Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques • No. 92 • 2026: 58 – 70

ORIGINAL PAPER

The presidential advisers in Romania. Recruitment process

Radu Cupcea[1)]

Abstract
The Presidential Administration is a pivotal political institution within the Romanian state mechanism. Despite its importance, the President's entourage remains largely under-researched by social scientists, a gap resulting from both the scarcity of dedicated studies and inherent biases within existing literature. Current analyses prioritize the presence of high-ranking civil servants while rarely offering a qualitative perspective. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, this article draws on semi-structured interviews conducted with advisers at the Cotroceni Palace who served between 1990 and 2025. It examines professional trajectories, recruitment processes, the adviser-president relationship, and the impact of politicization. Ultimately, this study highlights the dynamics of presidential entourage formation and seeks to establish a framework for future large-scale qualitative research.
Keywords: *presidential advisers, policy advice, professional profile, recruitment processes*.

[1)] Scientific Research Assistant at the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations "Ion I. C. Brătianu" of the Romanian Academy, Phone: 0040769163062, Email: radu.cupcea@ispri.ro.

The existence of political advisers is as old as politics itself. In an already-published scientific article (Cupcea, 2024), we presented numerous sources from antiquity that give us clues about the existence of wise and faithful people who were positioned next to the leaders in order to provide them with advice, and analysed information from the fields in which they had expertise. We also need to recognise that the relationship between leaders and advisers is a familiar theme in the academic societies of Western Europe, and that it has been a focus of classical political thinking. In early modernity, the theme was taken up by the genre of writing called "speculum principis" or "the mirror of princes", which aimed to advise princes on how to rule.

However, in their contemporary embodiment, the presence and manifestation of advisers in the activity of political leaders is vastly different from classical understanding. We identify political consultants, presidential advisers, ministerial advisers, and parliamentary advisers. We divided the presidential advisers into "American-type" presidential advisers, who we meet in the staff of the President of the United States of America, "French-type" presidential advisers, present in the process of exercising power at the Élysée Palace, and the presidential advisers from continental Europe, where this phenomenon is of recent date.

The typology of advisers, as you may have realized, derives from the type of governance. France, where the type of political regime now called "presidential" initially originated, has a directly elected president who enjoys significant power, and is a country described as a "presidential monarchy" (Duverger, 1974), with a president whose influence is unparalleled in other democracies. (Martigny V, Peters, BG.)

In the United States, where the office of president was invented and subsequently disseminated, the person elected by the voters exercises centralised political power in the absence of a prime minister.

Against the backdrop of such power, unparalleled in other democracies of the world, the leaders of the French and American presidential administrations were determined to hire reliable, loyal and responsive advisers, to whom they would entrust a part of their power. An unparalleled fact because "most of the other Western democracies are parliamentary regimes. In some, although nominally headed by a president, the president plays only a protocol role and consequently the same role belongs to any advisers he might have." (Alexe, Barbăroșie, 2012). However, some states have been inspired by these two major governance models - and implemented them and adapted them. Federal Brazil is a good example of a regime that drew inspiration from North American presidentialism. In Europe, the French model inspired Portugal and former Communist regimes such as Romania, Poland, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of Belarus or other ex-Soviet authoritarian regimes in Central Asia.

Returning to the way we define the people in the President's entourage, a definition that I have chosen to assign to the "presidential adviser" and which was inspired by the method Richard Shaw used in the case of the "ministerial adviser" (Shaw, 2023:3), is that of a public servant temporarily appointed by the president to provide party-political advice, and who is free from the requirements of political impartiality that apply to permanent bureaucracy. The notion of presidential adviser is not the same as what we call a political consultant, because "the term political consultant refers to political agents specializing in winning elections, who appeared and developed over the last half century, and were employed due to their experience in the specific field of political campaigning." (Dulio, 2004: 5) and (Védrines, 2025). I also chose not to identify them solely as political advisers to the president - because the work of a person in this position involves much

more than offering political advice. Sometimes, depending on their specialization, advisers provide the president with technical or specialised advice. Some conclusions drawn from the study of the historical occurrence of presidential advisers claim that these would be the people in charge of "putting power into action" (Martigny V, Peters, BG. *Ibid*.).

