

Ref: CommHR/MOF/sf 111-2026

Ilie BOLOJAN
Prime Minister of Romania

Strasbourg, 10 July 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to follow up on my recent visit to Romania, from 26 to 29 May 2026, when I had the opportunity to gain deep insights into the human rights situation of older persons in residential care.

I express my appreciation for the progress Romania has achieved in reforming social services in recent years, including in strengthening regulation of licensing and quality standards for long-term care. I was also encouraged by the commitment demonstrated by many of those working in care homes.

I did, however, observe several challenges. Older people and others in care institutions continue to be regarded as beneficiaries of services rather than fully-fledged rights holders – a perspective that warrants reconsideration across the social care system. The ongoing shortage of care services makes access difficult, particularly as Romania's population ages and care needs are growing. Moreover, some of the most vulnerable, including those living in poverty or with disabilities or mental health issues, often fall between separate support systems and struggle to obtain the care they require. The system should be sufficiently developed and able to respond holistically to the diverse and complex circumstances of these individuals, rather than relying on rigid classifications. In this regard, a better integration of the social and healthcare systems is also needed.

It was also impressed upon me that inspections frequently focus on adherence to formal standards, without adequately prioritising the individuals at the heart of these requirements. It would be useful to review inspection methods to better consider, together with technical criteria, the effective enjoyment of rights and the wellbeing of residents.

Concerns were also raised during my visit regarding the adequacy and sustainability of funding for long-term care services. Appropriate national and EU funding should be allocated through clear and accessible procedures to enable providers – most of which are not-for-profit organisations – to continue delivering essential care in line with needs and to the required standards.

Turning to the issue of unlicensed care homes operating illegally in various forms in Romania, the situation at Dumbrava village in Bihor County is particularly troubling. For many years, this institution operated unlawfully, reportedly hosting thousands of vulnerable people under abusive conditions, with over a thousand deaths recorded. I welcome the recent intervention of the Directorate for Investigating Organised Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT) and the transfer of residents to hospitals and licensed care facilities. However, I am concerned by how long this situation persisted, despite repeated alerts from civil society and journalists and recommendations by the People's Advocate. I also note that public debate surrounding DIICOT's intervention has been polarised and that online hate speech has been directed against those who exposed these abuses.

It is important now that proceedings relating to Dumbrava are conducted with integrity and independence, and that the circumstances, including of the deaths that occurred, are thoroughly investigated.

Looking ahead, as noted in my [end-of-visit statement](#), enforcement of licensing requirements should be strengthened. It would also be valuable to review and adopt legal provisions – including under criminal law, as necessary – to address the operation of illegal homes, and to strengthen independent monitoring. In this regard, I recommend that your authorities consider enhancing support for the

People's Advocate. Residents should also have access to channels for the reporting of concerns and the pursuit of remedies. The role of NGOs in promoting respect for the human rights and dignity of residents should likewise be recognised and supported.

Finally, I encourage your authorities to establish clear procedures for reporting and investigating deaths in care homes for older persons, drawing on practices that already exist regarding persons with disabilities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael O'Flaherty', with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael O'Flaherty

CC:

Dragoş-Nicolae PÎSLARU
Interim Minister of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity