

ROMANIA'S POLITICAL TURNOVER AND LEGISLATIVE VOLATILITY: A TALE THAT ENDURE



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Preamble

Romania is once again going through a moment of political instability, following Parliament's adoption of a no-confidence motion that brought down the Bolojan government and amid continued difficulties in forming a stable governing coalition. This episode is not, however, an isolated one; it is part of a long series of frequent governmental changes that have defined the past decade and a half. It is precisely for this reason that, at CPAG, we set out to quantify the magnitude of these changes and to place them in a comparative perspective alongside the countries in the region, in order to understand whether the instability we are experiencing is a distinctly Romanian feature or a structural characteristic of the Central and Eastern European space.

The consequences of this instability extend well beyond the strictly political sphere. Frequent changes erode the state's capacity to formulate and, above all, to implement a coherent medium- and long-term strategy. In spite of a coalition that has been relatively stable on paper, governmental practice has shown that each new cabinet has marked a rupture from the projects and policies of its predecessors – a discontinuity that often nullifies the cumulative efforts of previous cycles. Romania thus appears trapped in a permanent cycle of “starting over,” in which strategic priorities are rewritten with every change of executive team.

The lack of stability and predictability in Romania directly affects the economy's capacity to follow a sustainable growth trajectory. Investments, whether domestic or foreign, require planning horizons that extend beyond the electoral cycle, and the absence of a predictable framework discourages long-term decisions and pushes capital toward regional alternatives perceived as safer.

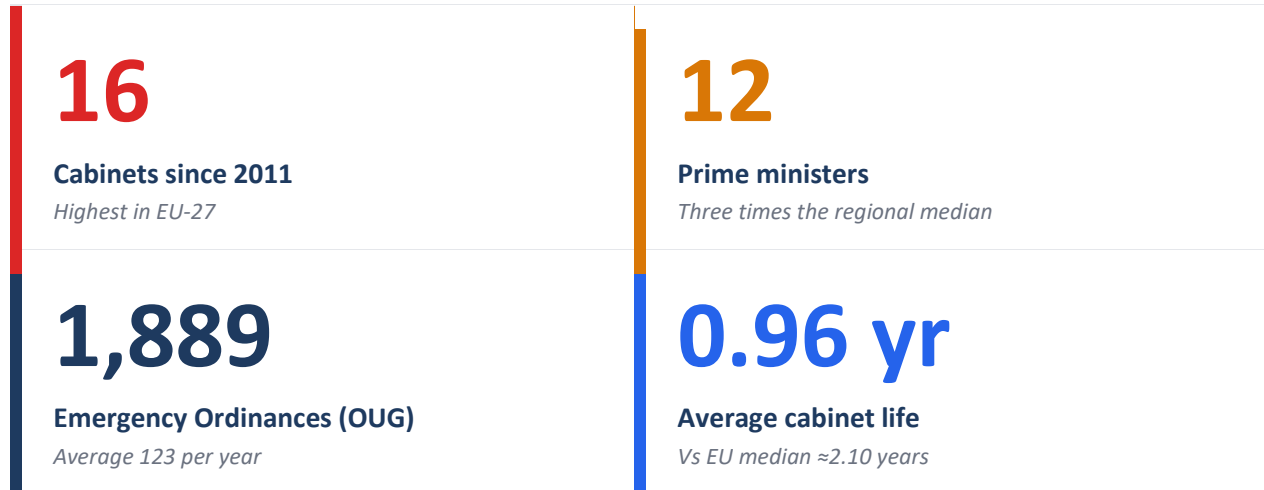
Compounding this is a chronic legislative instability: frequent, at times contradictory, changes to the regulatory framework make it extremely difficult for citizens and companies to adapt to the rules of the game. Fiscal and legal predictability – the foundation of any competitive economy – becomes more of an aspiration than a reality.

In a global context marked by profound transformations and a rapid succession of crises – geopolitical, energy-related, and commercial – it is essential for Romania to reduce its internal shocks and to build an economy resilient enough to navigate this turbulence without disproportionate costs. Internal stability thereby becomes not only a condition of good governance, but also a competitive advantage in attracting investment and sustaining long-term economic growth.

Through the analysis that follows, we place Romania in the mirror of the region, counting presidents, prime ministers, ministers of finance, and the composition of parliaments over the period 2011–2026, in order to assess, beyond perceptions, the actual degree of political instability and to understand the extent to which Romania lacks an economic development vision and strategy that endure beyond electoral cycles.

Key findings at a glance

What the analysis reveals about Romania, 2011–2026



Seven key findings

- **Extreme political turnover.** With 16 cabinets, 12 prime ministers, and 15 finance ministers since 2011, an average cabinet life of just around 1 year, Romania's status as a regional outlier on political turnover has produced a structural lack of continuity that prevents the successful execution of long-term reforms.
- **Regulatory inconsistency on the ground.** Despite the anchoring effect of EU membership, Romania's regulatory environment remains unpredictable, marked by opaque policy application and a lack of ground-level consistency for the businesses operating in the country.
- **A missing medium-term governance vision.** Romania needs a governance model that combines enough stability for medium-term planning with the political pluralism required to course-correct across electoral cycles.
- **Implementation deficiency.** With 1,889 emergency ordinances issued since 2011, an average of 123 per year, peaking at 226 in a single year, the state's reliance on this instrument reveals a system far more capable of rapidly changing the rules than of strategising or implementing them.
- **The double discontinuity.** Because Romanian cabinets act as both rule-makers and rule-implementers every change of leadership triggers a disruptive overhaul of the legislative framework itself, not merely of its application.
- **Tangible economic costs.** Chronic political instability is one reason why the country fails to maximise absorption rates of its EU-related funds.
- **Parliamentary fragmentation has increased the likelihood of increased cabinet instability.** The number of parliamentary groups has roughly doubled since 2008; the sovereigntist bloc (AUR, SOS Romania and POT) holds about 35% of seats in 2024–2028 and is not coalition-eligible, compressing the workable majority into ever-thinner mainstream coalitions. Six Prime Ministers have been removed by successful motions of no confidence during the period – a record of such motions not seen elsewhere in the region.

01

POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Cabinet, prime-minister and finance-minister turnover, 2011–2026

16

Cabinets

12

Prime ministers

15

Finance ministers

0.96 yr

Avg cabinet life

1. Government turnover and executive continuity

What this section asks. *How often does the team running the country change? And does the same person stay in charge of the public purse long enough to actually finish anything? This section answers those two questions for Romania and four neighbours, namely Bulgaria, Poland, Czechia, Hungary, using three simple counts: how many cabinets each country has had since 2011, how many distinct prime ministers, and how many distinct finance ministers.*

Three personnel-turnover indicators are reported for each country: the number of distinct cabinets in office, the number of unique prime ministers, and the number of unique finance ministers. The headline ranking uses a politically-formed rule, it excludes caretaker and interim cabinets, which are not politically chosen. Gross counts that include caretakers¹ are shown separately for comparison.

1.1 The headline numbers

Table 1. Cabinets, prime ministers and finance ministers in five Central European EU member states, 1 January 2011 – May 2026 (caretaker / interim holders excluded)

Country	Cabinets	PMs	Fin. min.	Yrs / cabinet	Yrs / PM
Romania	16	12	15	0.96	1.28
Bulgaria	7	5	6	2.2	3.1
Poland	8	4	9	1.9	3.8
Czechia	6	4	5	2.6	3.8
Hungary	4	1	3	3.9	15.3
Median of the five	7	4	6	≈2.2	≈3.1

Source: official national-government registers (gov.ro, government.bg, premier.gov.pl, vlada.cz, kormany.hu). Romania highlighted.

Romania is the regional outlier on every indicator. Sixteen politically-formed cabinets, twelve prime ministers and fifteen finance ministers since January 2011 – the highest of any country in the group,

¹ A caretaker (or “interim”) cabinet is a temporary government appointed to keep essential operations running between elections, usually when no political coalition can be formed. It does not pursue a political programme of its own; its job is to administer the state until politicians agree on a new majority. In our region, Bulgaria uses caretakers most often: between 2021 and 2024, the country spent almost one in five months under one. Romania uses them rarely – when it does, episodes typically last only weeks (e.g. Predoiu, Câmpeanu, Fifor).

and the highest of any EU-27 member state in the period. The mean cabinet life of ~1 year, roughly **eleven and a half months**, is the shortest in the region.

The practical consequence of this churn is rarely confined to the cabinet itself. Each new Romanian government typically replaces not only the prime minister and the twenty-or-so ministers, but also the deputy ministers, the three to five state secretaries per ministry, the heads of subordinate agencies, the cabinet of advisers around the PM and around each minister, and the leadership of the General Secretariat of the Government (SGG) – the body that coordinates inter-ministerial work.

◆ A useful comparison

A serious medium-term reform – fiscal consolidation, education reform, healthcare restructuring, the absorption of EU recovery funds – has an implementation horizon of three to five years. Romania's average cabinet survives less than one. **The mismatch between the shelf-life of governments and the shelf-life of the reforms they are supposed to deliver is the single most important fact in this report.**

With sixteen cabinets in fifteen years, the cumulative effect is the displacement of several thousand civil-service and political appointees, and the loss of the institutional memory that medium- and long-term strategy requires.

Hungary is the regional outlier of stability. Four cabinets, one prime minister, three finance ministers in fifteen years. This reflects sustained one-party dominance under Fidesz since 2010, secured by a constitutional two-thirds majority. It is a different mechanism from the consensual coalition stability seen in countries like Germany or Luxembourg – stability through political dominance rather than through inter-party agreement.