Depending on the country, system and regime, the objective situation of the presidential advisers is therefore certainly not identical. However, one observation is universal: advisers of state leaders are found at the highest levels of political power in all contemporary states, and in a much larger number today than a century ago.

In Romania, the presidential institution was established on March 28, 1974, when Dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu wanted to go abroad and present himself as a real head of state, not as a mere party leader (Despa, 2025). After the fall of the Communist regime, the provisional leadership took over the presidential duties (through Ion Iliescu). 1992 was the first year in which presidential elections were held in Romania. Since then, according to the constitutional provisions in force, the President of Romania operates in a rather semi-presidential political regime.

As in most of the newly-democratised Central-Eastern European states, it became the established norm that the president, prime minister and ministers should surround themselves with teams of "personal advisers", whose number varied between three and over ten - people with solid or highly politicized professional profiles (this does not exclude, however, their subsequent and sometimes very speedy appointment to high administrative positions in countries where political patronage or even shameless kinship systems reign) (Dulong, D., France, P., Le Mazier, J., 2019).

Regarding these advisers, after thirty-five years there are some simple research questions to which the public and academia expect an answer – or at least a nuancing of the answer they have in mind. The first one is - how are presidential advisers recruited in Romania? Another question regards the key criteria that leaders who won the presidential elections took into account when building their teams at the Cotroceni Palace. From what professional backgrounds do advisers and counsellors in the presidential administration come? Were these people known beforehand by the person who became president, or was it simply a political lottery? The answers are important and necessary in order for the public to understand the typology elected leaders in Romania are looking for when selecting staff able to carry out their mandate. At the same time, any persons who aim for the position of presidential adviser will by the end of this work be edified, I hope, by the methods of presidential selection, because we all realize very well that there are no fixed, predetermined criteria in this field.

How do you become a presidential adviser in Romania? Recruiting

In the case of the first presidential team, things were the exact opposite of what happened later. It was the first and last time the advisers came to the President, and it was not the President who sought the advisers. At that time, there were not many options available on the Romanian socio-professional market. President Emil Constantinescu was the first leader who had the opportunity to choose graduates of higher education in the West. President Ion Iliescu, in his first "transition" mandate and taking into account his

previous political career, could only choose a team made up of "*apparatciki*",[2] as one of his advisers defined himself. (Interview No. 2)

The group of experts within ADIRI,[3] whose members worked in Cotroceni, consisted of two sociologists, two lawyers, an engineer, a military historian and an economist specialising in foreign trade. This group, in addition to concerns about "Romania's accession to the Western world" and questions it asked itself during the events that preceded the transition of power, was mainly concerned about access to the forefront of Romanian politics. Desire for political affirmation prompted some of the members of the association to send a letter to the president of CFSN,[4] Ion Iliescu, with a series of observations and suggestions on the direction of the post-Communist Romanian state. The President found the contents of the letter attractive and invited them to become his advisers. "*We were a group and we stayed that way. At one point he [the President] wanted to get to know us after reading something we had written, and we stayed together. Most of the members of this group were his advisers."* (Interview No. 2).

