distribution firms, which has reduced consumer choice.

Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists’ rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

Panel Participants

Ioana Avadani, Executive Director, Center for Independent Journalism, Bucharest

Razvan Martin, Program Coordinator, Media Monitoring Agency, Bucharest

Brindusa Armanca, Journalist, *Ziua* newspaper, Bucharest

Adrian Voinea, Editor, *Gazeta de Sud*, Craiova

Liviu Avram, Journalist, *Bucharest*

Mihai Vartosu, Regional Managing Director, Grey Advertising Agency, Bucharest

George Ene, General Secretary, Romanian Press Club, Bucharest

Iulian Comanescu, Journalist, *Evenimentul Zilei*, Bucharest

Moderator

Cristian Ghinea, Journalist, *Dilema Veche*, Bucharest

Observer

Liana Ganea, Media Monitoring Agency, Bucharest

ROMANIA AT A GLANCE

GENERAL

- **Population:** 21,673,000 (July 2004)
- **Capital city:** Bucharest
- **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Romanian 89.5%, Hungarian 6.6%, Roma 2.5%
- **Religions (% of population):** Orthodox 86%, Catholic 4.7%, Reformats 3.2%, Greco-Catholics 0.8%
- **Languages:** Romanian (official), Hungarian, German
- **GDP:** €58.9 billion (2004)
- **Literacy rate (% of population):** 97.4% for population over 10 years old
- **President or top authority:** President Traian Basescu
- **Next scheduled elections:** Parliamentary 2008, presidential 2009

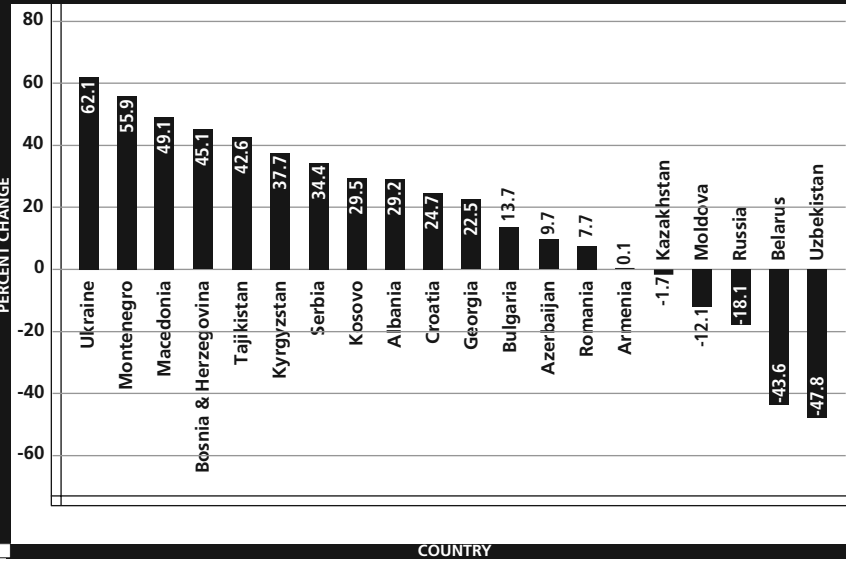
MEDIA-SPECIFIC

■ **Newspaper circulation statistics (total circulation and largest paper):** The newspapers registered by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (BRAT) in 2005 sold a total of 1,051,189 copies each day. *Audit Bureau of Circulation, October 2005*

Libertatea, the largest paper, sold 251,834 copies.

■ **Broadcast ratings (top three ranked stations):** Pro TV, Antena 1, Acasa TV
TNS-AGB

MSI AVERAGE SCORES—PERCENT CHANGE 2001–2005



■ **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Over 1,000 print outlets; according to the National Broadcasting Council, 519 radio stations and 189 television stations were licensed (2004), but not all of these actually function.

■ **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** €200 million (television €130 million, print €40 million, radio €10 million, other €20 million) *Mihai Vartosu, director of ARMA (Romanian Association for Measuring Audiences)*

■ **Number of Internet users:** Approximately 4 million *“Television Across Europe: Regulation, Policy and Independence”—Romanian chapter, EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program, 2005*

■ **News agencies:** Mediafax, Rompress, AM Press, Romnet, AMOS News

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: ROMANIA