Bulgaria's apparent volatility is largely caretaker churn. Bulgaria's politically-formed total of seven cabinets is well below its gross count of thirteen (see 1.2). Most of the volatility comes from constitutional reliance on caretaker governments between elections, not from short-lived political coalitions.

▲ Key takeaway

Among five comparable Central European EU members, Romania has had more than twice as many governments and three times as many prime ministers as the regional median. The average cabinet life of under one year is structurally incompatible with the multi-year horizons that any serious economic reform requires.

1.2 Including caretakers

What this section asks. *If we count every cabinet that has held office, including the temporary “between elections” ones, does the picture change?*

The headline ranking in 1.1 deliberately excluded caretaker / interim governments because they are not politically chosen and do not pursue a political programme. But it is worth checking whether

including them shifts the ranking – particularly for Bulgaria, where caretakers are constitutionally common.

Table 1b. Gross counts including caretaker / interim governments and prime ministers, 2011–2026

Country	Cabinets (gross)	PMs (gross)	Yrs / cabinet	Yrs / PM
Romania	17	15	0.91	1.02
Bulgaria	13	11	1.18	1.39
Poland	8	4	1.93	3.83
Czechia	7	5	2.20	3.07
Hungary	4	1	3.85	15.33

Source: official national-government registers. Romania highlighted.

Even on the gross count that includes caretakers, **Romania still leads** – with 17 cabinets and 15 unique PMs, ahead of Bulgaria's 13 and 11. In other words, Romania's instability does not “disappear” when we adjust for the way different countries count their interim arrangements. Whichever lens we use – politically-formed only, or every cabinet that ever sat – Romania changes governments more often than any of its neighbours.

1.3 Time spent under full vs interim government

What this section asks. *Cabinets are easy to count – but what we really want to know is how much of the last fifteen years each country spent under a full, politically-elected government, versus under a temporary one. The two pictures can diverge substantially.*

Table 1c. Time governed by full cabinets vs interim / caretaker cabinets, 2011–2026 (total period: 184.0 months)

Country	Months under full govt	Months under interim	% full	% interim
Poland	184.0	0.0	100.0%	0.0%
Hungary	184.0	0.0	100.0%	0.0%
Romania	181.0	3.0	98.4%	1.6%
Czechia	177.4	6.7	96.4%	3.6%
Bulgaria	148.8	35.2	80.9%	19.1%

Source: official national-government registers. Romania highlighted.

Two different pictures of stability emerge from the same data. By the *number* of cabinets, Romania is the most volatile (16 politically-formed, 17 with caretakers). By the *time actually spent under interim rule*, Bulgaria is by far the most affected (35 months out of 184, or 19.1%), while Romania spent only 3 months (1.6%).

Romania changes governments often, but each new government is politically formed almost immediately. Bulgaria experiences shorter politically-formed cabinets because they keep being interrupted by extended caretaker episodes.

◆ Why this distinction matters

A country that spends a fifth of its time under caretakers (Bulgaria) and one that spends almost none under them (Romania) face different problems, even when their cabinet counts look similar on paper. Caretakers cannot pass major reforms; politically-formed but short-lived cabinets *can* pass major reforms – they just rarely live long enough to implement them. **Romania's instability is the second kind: a high turnover of cabinets that legislate vigorously and then leave before their decisions can be tested.**

▲ Key takeaway

On time spent under interim rule, Bulgaria looks worse. On time spent making and unmaking real policy, Romania does. The two countries face structurally different forms of political instability.

1.4 Parliamentary structure and political fragmentation

What this section asks. *If cabinet life in Romania is the shortest in the EU-27, what does the parliamentary structure underneath look like? Is there a structural cause in the way Romania's parliament is composed – and does that cause connect to the cabinet instability documented above?*

Romania's parliament is bicameral and largely symmetric: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate are elected concurrently for four-year terms, share virtually identical legislative powers, and sit jointly only for specific constitutional acts. Eighteen Chamber seats are constitutionally reserved for ethnic minority organisations. Between 2011 and 2026, five legislatures sat; the share of seats held by the largest parties – and the number of distinct parliamentary groups – tells a clear story of growing fragmentation.

Table 1d. Romanian legislatures, 2008–2028 (combined Chamber + Senate seats at start of legislature)

Legislature	Total seats	Top parties (combined seats)	Parl. groups
2008–2012	471	PDL 166 · PSD+PC 163 · PNL 93 · UDMR 31 · min. 18	5
2012–2016	588	USL (PSD+PNL+PC+UNPR) 395 · ARD 80 · PP-DD 68 · UDMR 27 · min. 18	5
2016–2020	465	PSD 221 · PNL 99 · USR 43 · UDMR 30 · ALDE 29 · PMP 26 · min. 17	7
2020–2024	466	PSD 157 · PNL 134 · USR-PLUS 80 · AUR 47 · UDMR 30 · min. 18	6
2024–2028	465	PSD 122 · AUR 91 · PNL 71 · USR 59 · SOS 40 · UDMR 32 · POT 31 · min. 18	8

Source: Chamber of Deputies (cdep.ro), Romanian Senate (senat.ro), Central Electoral Bureau (bec.ro)

To see how those seats translate into governing majorities, the table in Annex 1 shows the initial governing coalition for each legislature, the parties involved, and the share of the total parliament those parties controlled at the start of the term.

Fragmentation has roughly doubled. In 2008–2016, the Romanian parliament typically held five parliamentary groups; from 2016 onward it has held seven or eight. The 2024–2028 chamber is the most fragmented since 1990.

The PSD/PDL–PNL duopoly has collapsed. In 2008–2012, the three legacy mainstream parties (PDL, PSD+PC, PNL) held 422 of 471 seats – about 90%. In 2024–2028, PSD and PNL together hold only 193 of 465 seats – about 41% – while PDL and its successor PMP have disappeared from Parliament.

Governing majorities have become more fragile despite appearing numerically sufficient. Between 2008 and 2016, governing coalitions generally held working majorities of 67–76% of seats – with two notable exceptions, the Boc II and Ungureanu cabinets, whose parliamentary support fell just below 50% under the political cost of the austerity measures adopted during the 2008–2010 financial crisis. After 2016, majorities became thin or fell into minority government, and cabinets frequently fell mid-term. In the 2024–2028 legislature, a working majority has been restored – but only because four parties (PSD, PNL, UDMR and USR) form the governing coalition. On paper, 61% looks comfortable; in practice, the loss of any single partner would immediately threaten the government – as happened when PSD joined AUR in filing a motion of no confidence against the Bolojan cabinet.

Sovereignist parties are now a structural force. AUR, SOS Romania and POT – none of which existed in Parliament before 2020 – together hold 162 of 465 seats in 2024–2028, roughly 35%. None is currently considered coalition-eligible by the mainstream parties, which compresses the workable majority into the remaining 65% of the chamber.

How Romania compares to the region

The fragmentation aspect looks different across Central Europe. Hungary stayed within 4–6 parliamentary groups across five legislatures; Poland within 5–6; Czechia oscillated 4–9; Bulgaria fluctuated cycle by cycle, in part because eleven legislatures sat in 15 years (against four or five in every peer). Romania, posted the largest absolute increase in fragmentation among the five countries – from 4 effective groups in 2008 to 7–8 in 2024.

Why Romania's parliament brings cabinets down

Six Prime Ministers have been removed by successful motions of no confidence adopted by Parliament during 2011–2026: Emil Boc (PDL, February 2012), Sorin Grindeanu (PSD, June 2017), Viorica Dăncilă (PSD, October 2019), Ludovic Orban (PNL, February 2020), Florin Cîțu (PNL, October 2021), and Ilie Bolojan (PNL, May 2026). By contrast, Hungary has had no successful motion of no confidence since 2010²; Poland uses a constructive vote (which raises the bar); Czech and Bulgarian government turnover has typically come through coalition collapse or voluntary resignation rather than motions of no confidence. The Romanian executive is therefore the most directly accountable to – and the most exposed to – its legislature among the five.

Since the fall of the Bolojan government, the political crisis has lengthened through the difficulty of forming a new parliamentary majority capable of sustaining a stable executive. The President has successively designated two candidates for prime minister, but these attempts have exposed the limits of the current parliamentary arithmetic: in a fragmented legislature, where governmental support depends on negotiations among several parties with diverging positions and interests, building a

² This, could, however, generate even adverse effects as the relationship between Hungary and the EU showed over the last years

coherent majority becomes a process vulnerable to political deadlock. The situation shows that instability is not only about removing a government — it is also about the political system's capacity to convert a parliamentary result into a workable governing formula.

◆ **Synthesis: fragmentation as the upstream cause of cabinet instability**

Taken together with the cabinet, prime-minister and finance-minister turnover figures documented in section 1.1, parliamentary data point to the fact that, as parliamentary groups rose from 5 in 2008–2016 to 6–8 from 2016 onward, cabinet life shortened. The six successful motions of no confidence all occurred in legislatures with 5–7 effective groups, where no single party held a majority on its own.

The “grand coalition” is defensive arithmetic, not a preference. When the two largest parties together fall well short of a majority – PSD+PNL had 203/466 (44%) in 2020–24 and 193/465 (41%) in 2024–28 – they are forced into otherwise unlikely coalitions. These deliver formal majorities at the price of low ideological coherence, recurrent renegotiation, and a tendency to substitute personnel changes (rotating PMs, replacing finance ministers) for genuine programmatic agreement.

Fragmentation is therefore an upstream cause of the economic-policy deficit identified elsewhere in this report. Cabinet life of under one year is structurally incompatible with the 3–5 year horizons required by fiscal consolidation, education and health reform, public-administration reform and EU funds absorption. Romania has repeatedly missed PNRR milestones precisely because the cabinet that committed to them is no longer the cabinet asked to deliver them.

◆ **The economic geography of the anti-system vote**

Drawing on a separate CPAG paper by Ella Kallai, *Social Cohesion at Risk* (June 2025), the May 2025 presidential election split Romania along an economic fault line: the four regions at or above 70% of the EU average GDP per capita PPS – Bucharest-Ilfov ($\approx 200\%$), West, Centre, North-West – voted majority for the European path, while the four regions below that threshold – North-East (46%), South-East (61%), South (60%), South-West (62%) – voted majority for change. Sixty-four percent of all change votes came from counties where GDP per capita grew slower than the country average between 2000 and 2022.

Romania has had the fastest national real convergence in the region (GDP per capita PPS rising from 26% to 78% of the EU average between 2000 and 2023) but also the widest internal regional gap (richest-to-poorest ratio rising from 3.1 in 2000 to 4.1 in 2023). The sovereigntist surge in Parliament tracks that same county-level pattern, so the parliamentary fragmentation diagnosed above has an **economic-geography upstream cause that no reform of coalition arithmetic can address on its own**. Investments prioritised in the regions left behind would do more to stabilise the political system than any change to the way governments are formed.

▲ **Key takeaway**

Romania's growing parliamentary fragmentation is the upstream structural cause of its short cabinet life. The number of parliamentary groups doubled from four in 2008 to seven or eight by 2024; the sovereigntist bloc now holds roughly 35% of seats and is not coalition-eligible; the

workable majority compresses into ever-thinner mainstream coalitions; and six Prime Ministers have been removed by successful motions of no confidence. The economic geography of the anti-system vote suggests this fragmentation has roots that lie outside Parliament itself – in the regional disparities of Romanian convergence.

2. The World Bank Governance Indicators

■ Quick explainer — What are the World Bank Governance Indicators (WGI)?

The Worldwide Governance Indicators are a set of six annual scores produced by the World Bank since 1996, aggregating hundreds of expert and survey-based assessments into a single comparable number per country, per year, per dimension. Three of the six are relevant for this report:

- **Political Stability (PV)** — will the government be destabilised through violent or unconstitutional means?
- **Government Effectiveness (GE)** — can the state design good policy and actually deliver it?
- **Regulatory Quality (RQ)** — are the rules under which businesses and citizens operate sound and predictable?

Scores run from roughly **-2.5 (worst) to +2.5 (best)**, with the global average at zero; above +1.0 is genuinely strong, below zero signals weakness.

2.1 Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism

What this section asks. *How likely is it, in the eyes of international observers, that the Romanian government could be destabilised by unconstitutional or violent means? And how does that perception compare with the region?*

This indicator measures perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilised by unconstitutional or violent means, including domestic political violence and terrorism. **Higher scores mean greater perceived stability.**

Table 2. World Bank WGI 'Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism' (PV.EST), 1996–2024

Country	Avg 1996-2024	Avg 2011-2024	Min (year)	Max (year)	Latest 2024 / 2023	Rank 2024 of 215
Czechia	+1.02	+1.05	+0.61 (2000)	+1.13 (2008)	+0.97 / +1.07	43
Hungary	+0.82	+0.70	+0.44 (2024)	+1.24 (2002)	+0.44 / +0.58	85
Poland	+0.72	+0.74	+0.22 (2004)	+1.10 (2010)	+0.50 / +0.51	79
Bulgaria	+0.32	+0.33	-0.11 (1996)	+0.59 (2018)	+0.04 / +0.31	110
Romania	+0.27	+0.33	-0.28 (2000)	+0.67 (2021)	+0.16 / +0.50	101

Source: World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators. Romania highlighted.

Hungary's score is high but falling fast. From a peak of +1.24 in 2002 to +0.44 in 2024 – Hungary's all-time low. The decline reflects rule-of-law concerns under continuous Fidesz government since 2010. The headline “stability” of one prime minister for fifteen years is, paradoxically, beginning to be read by international observers as a *risk* rather than a strength.

Romania's 2024 drop is unusually steep. A 0.34-point fall in a single year (from +0.50 in 2023 to +0.16 in 2024) – among the steepest single-year declines for any EU member state in the entire WGI series. This reflects the political turbulence around the Constitutional Court's December 2024 annulment of the presidential election and the rerun in 2025.

◆ **What this looks like to outside investors**

A 0.34-point fall in a single year is the equivalent of moving down by roughly 30 places in the global ranking. For investors deciding whether to expand a factory, open a regional office, or refinance a multi-year project, this kind of shift is a flashing yellow light – not because of the absolute level, but because of the rate of change.

Bulgaria's 2024 reading is now the lowest of the five. Bulgaria peaked at +0.59 in 2018; the fall to +0.04 in 2024 suggests external observers now treat the recurring Bulgarian cabinet-formation deadlock as a more serious risk than they did a decade ago.

▲ **Key takeaway**

Both Romania and Hungary are losing perceived political stability in international assessments – but for opposite reasons. Romania, because its political system is producing too many cabinets and a contested presidential election; Hungary, because its political system has been producing too few alternatives and a steady erosion of checks and balances. With the recent change of government in Budapest, however, Hungary may recover its stability score more quickly than Romania: a fresh political mandate typically prompts external observers to reset their assessments, whereas Romania's pattern of frequent cabinet changes is structural and harder to unwind in a single electoral cycle.

2.2 Government Effectiveness

What this section asks. *Once a Romanian government is in office – however briefly – does the state actually function? Can the public administration design and deliver policy? This is a different question from whether cabinets last; it is about the underlying machine.*

This indicator captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the civil service's independence from political pressures, and the government's ability to design and implement policy. **Higher scores mean a more effective state.**

Table 3. World Bank WGI 'Government Effectiveness' (GE.EST), 2011–2024

Country	Avg 2011-2024	Min (year)	Max (year)	Latest 2024 / 2023	Rank 2024 of 213
Czechia	+0.99	+0.69 (2013)	+1.24 (2023)	+1.18 / +1.24	25

Country	Avg 2011-2024	Min (year)	Max (year)	Latest 2024 / 2023	Rank 2024 of 213
Poland	+0.67	+0.52 (2022)	+0.91 (2014)	+0.67 / +0.63	74
Hungary	+0.59	+0.43 (2012)	+0.78 (2021)	+0.50 / +0.55	96
Romania	-0.04	-0.25 (2020)	+0.42 (2024)	+0.42 / +0.13	103
Bulgaria	-0.07	-0.28 (2011)	+0.11 (2023)	+0.04 / +0.11	138

Source: World Bank WGI. Romania highlighted.

Romania has shown the largest improvement in the group. From -0.25 in 2020 to +0.42 in 2024 – Romania's first sustained move into clearly positive territory in the series. This improvement coincided with the post-2021 strengthening of administrative capacity linked to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) and the broader EU funds implementation cycle. It also occurred during a period of relative political accommodation between the two main parties, PSD and PNL, which maintained a broad governing coalition despite several changes in government leadership.

◆ A counter-intuitive finding

The same country that was recording its worst-ever political-stability score in 2024 was simultaneously recording its best-ever government-effectiveness score. The political layer was visibly fraying, while the administrative layer was visibly improving. The likely explanation: EU-anchored reform machinery – PNRR milestones, Cohesion Funds rules, EDP fiscal monitoring – has built an administrative core that increasingly operates independently of the political turnover above it. **The state has learned to function around its cabinets.**

Hungary's score has flatlined despite stable cabinets. The 2024 reading (+0.50) is below the 2021 peak (+0.78) and roughly back at its 2014 level. Cabinet stability has not translated into sustained gains in perceived government effectiveness – a useful reminder that having the same prime minister for fifteen years is not, on its own, the same thing as building a more capable state.

Czechia leads the group consistently, ranking in the global top 30 throughout the period. This sets the regional benchmark.

▲ Key takeaway

In Romania, the perceived effectiveness of the state has improved sharply since 2020 – the opposite of what cabinet-turnover statistics alone would predict. The most likely explanation is that EU-funded administrative reforms have protected parts of the state from the frequent changes at the political level.

3. Romania in the EU-27: A Descriptive Overview

What this section asks. *How does Romania's position compare with the entire European Union – including the older, more politically stable democracies of Western and Northern Europe? Is Romania an outlier within Central Europe, or an outlier within the EU as a whole?*

This table presents the same three indicators – cabinets, prime ministers, and finance ministers – for all twenty-seven EU member states, ordered by cabinet count. The reference period is the longest possible: from 1 January 1990 (or independence/EU accession date, whichever is later) to May 2026. Romania is highlighted; Cyprus is reproduced for completeness but excluded from the cabinet ranking on account of its presidential constitution.

■ **Quick explainer — Why group countries into clusters?**

The clusters capture different political traditions: post-communist democracies are typically less than 35 years old; Western European democracies have stable, consensus-driven coalition cultures; Nordic countries combine social-democratic traditions with high institutional trust. Comparing Romania only with Hungary or Bulgaria can be misleading; placing it alongside Germany, the Netherlands or Luxembourg shows the full distance between Romania's experience and the EU mainstream.

Table. EU-27 governments, prime ministers and finance ministers, 1990 – May 2026

Country	Cabinets	PMs	Fin. min.	Yrs/cab.	From	Cluster
Romania	36	20	27	1.01	1990	CEE / Balkans
France	28	17	18	1.30	1990	Western Europe
Bulgaria	24	16	18	1.51	1990	CEE / Balkans
Italy	21	14	17	1.73	1990	Southern Europe
Latvia	21	15	17	1.68	1991	Baltics
Poland	21	16	17	1.73	1990	CEE / V4
Estonia	18	11	14	1.96	1991	Baltics
Greece	18	11	13	2.02	1990	Southern Europe
Lithuania	18	12	14	2.02	1990	Baltics
Portugal	18	8	11	2.02	1990	Southern Europe
Czechia	17	13	15	1.96	1993	CEE / V4
Croatia	16	12	14	2.21	1991	CEE / Balkans
Finland	16	12	14	2.27	1990	Nordics
Slovakia	16	9	12	2.08	1993	CEE / V4
Slovenia	15	10	12	2.36	1991	CEE
Austria	14	8	12	2.60	1990	Western Europe
Denmark	14	6	10	2.60	1990	Nordics
Sweden	14	7	11	2.60	1990	Nordics
Belgium	13	7	11	2.79	1990	Western Europe
Ireland	13	8	10	2.79	1990	Western Europe
Spain	13	5	11	2.79	1990	Southern Europe

Country	Cabinets	PMs	Fin. min.	Yrs/cab.	From	Cluster
Hungary	12	8	10	3.03	1990	CEE / V4
Netherlands	12	5	10	3.03	1990	Western Europe
Germany	11	5	10	3.30	1990	Western Europe
Malta	9	5	8	4.04	1990	Southern Europe
Luxembourg	8	4	6	4.54	1990	Western Europe
Cyprus*	n/a	6	12	n/a	1990	Southern Europe
EU-27 median	16	9	12	≈2.10	—	—

'Yrs/cab.' is computed as the count-period in years divided by the cabinet count. Cyprus is excluded from cabinet-count comparison (presidential system); the figure shown there is the number of presidents since 1990. Source: author's compilation from official national parliamentary and government registers.

Romania is the EU-27 outlier on all three indicators. Its 36 cabinets are 28% above the second-highest figure (France, 28) and **more than four times** the lowest (Luxembourg, 8). Its 20 prime ministers exceed France's 17 and Bulgaria's 16. Its 27 finance ministers are nine more than the next-highest national total (France and Bulgaria, with 18 each).

◆ What this means for economic planning

Long-term capital allocation – a factory, infrastructure, multi-year R&D, a regional headquarters – is decided over horizons of seven to ten years. In that time, the typical Western European country goes through two to three governments. Romania goes through six to eight. This is the practical meaning of policy unpredictability: **the near-certainty that the rules, the tax framework, and the official interlocutors will change at least once during the lifetime of any serious investment decision.**

It is also worth noting *who Romania's nearest neighbours are on this league table*: France, Bulgaria, Italy, Latvia, Poland. France is a special case (its semi-presidential system permits frequent ministerial reshuffles without changing the head of state). Italy and Bulgaria are the two other EU members traditionally associated with persistent governmental volatility. Latvia and Poland round out the group. **The countries Romania is most often compared with are the EU's least stable democracies on this measure** – and Romania still tops the list.

By contrast, the EU's most stable democracies on this measure are Luxembourg, Malta, Germany, and the Netherlands – countries that have built strong consensus-based coalition cultures, in which government formation tends to produce durable arrangements that survive multiple electoral cycles.

▲ Key takeaway

Romania's instability is not a regional phenomenon, but a Europe-wide one. Across thirty-five years and twenty-seven member states, no other EU country has changed its government, prime minister, or finance minister as often. Even within the post-communist cluster – which faced a similar transition starting point in 1990 – Romania's record is distinct: 12 more cabinets than Poland or Czechia, 24 more than Hungary.

4. Regulatory quality and institutional predictability

What this section asks. *Even when governments change frequently, do the rules under which businesses and citizens operate change with them? Or has Romania – through its EU membership – built a regulatory framework stable enough to outlast its cabinets?*

This section reports the third WGI dimension – **Regulatory Quality (RQ)** – which captures perceptions of the government's ability to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private-sector development.

Unlike Political Stability (PV) and Government Effectiveness (GE) covered earlier, Regulatory Quality is concerned with the substantive content of the rules under which businesses, investors and citizens operate – not with how often the cabinet that produces them changes. It is therefore the natural bridge from Part I (political instability) to Part II (legislative and regulatory stability): it asks whether high cabinet turnover has, in practice, translated into chaotic regulation.

Table 4. World Bank WGI 'Regulatory Quality' (RQ.ES), 2011–2024

Country	Avg 2011-2024	Min (year)	Max (year)	Latest 2024 / 2023	Rank 2024 of 211
Czechia	+1.08	+0.81 (2014)	+1.33 (2022)	+1.23 / +1.23	18
Poland	+0.78	+0.67 (2021)	+0.90 (2013)	+0.69 / +0.73	77
Hungary	+0.50	+0.24 (2023)	+0.90 (2011)	+0.34 / +0.24	118
Romania	+0.38	+0.30 (2020)	+0.45 (2015)	+0.38 / +0.34	109
Bulgaria	+0.37	+0.25 (2022)	+0.56 (2016)	+0.29 / +0.35	128

Source: World Bank WGI. Romania highlighted.

Hungary has the steepest sustained decline in the group. From +0.90 in 2011 (the highest reading of any country in the group at that point) to +0.24 in 2023 – a 0.66-point loss over thirteen years. This tracks the cumulative effect of sectoral special taxes, retroactive regulation of utilities, and the post-2020 reliance on government decrees.

Romania has the most stable regulatory quality of the five. Despite having had 16 cabinets over the period – the highest cabinet turnover in the group – Romania's score has fluctuated in a narrow band of 0.30–0.45 for fourteen years. Frequent government changes have not, in fact, translated into shifts in perceived regulatory quality. The most plausible explanation is that the underlying regulatory framework, shaped by EU accession requirements and EU funds conditionality, has been broadly insulated from cabinet reshuffles.

◆ The EU as a regulatory anchor

Membership of the European Union imposes a body of rules – the *acquis communautaire* – that no individual Romanian government can substantially rewrite. Single-market regulations, competition policy, state aid, financial regulation, environmental and consumer standards: these are decided in Brussels and applied in Bucharest. For investors, this is a quiet but powerful guarantee – the parts of Romanian regulation most relevant to cross-border business are protected from domestic

political turbulence by an institutional layer above the national cabinet. **Romania's cabinets come and go; the EU rulebook does not.**

Bulgaria has lost ground since 2018. Peaked at +0.56 in 2016; drifted to +0.29 in 2024, the lowest of the five. The decline coincides with the 2021–2024 caretaker-government sequence.

◆ A note from the business front line

The WGI scores suggest broad regulatory stability, but the perception of investors operating in Romania paints a more critical picture. According to the FIC Members Business Sentiment Index (September 2024 reading – aligned in time with the WGI 2024 reporting), 64% of foreign investors described the regulatory burden as uncompetitive, 80% found the transparency and consistency of policy application uncompetitive, and 68% said the legislative environment had become less predictable. Forty-four percent reported that the overall business environment had recently worsened, against only 10% who reported improvement.

The AmCham Romania Business Barometer (6th edition, 2024) confirms this picture through a different methodology and respondent base. 62% of AmCham member companies rated the predictability of the investment framework as poor or weak – up from 51% in 2023 – while 51% rated economic and industrial policy as poor or weak, a sharp deterioration from 35% the previous year. The overall investment and business climate score also fell: the share of respondents rating it as “good or very good” dropped from 46% in 2023 to 37% in 2024.

The divergence with the WGI is itself informative: the WGI captures expert assessments of the formal framework, while the FIC and AmCham reflect investors' day-to-day operational experience.

◆ A note from public opinion (Eurobarometer)

Eurobarometer surveys place Romanian trust in national institutions among the lowest in the EU. In the Autumn 2023 wave, only 29% of Romanians said they tend to trust the national Parliament and 36% the Government, against 52% who expressed trust in the European Union. By Autumn 2024, Romanian trust in the EU had risen further to 56%, while EU-wide trust in national institutions fell by another 3 percentage points.

Cross-indicator note (Romania)

Across the three WGI dimensions, Romania's 2024 profile is heterogeneous:

- **Political Stability** has fallen sharply (from +0.50 to +0.16, see Section 2.1)
- **Government Effectiveness** has risen sharply to a series high (from +0.13 to +0.42, see Section 2.2)
- **Regulatory Quality** has remained essentially flat (+0.34 to +0.38, this section)

The cabinet-count statistic alone would have predicted uniform “instability” across all three dimensions. The WGI evidence shows the opposite: political-event volatility, administrative capacity, and regulatory continuity have, in the Romanian case, **partially decoupled**. This decoupling is an important nuance for the Part II analysis below: the rules under which Romania operates have been

more stable than the cabinets that change them, partly because much of the framework is anchored in EU-level commitments outside any single cabinet's control.

▲ Key takeaway

Romania's high cabinet turnover has not destabilised the formal regulatory framework, which is anchored by EU membership. However, business-sentiment data show that the lived application of those rules has become harder for investors to navigate. The reassuring finding (a stable Brussels-shaped framework) and the worrying one (deteriorating operational experience on the ground) are not in contradiction: they capture two different layers of the same regulatory environment, and both must be read together.

02

LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY STABILITY

How political instability turns into legislative instability

1,889

OUGs since 2011

123

OUGs/yr avg

301

Laws/yr avg

64%

Parliament's share

What this section asks. *Part I established that Romania changes governments more often than any other EU member state. Part II asks the natural follow-up question: do these governments also change the rules more often – and through what means?*

The answer, as we shall see, is striking on two counts. First, **Romania produces more primary legislation than any of its four regional comparators**, combining parliamentary laws and government ordinances: roughly 301 laws per year on average, against 76 in Czechia and 182 in Hungary. Second, **Romania relies more heavily than almost any other EU member state on a particular instrument, the Government Emergency Ordinance (OUG)** – an executive act that has the force of law without needing prior parliamentary approval. This part first explains how Romanian law-making works, then compares it with the law-making models of Bulgaria, Poland, Czechia and Hungary.

5. Romania's law-making model

What this section asks. *Who, in Romania, can make a law that is binding on citizens and companies? And how often does each actor do so?*

In most EU countries, the answer is straightforward: parliament makes laws. In Romania, the answer is less clean. The Constitution gives two actors the power to issue what is legally classified as primary legislation:

■ Quick explainer — The three forms of primary legislation in Romania

- **Lege (parliamentary law)** — adopted by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, signed by the President. The classical instrument: deliberation, committee work, public debate, two readings, votes.
- **OUG — Ordonanță de Urgență (Government Emergency Ordinance)** — issued by the Government in extraordinary situations, under Article 115 of the Constitution. Comes into force immediately upon publication in the Official Gazette. Parliament must subsequently approve or reject it, but the OUG already has the force of law in the meantime – often for months or years.
- **OG — Ordonanță (ordinary Government Ordinance)** — issued by the Government on the basis of a special enabling law passed by Parliament during parliamentary recess. Less frequent and less controversial than OUGs.

Why this matters. OUGs were designed by the framers of the 1991 Constitution as an exceptional instrument – a way to legislate quickly when Parliament was unavailable. In practice, OUGs have become a routine governing tool. Major fiscal packages, tax changes, judicial reforms, and education reforms have repeatedly been introduced by OUG rather than by parliamentary law. This shifts the centre of gravity of Romanian law-making from Parliament to the Government, with two consequences: (i) the law changes overnight, by Government decision, with no parliamentary debate; and (ii) the substantive policy is often already months or years old by the time Parliament gets to vote on whether to confirm it.

Annex 2 details the annual count of OUGs. The absolute volume is striking: **1,889 OUGs in 15.3 years – an average of roughly 123 per year, with a peak of 226 in 2020**. This is exceptional in the European context. Most Western and Northern EU member states have either no equivalent instrument or use it only a handful of times per year. Where comparable mechanisms do exist, they are generally framed as exceptional, temporary, or subject to rapid parliamentary validation, rather than as a routine channel of government lawmaking. Portugal is the main exception in terms of volume, but its decrees-law operate within a different constitutional logic: they represent a regular form of executive legislation in areas not reserved to Parliament, rather than an emergency instrument comparable to Romania's OUGs.

The issuance is rarely driven by genuine emergencies. Even in low-crisis years (2014, 2016, 2019) the Romanian Government issued ninety-plus OUGs – well above what the constitutional threshold of “extraordinary cases” in Article 115 would suggest. Issuance peaks in election or fiscal-package years: the 187 OUGs of 2022 (around the energy crisis and the OUG 16/2022 fiscal package); the 156 OUGs of 2024 (around the Law 296/2023 fiscal package and the EDP-driven consolidation).

The pattern is revealing, OUGs have become an instrument of structural reform, rather than the exceptional last resort the Constitution envisaged.

How Romanian laws are made



CONSILIUM POLICY ADVISORS GROUP

Who can initiate a draft law?

<p>Government</p> <p>Ministries and central bodies route drafts through the General Secretariat of the Government.</p> <p><i>Drafts laws, OUGs, OGs.</i></p>	<p>Members of Parliament</p> <p>Deputies, senators or parliamentary groups.</p> <p><i>Drafts parliamentary laws only.</i></p>	<p>Citizens</p> <p>At least 100,000 signatures from 1/4 of the counties.</p> <p><i>Drafts parliamentary laws only.</i></p>	<p>President of Romania</p> <p>Initiates constitutional revision at the Government's proposal.</p> <p><i>Exceptional powers only.</i></p>
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Three forms of primary legislation

Parliamentary Law	Emergency Ordinance	Government Ordinance
<p>Adopted by Parliament, promulgated by the President</p>	<p>Issued by Government; effective after submission</p>	<p>Issued during the parliamentary recess</p>
<p>1 Initiator + drafting</p> <p>Government, MPs or citizens draft the bill</p>	<p>1 Trigger</p> <p>Extraordinary situation No prior authorisation <i>In practice, OUG are used almost weekly</i></p>	<p>1 Precondition</p> <p>Enabling law from Parliament adopted before the recess</p>
<p>2 Consultations</p> <p>Public consultation + Legislative Council opinion (30 days)</p>	<p>2 Drafting</p> <p>Government drafts the OUG. Cannot affect fundamental rights, electoral law, or constitutional law domains.</p>	<p>2 Drafting</p> <p>Government drafts the OG strictly within the enabling law (ordinary-law domains only)</p>
<p>3 First Chamber</p> <p>Debate within 45 days (60 days for codes) Committees + plenary <i>Tacit adoption if deadline exceeded</i></p>	<p>3 Entry into force</p> <p>Submitted to Parliament then published Published in Official Gazette — in force</p>	<p>3 Entry into force</p> <p>Direct publication in the Official Gazette Submission only if the enabling law requires it Published in Official Gazette — in force</p>
<p>4 Second Chamber</p> <p>Decisional vote Committees + plenary Final decision on draft</p>	<p>4 Parliament approval</p> <p>First Chamber: 30 days (tacit if exceeded) Second Chamber: emergency procedure, no time limit <i>NO deadline at 2nd Chamber — OUGs may stay pending for years.</i></p>	<p>4 Parliament approval</p> <p>Same bicameral process only if the enabling law required approval</p>
<p>5 President + CCR</p> <p>Promulgation in 20 days or re-examination request</p> <p>CCR may be seized by: President, Chamber Presidents, Government, High Court, Ombudsman, 50 dep., 25 sen.</p>	<p>5 Constitutional Court</p> <p>Triggered once the OUG is in force:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ombudsman refers it directly to the Court • Plea of unconstitutionality in any court 	<p>5 Constitutional Court</p> <p>Triggered once the OG is in force:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ombudsman refers it directly to the Court • Plea of unconstitutionality in any court
<p>6 Published in the Official Gazette In force 3 days later (unless otherwise stated)</p>	<p>6 Approval Law published in the Official Gazette (may modify the initial OUG)</p>	<p>6 Approval Law published in the Official Gazette (may modify the initial OG)</p>

Sources: Constitution of Romania; Emergency Ordinance 1/1999; Laws 24/2000 (legislative technique), 47/1992 (CCR), 52/2003 (transparency), 73/1993 (Legislative Council), 169/1999 (citizens' initiative).

◆ **What this means for businesses and citizens**

A tax rule introduced by OUG on a Friday evening can apply from the following Monday, with virtually no public consultation, no impact assessment, no parliamentary debate. Even if Parliament eventually rejects the OUG, the rule has already been in force for months. Companies plan compliance, hiring, and investment timing assuming any government can change the rules overnight. **This is the operational meaning of regulatory unpredictability: not that the rules are bad, but that they can be replaced at any moment by an instrument that bypasses parliamentary deliberation.**

Table 5. Annual count of laws adopted by the Romanian Parliament, 2011 – May 2026, with the Government's same-year OUG+OG total for comparison

Year	Laws adopted by Parliament	Government ordinances same year (OUG + OG)
2011	302	157
2012	222	123
2013	384	149
2014	187	124
2015	358	109
2016	252	127
2017	278	147
2018	363	141
2019	263	120
2020	298	238
2021	323	159
2022	385	224
2023	431	175
2024	332	209
2025	248	152
2026*	61	40
Total 2011 – May 2026	4,687	2,394

Source: Chamber of Deputies legislative archive. 2026 figures are partial.

First, in absolute terms, Parliament adopts roughly twice as many normative acts per year as the Government issues ordinances: 4,687 laws against 2,394 OUGs and OGs over the period (≈ 308 laws per year vs ≈ 156 ordinances per year). On the headline ratio, Government output is about half of Parliament's.

Second, the headline ratio understates executive dominance, because a substantial share of the laws Parliament adopts are themselves *legi de aprobare* – approvals of OUGs that the Government had already issued months or years earlier.

■ Quick explainer — What is a *lege de aprobare*?

When the Government issues an OUG, the Constitution requires Parliament to subsequently vote on it. If Parliament approves the OUG, the resulting law is called a *lege de aprobare* – literally, an “approval law”. From a legal point of view, it is a regular parliamentary act; in substance, it does not introduce new policy, because the OUG is already in force from the moment of publication.

Three caveats limit how much weight the *lege de aprobare* mechanism actually carries as a parliamentary check. **First, a large share of OUGs are never voted on at all** – they sit on the parliamentary agenda for years and are simply absorbed into the legal system without any explicit ratification. **Second, when a vote does happen, it typically comes months or even years after the OUG entered into force**, by which time the policy has already shaped tax bills, hiring decisions, court cases and budget allocations. **Third, when Parliament does engage substantively, it often amends the OUG rather than passing it in its original form** – which means the *lege de aprobare* is not a pure rubber-stamp, but it is also not, in practice, the meaningful ex-ante control the Constitution envisaged.

