

Calendar of the most important dates for democracy building and the rule of law crisis in Romania

December 1991 - Romania adopts a post-communist constitution by referendum.

October 2003 - Romania adopts amendments to the constitution, also by referendum.

February 2012 - Mass protests against the government intensify.

They started in January, opposing the discretionary health reform, and quickly turn against the president, with corruption a major concern. They continue until April-May. After a vote of no confidence against the second cabinet of PM Emil Boc (PDL), Parliament appoints PM Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu. Ungureanu puts a somewhat technocratic touch on the same coalition, but the Cabinet is still very political.

May 2012 - After a vote of no confidence against Ungureanu, Parliament appoints PM Victor Ponta.

Ponta leads a new coalition (PSD, PNL and some former allies of PDL) with a political agenda focused on revenge. Education Minister Ioan Mang is accused of plagiarism in his doctoral thesis.

June 2012 - The electoral coalition of PSD and PNL wins the local elections with almost 50%, boosting PM Ponta's political ambitions.

Former PM Adrian Năstase (PSD, 2000-04) is found guilty of corruption. His 2-year sentence is suspended: He does not go to prison, but is no longer eligible for public office. PM Ponta is accused of plagiarism in his doctoral thesis; he loses his title in 2016. Education Minister Liviu Pop dismantles the national council in charge of verifying doctoral theses (HotNews), his action effectively supporting PM Ponta's position.

July 2012 - Parliament suspends President Băsescu and calls for an impeachment referendum.

Crin Antonescu (PNL) becomes interim president. Mass protests continue against corruption, plagiarism, as well as in favor of and against various politicians. Shale gas and fracking become a major topic; anti-fracking protests continue until Nov. 2014. The EC president Barroso issues PM Ponta with an 11-point 'to-do list' (Euractiv). The impeachment referendum receives 87% of the votes against President Băsescu.

August 2012 - The CCR invalidates the results of the impeachment referendum for not meeting the quorum (participation amounts to only 46%, instead of the required minimum of 50%).

Băsescu is reinstated with all powers restored.

September 2012 - Roma activists protest against racism and discrimination, but the rest of society ignores the topic.

December 2012 - The same electoral coalition of PSD and PNL wins the parliamentary elections in a landslide victory with a majority of 66%.

After the elections, Parliament reappoints PM Ponta to head a new coalition (PSD and PNL).

May 2013 - PM Ponta (as interim justice minister) and President Băsescu negotiate the leadership of the prosecution, ignoring the CSM advice (Digi24).

Former prosecutor general Laura Codruța Kövesi (2006-13), thought to be an ally of Băsescu, is 'demoted' to head the DNA; the new prosecutor general Tiberiu Nițu (2013-16) turns out to be a friend of Ponta, and Alina Bica, who is thought to support the PDL, becomes the new head of the DIICOT (2013-14). Both Bica and Nițu are later investigated by Kövesi's DNA—Bica is convicted in 2018, while Nițu avoids charges and retires in 2020.

September 2013 - Start of weekly mass protests against the gold mine at Roșia Montana, with demonstrators also criticizing corruption and other issues.

The protests continue until January 2014.

January 2014 - Former PM Năstase is found guilty in a second case of corruption; this time, he goes to prison for four years.

Culture Minister Gigel Știrbu is accused of plagiarism in his doctoral thesis.

February 2014 - After the withdrawal of the PNL from the Ponta II cabinet PM Ponta engineers a new coalition with the UDMR and other political factions and is reconfirmed by Parliament.

March 2014 - The CCR confirms Parliament's decision to appoint a new cabinet (Ponta III) without a (new) governing program (Digi24).

The UDMR leaves the coalition, but a group split off from the PNL rejoins it.

May 2014 - The PSD wins the elections for the European Parliament with about 37% of the votes.

The PNL comes a distant second with only 15%.

July 2014 - The PNL absorbs the former rival PDL; the merger is confirmed by the courts in October.

November 2014 - Klaus Iohannis (PNL) wins the presidential elections against PM Victor Ponta (PSD); PM Ponta is accused of tampering with the voting procedures, especially at polling stations abroad.

At the end of December, Iohannis takes over from Traian Băsescu (formerly PDL), whose second mandate has come to an end.

December 2014 - Adjusting for the results of the presidential campaign, Parliament approves a reshuffled Ponta IV Cabinet, but the coalition remains largely the same.

January 2015 - In an attempt to save face after the electoral scandal of November 2014, Parliament considers amendments to all legislation concerning political parties, party finance and elections (but not to referendums).

Although CSOs are invited to contribute, not all of their input is included, and the resulting laws are flawed.

August 2015 - Mihai Tudose (future PM in 2017) is accused of plagiarism in his doctoral thesis.

