



SUCCESS STORY

Law Experts Support Continued Reform

Helping Romania build a strong foundation for legal reform



USAID-sponsored attorney Ana Maria Andronic, left, meets with colleagues at the National Court Clerk School in Bucharest.

Legal experts are looking at USAID assistance efforts in a new light: they want to capture ideas, lessons, and best practices that arose through that assistance to understand how to continue along the path USAID laid out in partnership with the American Bar Association.

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As Romania prepares to enter the European Union, Romanians regard USAID assistance efforts in a new light — they want to capture ideas, lessons, and best practices from over 13 years of USAID’s work in Romania to understand how to continue along the path USAID laid out. One group is especially keen on this: legal professionals.

Since 1991, USAID has helped Romania modernize its legal system in partnership with the American Bar Association. Romanian legal professionals have worked alongside international experts on programs addressing court reform, judicial associations, dispute resolution, anti-corruption and legislative assistance, judicial training, and legal education.

Legal experts have seen successes, both small and large. One visible legacy of USAID’s work is the inclusion of USAID-sponsored ethics materials into the required curriculum at Romania’s National Court Clerk School. On a larger scale, clerks are now attending training with judges and prosecutors, resulting in a deeper cooperation between the National Court Clerk School and Romania’s National Institute of Magistrates. This level of cooperation, which was once rare, is now common.

Since October 2003, USAID has trained more than 200 judges in ethnics and 82 judges in Romania’s Freedom of Information Act. USAID also produced two guides, one for citizens and one for government personnel, on access to court information.

“We’ve accomplished a great deal in a very short time, with limited resources,” says the Romania director of the Bar Association’s program, Madeleine Crohn. “That’s due to the skills of our Romanian staff. They know the communities, who the leaders are, how activities need to be conducted in order to be successful.”

Photo: USAID/Jay Sorensen