Third, the gap closes sharply in crisis years. In 2020 the Government issued 238 ordinances against Parliament's 298 laws (a ratio of 80%); in 2022, 224 against 385 (58%). When the political pressure rises, the executive's share of total law-making rises with it.

▲ Key takeaway

The Romanian executive is the primary generator of substantive new law, with Parliament functioning to a substantial extent as the chamber that retroactively ratifies what the Government has already enacted by ordinance. The Constitution intended the opposite arrangement.

6. Comparative law-making practices

What this section asks. *Romania produces a lot of laws – but is that figure actually comparable with what its neighbours produce? Each of the five countries operates under a different constitutional set-up, and “counting laws” turns out to mean something subtly different in each.*

Comparing “laws per year” across countries is not as simple as adding up the totals. Each of the five operates under different constitutional rules about who can legislate, when, and how.

■ Quick explainer — Five different ways to make a law

Romania. Parliament passes laws; the Government can also issue ordinances (OUGs and OGs) that have the same legal force. About one in three of the laws Parliament adopts each year are *legi de aprobare* – laws that ratify earlier government ordinances rather than originating new policy. In practice, however, many OUGs are never voted on by Parliament at all, and those that are typically reach a vote months or years after entering into force; when Parliament does engage, it often amends the original ordinance rather than passing it unchanged.

Hungary. The unicameral Parliament (Országgyűlés) is the only normal-times law-maker. Since March 2020, however, the Government has been continuously operating under a declared *state of danger* (*veszélyhelyzet*), which gives it the power to issue decrees with the force of law – first under COVID, then under a “neighbouring-state war” emergency clause introduced in May 2022.

Poland. A pure parliamentary system. The bicameral Sejm and Senat are the only law-makers; the Government has no general decree-legislation power. The Polish count is therefore the cleanest “pure” parliamentary figure in the group.

Czechia. Also bicameral and parliamentary. The Government issues only secondary regulations (*nařízení vlády*) – which implement laws but cannot replace them. The Senate's veto power slows the legislative process and reduces the annual law count.

Bulgaria. Parliamentary monopoly, with one important constraint: under Article 99(5) of the Constitution, when no government can be formed the President appoints a caretaker cabinet and dissolves Parliament. Since April 2021, roughly half of all calendar months have produced zero primary legislation in Bulgaria – not because of low policy demand, but because Parliament was dissolved.

The bottom line: counting laws across these five systems does not give a clean comparison of policy output. Hungary bundles many reforms into one omnibus law; Romania splits them into several; Hungary uses government decrees during emergencies; Romania uses ordinances year-round; Bulgaria periodically stops legislating altogether for institutional reasons.

◆ Why this matters for the analysis

A naive comparison would conclude that Romania (~301 laws/yr) is “four times more active” than Czechia (~76 laws/yr). The conclusion is misleading. Czechia adopts fewer but typically broader laws; Romania adopts many narrower ones, plus a significant share of *legi de aprobare*. The genuine comparative question is not “how many laws”, but “how much regulatory change does the system push through, and through what channel” – which is what the rest of this section attempts to answer.

Annual law-adoption rate, three comparable countries

For the three countries where consistent annual data is available – Romania, Czechia, and Hungary – the average number of laws adopted by parliament per year breaks down as follows.

Table 6. Average annual number of laws adopted by parliament, 2011–2022, three countries (4-year block averages)

4-year block	Romania (laws/yr)	Czechia (laws/yr)	Hungary (laws/yr)
2011-2014	274	87	215
2015-2018	313	68	183
2019-2022	317	73	149
2011-2022 average	≈ 301	≈ 76	≈ 182

Source: Chamber of Deputies (Romania); Sbírka zákonů (Czechia); Magyar Közlöny / Országgyűlés (Hungary).

Romania adopts roughly four times as many laws per year as Czechia, and roughly 1.7 times as many as Hungary. The level alone, however, should not be read as Romania producing four times more *policy* than Czechia. It compares the number of times parliament votes a law – not the substantive scope of each act.

Hungary is the only country in the comparable set whose parliamentary law-making is declining (215 → 183 → 149 per year). Two factors drive this: first, the rising use of “salad laws” – omnibus statutes that bundle dozens of unrelated reforms into a single act, which reduces the headline count without reducing actual policy change. Second, after 2020, the substitution of government decrees for parliamentary law-making during the continuous state of danger.

Romania's parliamentary output is rising (274 → 313 → 317 per year). The increase is driven primarily by the growing share of laws that simply ratify government ordinances issued earlier.

▲ Key takeaway

Of the three countries with comparable data, Romania's parliament is by far the most active in terms of law count. The activity is not, however, primarily original legislation: a substantial share is ratification of earlier executive acts. Hungary's parliament has been quietly receding from law-making, replaced by government decrees during the continuous state of danger; Czechia's, by contrast, deliberates fewer but typically more substantial laws.

7. When governments make law: Romania's OUGs and Hungary's emergency decrees

What this section asks. *Romania and Hungary are the only two countries in this group where the executive can produce primary legislation without going through ordinary parliamentary procedure. The constitutional mechanisms are entirely different – but how do they compare in volume? Is Romania really, as the popular framing suggests, “ruled by ordinance” more than Hungary?*

The answer turns out to overturn a common assumption.

■ Quick explainer — What is the Hungarian state of danger?

Under Article 53 of the Hungarian Fundamental Law, the Government can declare a *state of danger* (*veszélyhelyzet*) to issue decrees that have the force of law. The design is identical in spirit to Romania's OUG: an exceptional instrument intended for genuine emergencies. In practice, **Hungary has been continuously under a declared state of danger since 13 March 2020** – first under a COVID trigger, then under a “neighbouring-state war” trigger introduced in May 2022. Each declaration formally lasts 180 days, but the Government has renewed it without interruption.

The two systems – Romanian OUGs and Hungarian state-of-danger decrees – are constitutionally different but functionally similar: both allow the executive to produce primary legislation without going through Parliament first. The key institutional contrast is set out below.

Table 7. Side-by-side: Romania OUG/OG and Hungary state-of-danger decrees

	Romania (OUG / OG)	Hungary (state-of-danger decrees)
When can the Government use it?	Anytime, in “extraordinary situations” – no formal emergency declaration required	Only during a formally declared state of danger – but the state of danger has been continuously in force since March 2020
What can it cover?	Excluded (in theory): constitutional, criminal, electoral, fundamental-rights matters	No subject-matter limits during the special regime – decrees can suspend any law including constitutionally entrenched ones
How long does it last?	Indefinitely, unless Parliament rejects or repeals it	15 days, unless Parliament extends – but the underlying state of danger is renewed every 180 days
How often is it used?	100–240 times per year, every year since 1991	Essentially zero before 2020; several hundred per year since

Source: Romanian Constitution, Article 115; Hungarian Fundamental Law, Article 53; Venice Commission opinions.

◆ Two different routes, two different problems

Romania's OUG is a low-threshold instrument: the Government can use it whenever it judges the situation to be “extraordinary”, without declaring an emergency. The result is high-volume, year-round use. Hungary's state-of-danger decree is, on paper, a high-threshold instrument: it requires a formally declared emergency. The result is lower-frequency use historically – but, since 2020, that emergency has been kept perpetually in force, turning the exception into the norm. **Both systems end up producing executive primary legislation that bypasses ordinary parliamentary deliberation. The mechanics are different; the institutional consequence is similar.**

How much each Government actually produces

Table 8. Annual volume of executive primary legislation, 2020–2023: Romania OUG+OG vs Hungary state-of-danger decrees

Year	Romania OUG + OG	Hungary state-of-danger decrees
2020	238	257
2021	159	286
2022	224	267
2023	175	203
Total 2020-2023	796	1,013

Source: Chamber of Deputies legislative archive (Romania); Magyar Közlöny indexing (Hungary).

A counter-intuitive finding. During 2020–2023, Hungary's Government issued more decrees with the force of law than Romania's Government issued ordinances (1,013 versus 796 – about 27% more). The popular framing of Romania as being “more ruled by ordinance” than Hungary is, for these four years, factually inverted.

Who actually makes the law: parliament vs government

Table 9. Composition of primary legislation, 2020–2023: parliamentary laws plus executive decrees, Romania vs Hungary

	Romania	Hungary
Laws adopted by Parliament	1,437	533
Decrees / ordinances by Government	796	1,013
Total primary-legislation acts	2,233	1,546
Share decided by Parliament	64%	34%
Share decided by Government	36%	66%

Source: Chamber of Deputies (Romania); Országgyűlés and Magyar Közlöny (Hungary).

The composition is **almost a mirror image of itself**. Romania produces about 44% more total primary-legislation acts than Hungary in absolute terms – but Romania's Parliament remains the dominant law-maker (about two-thirds of all primary legislation), whereas during the *state of danger* period Hungary's Government has become the dominant law-maker (also about two-thirds).

