

# Romania

## I. Summary

Romania is not a major source of illicit narcotics. However, Romania continues as a major transit country for narcotics and lies along the well-established Northern Balkan Route for opium, morphine base, and heroin moving from Afghanistan to Central and Western Europe. Synthetic drugs and precursor chemicals move eastward along this route towards Turkey and the Middle East (synthetic drugs like Captagon) and beyond back to Afghanistan (precursors), where the refining of opium into heroin and base increasingly occurs. Romania's counternarcotics agencies were re-organized in early 2009, resulting in the elimination of the national counternarcotics agency. Additionally, the global economic crisis made its mark on all Romanian government agencies, and resources for all remaining counternarcotics units were more scarce than usual. Despite these challenges, Romanian authorities continue to work closely with U.S. and regional counterparts for successful and effective international seizure operations. Drug use remained relatively constant, with some increase noted in the use of un-controlled pharmaceuticals by Romanian youth. The illicit traffic in pre-cursor chemicals, for use in heroin and synthetic drug production in countries further East increased in Romania. Romania is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

## II. Status of Country

Romania lies along the Northern Balkan Route, and therefore is a transit country for narcotics. Heroin and opium move from Southwest Asia to Central and Western Europe. Romania also sits astride a developing branch for the transit of synthetic drugs, such as MDMA (Ecstasy), from Western and Northern Europe to the East. Some MDMA, temporarily stored in Romania, may be bound for the USA and Canada. Romanian authorities estimate that eighty percent of the drugs that enter Romania are destined for Western Europe. It is believed that heroin, MDMA and other drugs are stored in large quantities in Romania awaiting further transshipment. Romania is increasingly becoming a storage location for large amounts of heroin, smuggled from Afghanistan through Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania via the Southern Balkan route, bound for Europe. A newly discovered branch of the Northern Route used by heroin drug trafficking organizations passes through Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine. A large amount of precursor chemicals transit Romania from Western European countries moving towards Turkey, and beyond to Afghanistan. While Romania is not a major source of production or cultivation of drugs, it may be a source of amphetamines. Use of Romania as a transshipment point for South American cocaine to Western Europe also appears to be increasing, as evidenced by a large seizure of cocaine from South America in early 2009. African-based hashish trafficking organizations may also be using Romania as a transshipment point.

## III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2009

**Policy Initiatives.** Romania's counternarcotics agencies suffered a setback with the re-organization of the Ministry of Interior in 2009. The General Directorate for Countering Organized Crime and Anti-Drug (DGCCOA) as well as the National Anti-Drug Agency were demoted into services rather than independent agencies, with the result that there is no longer a national drug agency in Romania. Also, the change resulted in position cuts for qualified and trained narcotics officers. Along with these changes, as of May 1, 2009, the Romanian Border Police were no longer involved in narcotics investigations and drug seizures except for those which occur at a border crossing. Despite these organizational changes and the resultant lack of continuity among the counternarcotics forces, Romania continues to play an active role on the Anti-Drug task force of the Bucharest-based Southeast European Cooperative Initiatives Regional Center for Combating Trans-Border Crime (SECI Center), as well as the Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG).

**Law Enforcement Efforts.** Romanian National Police reported that during the first nine months of 2009 they have seized 59.5 kilograms of heroin, just 18 grams of opium, 1,283.5 kilograms cocaine, 13,761 MDMA pills, approximately 27.3 kilograms of cannabis and minimal amounts of other drugs such as amphetamines, “magic mushrooms”, and tablets. This is an increase of 310 percent over last years’ seizures.

During the period of 2008 through September 2009, 713 persons were indicted for drug-related crimes, such as drug and precursor trafficking, possession, and consumption. 5,506 cases were opened in this period; of these 4,061 cases were suspended or dropped. 1,622 people were taken to trial in this period, including 38 minors. Total number of drug-related cases in 2008 numbered 3,103 and only 2,403 through September 2009.

Romanian authorities had significant international successes against drug trafficking organizations in 2009. Large quantities of cocaine are being shipped from South America to the Port of Constanta, Romania for further distribution throughout East and West Europe. A 1,204 kilograms cocaine seizure made at the Port of Constanta in January 2009, was the largest cocaine seizure in Romanian history. An international, multi-agency follow-up investigation led to the seizure of an additional 3.8 tons of cocaine in Brazil, from the same drug organization that was involved with the drugs seized in Constanta.

