

54th EUROPEAN PRESIDENTS CONFERENCE

COUNTRY REPORT – 2026 EDITION: “THE RULE OF LAW AND THE CHALLENGES OF MODERN CRIME”

2025 was one of the most intense years in Romanian advocacy

The Bucharest Bar Association is the largest and most influential bar in Romania, with the highest number of members in Southeast Europe. Its pivotal role in modernizing and updating the profession is supported by 16,000 lawyers out of a total of over 30,000 lawyers in Romania. Reform, transparent decision-making, and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms are the main pillars of the 2023–2027 mandate. A landmark moment was Romania’s signing, at the Council of Europe headquarters in Strasbourg, of the **European Convention on the Profession of Lawyer** on 21 October 2025.

The Bucharest Bar Association supports the promulgation and national implementation of this Convention

The year 2025 was marked by the continuous growth of challenges facing the legal profession, highlighting the priority of adopting and implementing the Convention. The profession’s core objectives remain **Freedom, Independence, and Autonomy**, crucial principles for Romanian lawyers. Unprecedented international openness coincided with the rejection of initiatives that could undermine these principles, the modernization of legal aid following lawyers’ protests, and major actions taken against individuals unlawfully practicing law.

Future Commitments and Reforms

At the end of the year, in which the legal profession played a balancing role among the legal professions and within the Rule of Law, Dean **Aurel Ciobanu** decided to integrate the Bucharest Bar into the **ECRIS 5 ecosystem**, which, according to public commitments, will provide access to a unified, secure, real-time electronic case file, including evidence and procedural documents. The Bucharest Bar also initiated a public consultation on the **CCBE Guidelines for Generative AI Use by Lawyers**, aiming to establish clear standards for the use of AI tools.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE BUCHAREST BAR TO THE CONFERENCE THEME

“Freedom versus Security: The Rule of Law under the Strain of Modern Crime”

The legal profession and the ethics of resilience

The convergence of multiple crises, affecting nearly all areas relevant to democracy and the Rule of Law, generates a central paradox: how can fundamental freedoms be effectively protected in the context of complex, transnational criminal threats?

The legal profession’s response manifests through the **ethics of resilience**, which requires not only adaptation to growing external pressures but also the maintenance of professional standards and independence. In international law, principles protecting lawyers—such as the **right to defense, professional secrecy, and protection against unjustified state interference**—provide a framework for responding to the challenges of globalized crime.

Events such as international conferences in Vienna play a vital role in defending, strengthening, and building a secure future for the profession worldwide. Among concrete actions, two resolutions are particularly noteworthy:

- **Rule of Law Resolution (2019)**
- **Resolution on Respect for the Rule of Law and Independence of Legal Professions in Romania (2020),**

whose effects remain durable in Romania, the European Union, and other countries where they have influenced the legal profession.

Debates within the Bucharest Bar emphasized the need for a **coordinated and proactive professional response**, reinforcing respect for the Rule of Law while simultaneously protecting individual freedoms without compromising public security. In this context, the ethics of resilience becomes an **active principle of professional governance and legal protection**, strengthening the credibility of the legal profession and contributing to public trust in justice.

The right to life, the right to liberty, and the right to defense are successively enshrined in the Romanian Constitution, Articles 22, 23, and 24.

Modern criminality constantly pressures both the legal profession and the Rule of Law, in a context where the fight for freedom is the foremost passion—**Alexis de Tocqueville**. Security, as an urgent necessity for nations, faces transnational crime, cyberattacks on client data, and external pressures.

The Bucharest Bar concludes:

In a world marked by transnational modern crime and complex threats, the legal profession plays an essential role in **protecting the Rule of Law and fundamental freedoms**. Risks must be anticipated and prevented, not only reacted to after crises occur.

The balance between freedom and security cannot be ensured by a single actor. **Collaboration between institutions, adherence to international standards, and professional solidarity among lawyers** is essential to enable legal systems to respond effectively to threats and protect democracy and citizens' rights.

The Rule of Law cannot exist without **guaranteeing judicial independence and the right to defense**. Upholding these fundamental principles strengthens the credibility and resilience of the justice system, even in the face of threats posed by modern criminality.

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Dean of the Bucharest Bar Association