In Hungary during 2020–2023, the Government issued nearly twice as many decrees as Parliament adopted laws. In Romania during the same period, Parliament adopted nearly twice as many laws as the Government issued ordinances. The ratios are symmetric and opposite. **Romania remains the more legislatively active system overall, with a higher combined number of acts adopted by Parliament and Government.**

◆ Why this matters for the comparison with Hungary

The standard contrast – “stable Hungary versus turbulent Romania” – holds for cabinets and prime ministers, but not for how primary legislation is actually produced. Since 2020, Hungary has become the more executive-dominated of the two. Cabinet stability and parliamentary marginalisation can coexist. The Romanian case poses the opposite problem: cabinet instability combined with active executive law-making. A government that lasts eleven months and produces 150 OUGs per year transmits its instability directly into the legal framework – something that does not occur in systems where the executive only implements.

▲ Key takeaway

Romania and Hungary use different constitutional routes to the same destination: a substantial share of primary legislation produced by the executive rather than Parliament. In Hungary's case, the share has grown to two-thirds of all primary legislation since 2020. Romania's executive is more visibly active because OUGs are issued year-round and in larger numbers per year than typical Hungarian decree volumes. Romanian governments do not merely implement legislation; they actively produce it. Each cabinet change therefore disrupts not only the executive function, but the law-making function itself.

8. What the Venice Commission says

What this section asks. *The Venice Commission is the European reference body on constitutional matters. It has examined both Romania's reliance on OUGs and Hungary's prolonged state of danger. What did it conclude in each case?*

■ Quick explainer — What is the Venice Commission?

The Venice Commission – formally the *European Commission for Democracy through Law* – is the Council of Europe's advisory body on constitutional matters. It brings together independent legal experts from 62 member states to issue opinions on whether national laws comply with European democratic standards. Its opinions are formally non-binding but carry significant weight: they are routinely cited by the European Commission in its Rule of Law reports, the European Court of Human Rights, and the European Parliament's Article 7 procedures. For Romania and Hungary, Venice Commission opinions function as **the closest thing Europe has to a peer review of national constitutional practice** – with material consequences for EU funds and infringement proceedings.

The Venice Commission has issued repeated critiques of both countries' executive law-making practices. The diagnoses, however, are very different.

On Romania

“

The routine recourse to ordonanțe de urgență, particularly to amend organic laws and the basic structure of the judiciary, is incompatible with the role of an ordinance as foreseen in Article 115 of the Constitution.

— Venice Commission, **Opinion on Romania's judicial reforms (2019)**

Earlier opinions (2012, 2014) had already flagged the same pattern. The European Commission's annual Rule of Law reports on Romania (2020–2024) have repeatedly echoed this concern – particularly the practice of issuing year-end “fiscal package” OUGs of several hundred articles each, modifying dozens of separate laws without public consultation or impact assessment.

◆ The diagnosis for Romania

A constitutional power designed for exceptional use has been normalised into routine governance. The instrument is not unconstitutional in itself; the problem is its volume and its application to areas (organic laws, judicial structures, fundamental rights) where the Constitution explicitly limits its use.

On Hungary

In its June 2020 opinion on the COVID-19 Authorisation Act, the Venice Commission concluded that the open-ended grant of decree powers to the Hungarian Government was acceptable only on the assumption that the state of danger would be of limited duration. Subsequent Commission observations (2021, 2022) on the renewals of the state of danger – and on the May 2022 amendment introducing the “neighbouring-state war” trigger – noted that the chained renewals had effectively

converted decree-rule into a parallel, permanent mode of normal governance. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament's ongoing Article 7 procedure have reached the same conclusion.

◆ The diagnosis for Hungary

An exceptional constitutional regime has been kept in force as if it were normal. The issue is not the volume of decrees within the regime, but the fact that the regime itself was supposed to be temporary and has, instead, become structural.

▲ Key takeaway

Romania and Hungary draw the same European-level criticism for the same underlying practice, but for opposite institutional reasons. Romania has normalised an exceptional instrument by using it routinely; Hungary has normalised an exceptional regime by keeping it permanently in force.

03

CONCLUSION

What our analysis demonstrates and what should be done about it

This report has assembled the empirical evidence behind a claim that Romanian commentators, business representatives, and international observers have repeated for over a decade: **that Romania's pattern of governance has become structurally unstable, and that the cost of that instability is no longer hypothetical.** Three findings emerge from the data.

Three findings

Romania is the regional outlier on political turnover, by every measure. Since 2011 it has had 16 politically formed cabinets, 12 prime ministers, and 15 finance ministers – the highest figures of any country in the five-state regional comparison and the highest in the EU-27. Each reshuffle affects ministerial leadership, state secretaries, subordinate agencies, advisory teams, and the coordination capacity of the General Secretariat of the Government. For medium- and long-term reforms, this creates a structural problem of continuity that cabinet-survival statistics, on their own, do not fully capture.

Romania's governance profile is not uniformly unstable, but it is not uniformly improving either. The World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators show that Political Stability weakened sharply in 2024 and that Regulatory Quality has remained essentially flat over the entire period. The most plausible explanation for the regulatory stability is the anchoring effect of EU membership, which has built an institutional layer above the national cabinet that no individual government can substantially rewrite. **However, the formal stability of the framework should not be confused with predictability on the ground,** as investors find policy application untransparent and inconsistent and the legislative environment less predictable.

The comparison with Hungary is important – and instructive in both directions. Hungary appears, at first sight, to be Romania's opposite: few cabinets, one dominant prime minister, strong executive continuity. The legislative evidence shows, however, that stability of personnel does not automatically translate into stronger parliamentary governance. Since 2020, Hungary's state-of-danger regime has enabled extensive use of government decrees with the force of law; during 2020–2023, Hungary's Government issued more primary-legislation acts (1,013) than Romania's (796), even though Romania remained the more legislatively active system overall. **Neither country represents a model worth emulating.** Romania exhibits excessive political fluctuation, which prevents the accumulation of institutional memory and undermines any attempt to execute multi-year reforms. Hungary exhibits the opposite extreme: prolonged single-party dominance has narrowed the political space and reduced the diversity of perspectives through which alternative visions, mid-course corrections, and parliamentary checks normally enter the policy process. **The desirable benchmark lies between them** – stable enough to plan for the medium term, yet plural enough to ensure regular alternation and the complementary visions that pluralism produces. The Western European and Nordic countries discussed earlier illustrate this combination: cabinet survival of two to three years on average, smooth coalition formation, and routine peaceful alternation between competing political programmes.

What this means for Romania

For Romania, the main warning is that **the state's capacity to change rules appears stronger than its capacity to stabilise and implement them.** Frequent ordinances can accelerate policy action, but they weaken predictability when used as a routine governing instrument: rules that can be introduced quickly by one government can be amended, suspended, or replaced just as quickly by the next. This is particularly problematic for reforms that require multi-year implementation – fiscal consolidation, education reform, healthcare restructuring, infrastructure planning, public-administration reform, EU funds absorption.

The central governance problem is therefore twofold. **First, the rapid turnover of governments makes it almost impossible to sustain a medium- to long-term economic strategy.** Reforms with multi-year horizons cannot be designed and executed by cabinets that survive less than twelve months on average. Institutional memory is lost; priorities are rewritten; the next cabinet starts again from a different position. **Cabinet turnover is not just a political fact; it is a structural cap on the country's capacity to develop and execute a long-term economic strategy.**

Second, the high volume of legislation produced by both Parliament and Government makes the regulatory environment difficult for companies to absorb. Routine use of OUGs can change fiscal or regulatory rules overnight, with no public consultation and no impact assessment. Firms face not only uncertainty but also direct compliance and adjustment costs. **For an economy that needs higher investment, stronger productivity, and better institutional capacity, this combination is particularly costly.**

Crucially, the two halves of the problem are not independent – they reinforce each other. **Each change of government in Romania is not only a political transition but also a legislative one,** because Romanian governments routinely act as legislators through OUGs. Where in most EU systems a change of cabinet affects only the implementation of laws made by Parliament, in Romania it directly displaces

a substantial share of the law itself: tax rules, fiscal frameworks, sectoral regulations, judicial procedures – all of which can be issued, amended, or repealed by ordinance, without prior parliamentary deliberation. **Political instability and legislative instability are therefore not two separate phenomena in Romanian governance; they are two faces of the same structural feature** – an executive that is simultaneously rule-maker and rule-implementer, so that every cabinet turnover produces a double discontinuity. This is the deeper reason why cabinet stability matters more in Romania than in most other EU member states: it is the only mechanism that, in Romania's institutional design, can deliver legislative continuity as well.

The economic stakes are no longer abstract

Two active dossiers illustrate what political and legislative instability is already costing Romania.

The PNRR (National Recovery and Resilience Plan). Romania's initial plan envisaged around €28 billion of EU- money between 2021 and 2026, conditional on reform milestones in pensions, fiscal architecture, public administration, and judicial governance. Eventually, due to the country's inability to attract the full amount, this was negotiated down to ~ EUR 20 Bn. Out of this, Romania would likely manage to absorb only a fraction of ~70%. The country has repeatedly missed milestones because the cabinet that committed to them is no longer the cabinet asked to deliver them. Each missed milestone delays disbursement and compresses the next implementation window.

Cohesion Policy and EU funds absorption. The 2021–2027 framework allocates around €31 billion to Romania. Effective absorption requires multi-year project planning, stable contracting authorities, and continuity of priorities across cabinets. Romania has consistently underperformed on absorption rates, and the political turbulence of 2024–2025 has already triggered the re-prioritisation of major projects.