After renouncing his title in 2016 he tries to recover it in court, but fails to do so in 2020.

October 2015 - A fire at the Colectiv club kills 64 people and injures 146.

Mass protests ensue, with demonstrators criticizing corruption and demanding a renewal of the political class. The USR and the PLUS give voice to some of the social outrage expressed in the protests

November 2015 - Parliament appoints PM Dacian Cioloș, after Ponta felt compelled to resign (DW).

Cioloș leads a team of 'technocrats, with covert parliamentary support from the PSD and the PNL. CSOs ask President Iohannis to persuade political parties to adopt a set of integrity and competency criteria for future ministers and other candidates in elections. Iohannis ignores the request. By this time, Parliament has passed and the president has promulgated six laws concerning political parties, party finance and elections, with the USR and the PLUS being the most visible outcomes.

February 2016 - The CCR bans the SRI from getting involved in criminal cases, including the use of wiretaps and other surveillance equipment.

March 2016 - Interim PG Bogdan Licu (who in 2022 becomes a justice at the CCR) is suspected of plagiarism in his doctoral thesis, and renounces the title.

June 2016 - The PSD wins the local elections with about 40% of the votes, but the PNL comes very close with 30% after having absorbed the PDL.

July 2016 - The CCR imposes a new interpretation of the Criminal Code regarding the crime of 'abuse of office.'

Former Interior Minister Petre Tobă is suspected of plagiarism in his doctoral thesis.

Former Vice-PM Gabriel Oprea also loses his doctoral title because of plagiarism; his appeal is rejected in 2018. He appeals again in 2022, but is unlikely to get a favorable verdict soon.

October 2016 - Former PG and current DNA chief Laura Codruța Kövesi is suspected of plagiarism in her doctoral thesis (PressOne).

December 2016 - The PSD wins the parliamentary elections with 45% of the votes.

Liviu Dragnea of the PSD seeks to become PM, but is barred from this position on account of corruption charges.

January 2017 - After the elections, Parliament appoints PM Sorin Grindeanu (PSD); one of the coalition partners is a faction which split off from the PNL, but Liviu Dragnea retains the moral leadership of the PSD.

February 2017 - The Grindeanu Cabinet adopts OUG 13 with a crippling effect on the judiciary; mass protests ensue, and OUG 14 repeals the measures.

June 2017 - After a no confidence vote in Parliament orchestrated by the PSD, Grindeanu is replaced with PM Mihai Tudose (PSD).

Coalition and leadership remain unchanged.

August 2017 - Justice Minister Tudorel Toader (independent, but leaning towards the PSD) presents modifications to the three laws on the judiciary.

The measures initially included in OUG 13 now move more slowly through the regular parliamentary procedures.

November 2017 - The Senate passes a bill aimed at obstructing the work of CSOs with bureaucratic requirements almost impossible to satisfy.

Fortunately, the bill is delayed indefinitely by the Chamber of Deputies.

January 2018 - After Tudose resigns over an internal argument within the PSD, Parliament appoints PM Viorica Dăncilă (PSD).

Coalition and leadership remain the same.

February 2018 - Justice Minister Tudorel Toader initiates the procedure for removing Kövesi from the DNA.

March 2018 - The secret protocol between the prosecution and the SRI is leaked to the press (DW).

April 2018 - The CCR declares the statute of limitations insufficiently regulated in the Code of Criminal Procedure and instructs Parliament to make corrections within 45 days, which is the delay imposed by the constitution.

June 2018 - The ECJ convicts Romania for not providing equal protection to a gay couple legally married in another member state.

July 2018 - After several CCR appeals and rebuttals from the President, Parliament passes the three laws on the judiciary, which are published in the official journal.

Forced by a CCR decision, President Iohannis removes Kövesi from the DNA. Former Education Minister Liviu Pop stops defending his doctoral thesis after accusations of plagiarism.

August 2018 - The Romanian diaspora organizes mass protests against corruption and for an independent judiciary in Bucharest.

Anti-protesters intervene violently, and riot police aggravates the situation; it is suspected that Liviu Dragnea ordered them to do so. The trial only starts in late 2023.

October 2018 - The SIIJ becomes operational, as a consequence of the three laws on the judiciary coming into force.

The 'referendum for the family' receives 91% of the votes in favor of amending the constitution to explicitly state that marriage unites a man and a woman, instead of 'spouses'. However, the CCR invalidates the result for not meeting the quorum—participation barely reached 21% instead of the required 30%.

May 2019 - The PNL wins the elections for the European Parliament, with about 27% of the votes; the second place is disputed between the PSD and the USR-PLUS, which each receive about 22%.

The 'referendum on justice' receives about 85% of the votes in favor, and the results are

validated as participation reached 41%. This means that the cabinet may no longer adopt OUGs related to the judiciary.

October 2019 - Laura Codruța Kövesi becomes European Chief Prosecutor at the EPPO.

November 2019 - Klaus Iohannis (PNL) wins a second mandate as president of Romania, against PM Viorica Dăncilă (PSD).

After a no confidence vote against Dăncilă, Parliament appoints PM Ludovic Orban (PNL). The opposition comes to power and forms a minority cabinet.

March 2020 - After a no confidence vote against Orban, Parliament has no choice and appoints the Orban II Cabinet, which is still a minority cabinet.

The ECHR convicts Romania for the unlawful removal of Kövesi from the DNA. As the Covid pandemic hits, Romania notifies the CoE of a derogation to art. 15 of the European Convention on Human Rights. This means in practice that access to information is suspended and there is no transparency of decision-making.

May 2020 - The CCR declares unconstitutional the fines imposed by the police on individuals breaching the pandemic curfew.

The money is not repaid automatically, instead, those charged need to go to court and are dealt with case by case.

September 2020 - The PNL wins the local elections with about 32% of the votes. Surprisingly, the PSD only gets about 28%.

December 2020 - The PSD secures victory with 45% of the votes in the parliamentary elections, but is unable to form a coalition.

After the elections, Parliament appoints PM Florin Cîțu (PNL); his fragile coalition includes the USR-PLUS and the UDMR.

January 2021 - Romania officially launches the anti-Covid vaccination campaign.

May 2021 - The CSM's prosecutor Codruț Olaru loses his doctoral degree on account of plagiarism.

July 2021 - The CCR decides that Parliament does not have full discretionary power to dismiss the ombudsman.

September 2021 - The Minister of European Funds/Projects Cristian Ghinea (USR-

PLUS) announces the completion of negotiations and the signing of the PNRR.

The USR-PLUS leaves the Cîțu Cabinet; the minority Cabinet Cîțu II survives for about three months.

November 2021 - After a no confidence vote against Cîțu II, Parliament appoints PM Nicolae Ciucă (PNL), with his large coalition including the PSD and the UDMR.

December 2021 - The ECJ rules that judges may ignore CCR decisions that contravene EU law (especially the SIIJ).

Digitalization Minister Florin Roman resigns after being accused of plagiarism in his master's thesis.

January 2022 - The SIIJ is finally dismantled, but replaced with the SUPC, a creation of Justice Minister Cătălin Predoiu (PNL).

PM Ciucă is accused of plagiarism in his doctoral thesis. With the help of Interior Minister Lucian Bode, he brutally retaliates against journalist Emilia Șercan. Romania is invited to start accession discussions with the OECD.

February 2022 - PM Ciucă passes an OUG regarding emergency support and humanitarian assistance for refugees coming from Ukraine.

May 2022 - Observing that, since 2018, Parliament has not clarified the Code of Criminal Procedure with respect to the statute of limitations, the CCR decides that the entire text is unconstitutional.

September 2022 - Education Minister Sorin Câmpeanu resigns after accusations that there is plagiarized content in the support material to one of his university courses.

November 2022 - President Iohannis promulgates a new version of the three laws on the judiciary, which were initially adopted in 2018.

However, there are still internal imbalances within the system of justice. Brussels announces the end of CVM monitoring reports, which had been published regularly for 15 years (EC).

January 2023 - Interior Minister Lucian Bode is accused of plagiarism in his doctoral thesis.

May 2023 - The ECHR convicts Romania for not providing equal protection under

the law to gay couples that wish to either marry or form a civil union.

June 2023 - Marcel Ciolacu (PSD) is confirmed as PM, leading largely the same coalition made up of the PSD and the PNL (with support from the UDMR).

July 2023 - The ECJ decides that judges may ignore CCR decisions regarding the statute of limitations, especially in cases of fraud and corruption affecting the financial interests of the EU.

September 2023 - The CVM for Romania and Bulgaria is officially closed, and all monitoring transferred to the Rule of Law Mechanism (EC).

The ECHR rejects Romania's appeal regarding gay couples; Romania must afford gay couples equal protection under the law (Libertatea). PM Ciolacu asks for a vote of confidence in Parliament regarding the omnibus law on fiscal and budgetary measures. The opposition cannot summon enough signatures to press for a non-confidence vote, but accuses the government of contravening the constitution. The CCR decides in October that Ciolacu's fiscal and budgetary omnibus is constitutional (Digi24 and Europa Liberă).

June 2024 - Elections for the European Parliament.

September 2024 - Elections for local government in Romania.

October-November 2024 - Presidential elections in Romania.

December 2024 - Elections for the Romanian Parliament (might be postponed till Mar. 2025).

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