Law enforcement cooperation was continuing to expand and become more sophisticated with the assistance of foreign training programs such as those offered by the SECI Center. However, the global economic crisis had a significant negative impact on narcotics units already strained for resources. Romanian police had to stretch their resources and operations and occasionally suffered setbacks due to the lack of resources. Some officers were even forced to supplement their official budgets with their own personal money. Romanian police forces were able to secure some technical equipment, but lacked force protection equipment. Threats of pay cuts, and forced unpaid leave due to the economic crisis were having an impact on morale government-wide. Romanian authorities were concerned that their resources were out of line with their increasing responsibilities as an EU frontier country.

**Corruption.** Corruption remains a serious problem within the Romanian government, including within the judiciary and law enforcement branches. Convictions for many crimes, including drug-related crimes, were difficult to obtain, and as many as fifty percent of those convicted do not serve their full sentences. As a matter of government policy, however, Romania does not encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. There is no evidence that senior Romanian officials engage in, encourage, or facilitate the illicit production or distribution of dangerous drugs or substances, or launder proceeds from illegal transactions.

**Agreements and Treaties.** Romania is party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, and the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances. A new extradition treaty between the U.S. and Romania entered into force on May 8, 2009 replacing the 1925 treaty. The new treaty requires Romania to extradite its nationals to the U.S. The new agreement is in compliance with agreements previously signed between the EU and the United States as well as with a 2002 decision of the EU Council concerning arrest warrants and transfer procedures. The U.S.-Romanian Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters has been in force since 2001. The U.S. and Romania have a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement in force. Both governments have also ratified and exchanged instruments regarding a Protocol to the MLAT. These instruments form the basis for a modern law enforcement regime and implement obligations under the U.S.-EU extradition and mutual legal assistance agreements. Romanian legislation on precursor substances is consistent with that of the European Union. Romania is party to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three protocols, and the UN Convention Against Corruption.

**Cultivation/Production.** Romania is not a significant producer of illegal narcotics; however there is a small amount of domestic amphetamine and cannabis production.

**Drug Flow/Transit.** Illicit narcotics from Afghanistan enter Romania along the northern Balkan Route: by land from Ukraine, Moldova and Bulgaria, and by sea through the Black Sea Port of Constanta. Once in Romania, the drugs move through to Hungary or Serbia for onward distribution in Western Europe, notably Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Switzerland. The Balkan Route also runs transshipment of drugs and precursor chemicals eastward towards Turkey, the Middle East, and back to Afghanistan. Cocaine is moved primarily by sea, with some use of land and air routes.

**Domestic Programs.** Despite predictions to the contrary due to the economic crisis, illicit drug user rates remained relatively stable. On the other hand, the government was unable to devote any increased resources to prevention programs. Romanian authorities assessed that urban Romanian youth, mostly males aged 14-25, primarily used cannabis and injected heroin. Methamphetamine use has not yet taken hold in Romania. Authorities were concerned about a rise in use of un-controlled pharmaceuticals and household products as inhalants by youth as a cheap and easy replacement for illegal drugs.

#### IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

**Bilateral Cooperation.** In 2009 Romania, and the region, continued to benefit from U.S. financial assistance to the SECI Center for Combating Trans-border Crime. The U.S. paid 1.2 million dollars, two years of annual dues and other assistance in 2007, to cover the period 2007-2008. An additional 1.3 million dollars was given in 2009. In addition to financial support, the U.S., which is a permanent observer country at the SECI Center, provides expertise and personnel to support the SECI Center's law enforcement efforts. A Supervisory Special Agent, and a Supervisory Intelligence Research Specialist from the DEA are posted at the SECI Center, as well as a U.S. Department of Justice Resident Legal Advisor and a Supervisory Special Agent (retired) FBI liaison. The DEA personnel assigned to SECI augment the DEA Athens, Greece Country Office, which has Romania within its area of responsibility. DEA personnel from the Athens, Greece Country Office and SECI assist in coordinating narcotics information sharing, maintain liaison with participating law enforcement agencies, and coordinate with Romanian narcotics police on case-related issues. The resident legal advisor provides advice and technical assistance on various aspects of the SECI Center's mandate, including enhancing cooperation to combat drug trafficking. Training of a number of senior Level Law Enforcement officers in 2009 was supported by DoD through the U.S. European Command.

**The Road Ahead.** The DEA increased their presence in Romania during 2009, with the permanent addition of the Supervisory Intelligence Analyst position at the SECI Center. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation and partnership continue to grow and result in joint successes in international drug trafficking investigations. The United States stands ready to assist Romania and the region in meeting the continuing challenge of drug trafficking. There are significant concerns however, that the recent restructuring of Romania's counternarcotics agencies and the economic crisis will continue to have a negative impact on the ability of the Romanian police to fight narcotics trafficking.