◆ The economic stakes

Investment, productivity gains, and sustained convergence with Western EU income levels depend on the predictability of the rules under which capital is allocated. Romanian cabinets that last eleven months on average – and that simultaneously act as legislators through OUGs – transmit their instability directly into the regulatory framework, the absorption of EU funds, and the country's longer-term commitments. **Cabinet stability is therefore not merely a political concern; it is a precondition for medium-term economic planning that Romania has not had at its disposal for fifteen years.**

Parliamentary fragmentation: the upstream cause

Romania's growing parliamentary fragmentation is the structural cause of its short cabinet life. The number of parliamentary groups roughly doubled between 2008 and 2024, the PSD/PDL–PNL duopoly collapsed (from 90% of seats in 2008–12 to 41% in 2024–28), and a sovereigntist bloc that did not exist in Parliament before 2020 now holds about 35% of seats and is not coalition-eligible. The mainstream majority therefore depends on ever-thinner four-party coalitions in which the loss of any single partner immediately threatens the government.

The Romanian executive is uniquely exposed to motions of no confidence. Six Prime Ministers were removed by successful motions of no confidence during 2011–2026 – a record of such motions not seen in any of the four regional comparators. Hungary has had no successful motion since 2010; Poland uses a constructive vote (which raises the bar); Czech and Bulgarian government changes have typically come through coalition collapse or voluntary resignation.

Fragmentation feeds back on itself through the trust gap. Eurobarometer (Autumn 2024) places trust in the Romanian Parliament at 29% and in the Government at 36% – among the lowest in the EU – against 56% trust in the EU itself. This wide trust gap rewards anti-system parties at the next election: AUR went from 47 seats in 2020 to 91 in 2024, SOS Romania and POT entered Parliament for the first time, and the sovereigntist bloc roughly doubled its share. As voters abandon mainstream parties, the next parliament becomes more fragmented, the next government even harder to form and shorter-lived — and the same cycle repeats.

The roots of the fragmentation lie partly outside Parliament itself. Drawing on a separate CPAG paper by Ella Kallai, *Social Cohesion at Risk* (June 2025), the May 2025 presidential election split Romania along an economic fault line: the four regions at or above 70% of EU average GDP per capita PPS voted majority for the European path, while the four regions below that threshold voted majority for change, with 64% of all change votes coming from counties where GDP per capita grew slower than the country average between 2000 and 2022. Parliamentary fragmentation has, on this reading, an economic-geography upstream cause that no reform of coalition arithmetic can address on its own – **investments prioritised in the regions left behind would do more to stabilise the political system than any change to the way governments are formed.**

Methodological note

All figures in this report are drawn from publicly accessible official sources. Cabinet, prime-minister, finance-minister counts are taken directly from the official government registers of each country: gov.ro for Romania, government.bg for Bulgaria, premier.gov.pl and gov.pl/web for Poland, vlada.cz for Czechia, kormany.hu for Hungary. The politically-formed counting rule excludes pure caretaker / service cabinets that never sought a vote of confidence; politically-formed cabinets that lost a vote of confidence within weeks are retained because they were politically-formed and sought confidence.

Romanian OUG, OG, and parliamentary-law counts are taken from the Chamber of Deputies legislative archive. Hungarian state-of-danger decree counts are from the Magyar Közlöny (since 13 March 2020). Czech and Hungarian parliamentary law counts are from Sbírka zákonů and Országgyűlés. Poland and Bulgaria are excluded from the comparable per-year law table for lack of directly comparable annual statistics.

World Bank WGI data (data360 / WB_WGI), indicators PV, GE, RQ (WGI_EST series, 2024 update). Business sentiment data from the FIC Members Business Sentiment Index (March and September 2024) and the AmCham Romania Business Barometer 6th edition (April–May 2024). Venice Commission opinions cited: 924/2018 and 925/2018 (Romania, judicial reforms); 992/2020 (Hungary, COVID-19 Authorisation Act); and subsequent Venice Commission and PACE statements (2021–2024).

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Official government and parliament registers

- **Romania:** gov.ro (Government); cdep.ro (Chamber of Deputies, legislative archive).

- **Bulgaria:** government.bg (Council of Ministers register).
- **Poland:** premier.gov.pl; gov.pl/web (Council of Ministers register).
- **Czechia:** vlada.cz (Government register); Sbírka zákonů (Collection of Laws).
- **Parliamentary registers (added for the parliamentary-structure analysis):** Romania – senat.ro, bec.ro; Bulgaria – parliament.bg; Poland – sejm.gov.pl, senat.gov.pl; Czechia – psp.cz / pspen.psp.cz; Hungary – parlament.hu; cross-checked against IPU Parline (data.ipu.org).
- **Hungary:** kormany.hu (Government register); Magyar Közlöny (Official Gazette); Országgyűlés (National Assembly statistics).

Worldwide Governance Indicators (World Bank)

World Bank WGI database (data360 / WB_WGI), 2024 update, three indicators:

- **GOV_WGI_PV** — Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (Section 2.1).
- **GOV_WGI_GE** — Government Effectiveness (Section 2.2).
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- **European Commission, Standard Eurobarometer 102** — Autumn 2024 wave.
- **Parliamentary registers (added for the parliamentary-structure analysis):** Romania – senat.ro, bec.ro; Bulgaria – parliament.bg; Poland – sejm.gov.pl, senat.gov.pl; Czechia – psp.cz / pspen.psp.cz; Hungary – parlament.hu; cross-checked against IPU Parline (data.ipu.org).
- **Ella Kallai**, *Social Cohesion at Risk* — CPAG, June 2025.

Annex 1 - Romanian governing coalitions and their parliamentary majorities, 2008–2028

Legislature	Parties (combined seats)	Cabinet	Governing coalition	%
2008–2012	PDL 166 · PSD+PC 163 · PNL 93 · UDMR 31 · min. 18	Boc I	PDL + PSD-PC + UDMR	≈76%
2008–2012	PDL 166 · PSD+PC 163 · PNL 93 · UDMR 31 · min. 18	Boc II	PDL + UDMR + UNPR	≈45%
2008–2012	PDL 166 · PSD+PC 163 · PNL 93 · UDMR 31 · min. 18	Ungureanu	PDL + UDMR + UNPR	≈45%
2008–2012	PDL 166 · PSD+PC 163 · PNL 93 · UDMR 31 · min. 18	Ponta I	USL: PSD+PNL+PC+UNPR	≈60%
2012–2016	USL 395 · ARD 80 · PP-DD 68 · UDMR 27 · min. 18	Ponta II	USL + UDMR	67%
2012–2016	USL 395 · ARD 80 · PP-DD 68 · UDMR 27 · min. 18	Ponta III	PSD + PC + UNPR + UDMR	≈58%
2012–2016	USL 395 · ARD 80 · PP-DD 68 · UDMR 27 · min. 18	Ponta IV	PSD + UNPR + ALDE + UDMR	≈58%
2012–2016	USL 395 · ARD 80 · PP-DD 68 · UDMR 27 · min. 18	Cioloș	Technocratic, independent	n/a
2016–2020	PSD 221 · PNL 99 · USR 43 · UDMR 30 · ALDE 29 · PMP 26 · min. 17	Grindeanu	PSD + ALDE	54%
2016–2020	PSD 221 · PNL 99 · USR 43 · UDMR 30 · ALDE 29 · PMP 26 · min. 17	Tudose	PSD + ALDE	54%
2016–2020	PSD 221 · PNL 99 · USR 43 · UDMR 30 · ALDE 29 · PMP 26 · min. 17	Dăncilă	PSD + ALDE	54%
2016–2020	PSD 221 · PNL 99 · USR 43 · UDMR 30 · ALDE 29 · PMP 26 · min. 17	Orban I	PNL (minority)	21%
2016–2020	PSD 221 · PNL 99 · USR 43 · UDMR 30 · ALDE 29 · PMP 26 · min. 17	Orban II	PNL (minority)	21%
2020–2024	PSD 157 · PNL 134 · USR-PLUS 80 · AUR 47 · UDMR 30 · min. 18	Cîțu	PNL + USR-PLUS + UDMR	52%
2020–2024	PSD 157 · PNL 134 · USR-PLUS 80 · AUR 47 · UDMR 30 · min. 18	Ciucă	PNL + PSD + UDMR	69%
2020–2024	PSD 157 · PNL 134 · USR-PLUS 80 · AUR 47 · UDMR 30 · min. 18	Ciolacu I	PSD + PNL + UDMR	69%
2024–2028	PSD 122 · AUR 91 · PNL 71 · USR 59 · SOS 40 · UDMR 32 · POT 31 · min. 18	Ciolacu II	PSD + PNL + UDMR	≈48%
2024–2028	PSD 122 · AUR 91 · PNL 71 · USR 59 · SOS 40 · UDMR 32 · POT 31 · min. 18	Bolojan	PSD + PNL + UDMR + USR	≈61%

Source: Chamber of Deputies, Romanian Senat and BEC data.

Annex 2 - Annual count of Government Emergency Ordinances (OUG) and ordinary Government Ordinances (OG), Romania, 2011 – May 2026

Year	OUG (Emergency)	OG (Ordinary)	Total OUG + OG
2011	126	31	157
2012	96	27	123
2013	117	32	149
2014	95	29	124
2015	67	42	109
2016	100	27	127
2017	117	30	147
2018	114	27	141
2019	91	29	120
2020	226	12	238
2021	144	15	159
2022	187	37	224
2023	131	44	175
2024	156	53	209
2025	90	62	152
2026*	32	8	40
Total 2011 – May 2026	1,889	505	2,394

Source: Chamber of Deputies legislative archive. 2026 figures are through early May 2026 only (partial year).

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