Collaboration in this format did not last very long. The presidential term was limited, the challenges were great, and the struggle for power and for influencing the economic and external path of the country proved even greater. Differing views on the process of governing had also affected the President's relationship with his team of advisers. After about two years, the first team of presidential advisers gradually left the presidential administration, considering, through the voice of its leader, that "the experience of the first team of the Presidency, immediately after the Revolution, more precisely after the first free elections, has no equivalent and no consequences in the following period." (Interview No. 1). Of the seven, only two stayed with President Iliescu at Cotroceni after the 1992 elections - sociologist Iosif Boda and engineering professor Marius Guran. The second presidential team was built around Boda, whom Ion Iliescu appointed Head of the Presidency's Internal Policy Department. This time, President Iliescu hired former General Vasile Ionel as an adviser to the Department of Defence and National Security; having studied at the Military Academy of the USSR, the latter had already been compromised by accusations of being a GRU collaborator (Idem). Career diplomat Traian Chebeleu was appointed Foreign Policy adviser; he also held the position of presidential spokesperson, without possessing any qualities for such a position. The Department of Economic Affairs and Reform saw the appointment of Mișu Negrițoiu, an economist with experience both in the country and abroad, who was active in the party established by the President and took part in government policies during the transition to the market economy. Professor Marius Guran continued to advise the president on matters of science, education and culture; and an electronics technician who became known during the demonstrations of 21 December 1989 in the University Square in Bucharest, Iosif Dan, was invited by Ion Iliescu to advise him on domestic policy matters, after Iosif Boda left for an ambassadorial position.

The second presidential team was built by the President of Romania taking into account, even more than the first time, his ties with the past - and with a clear emphasis

[2] A familiar Russian term, which referred to a functionary or paid activist of the Soviet party or government "apparatus", who held an important, but not first rank, leadership position.

[3] Abbreviation for the Association of International Law and International Relations, established in 1966, bringing together university and diplomatic elites from the Socialist Republic of Romania.

[4] Council of the National Salvation Front.

on domestic politics. He managed to keep Boda and Guran, while relying on the organizational experience and notoriety of some of his new advisers, even though this was quite controversial in those tumultuous times. He assembled a mixed team of people who had never worked together before. Except for the presidential adviser for Education, who he would retain during his next term, Ion Iliescu did not have a brilliant mandate, mainly due to the fact that he failed to co-opt the most well-informed and experienced "*apparatciki*"; he lost the elections of 1996.

The Rector of the University of Bucharest, Professor Emil Constantinescu, managed to win the 1996 presidential election. He had been advised since 1992 by actor Mircea Diaconu, who pursued "the strategy of turning the little-known teacher with a common name into a friend of the voters" (Voinea, Delcea, 2014). Supported during the election campaign by numerous people from civil society - from the fragile private business environment timidly being built to the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR) - the new president remained focused on building his team using people from these groups. A fragment from the contemporary press reiterates this: "... the new head of state appointed his close friends, who were part of the campaign staff, to lead the main departments within the Presidency. Among them, Zoe Petre, Dorin Marian, Petru Berteanu, Mugurel Ciuvică, Cătălin Harnagea, Gheorghe Huiu." (Câmpean, 2000). The personality around which President Constantinescu started building the team was his colleague and friend, historian Zoe Petre. He carried out almost all his political actions in tandem with this lady. He appointed her to the position of presidential adviser on Domestic and Foreign Policy Issues to the President of Romania and coordinator of the Public Policy Department of the Romanian Presidency as soon as the election results were announced. In the presence of his history-specialised adviser, President Constantinescu continued the appointments. They took place in a noncommittal way, in the office of one of the non-governmental organizations that the two professors of the University of Bucharest had established.

*"*The evening before the official enthronement of the new President, there was great agitation at the headquarters of the Romanian Foundation for Democracy on Splaiul Unirii. A short while ago, at his request, I had opted for the position of presidential adviser, over that of Minister of Public Works." (Căpăţînă, 2002:61).

Negotiations on the division of functions had already started after the 1996 parliamentary elections, which the Convention had won. For this reason, despite the high demand - as many were all too willing to participate in the governance of the country - leader Constantinescu had enough positions available and ready to be distributed to those who had backed him in the process of obtaining political power. The president's main problem was that citizens' expectations were very high; and people trained in democratic governance and experienced in the political field were non-existent.

Inventorying President Constantinescu's team, we find the following data: a history teacher highly involved in civics, a geological engineer who had studied Political Science in the United States of America, an ex-engineer re-furbished into journalism, two lawyers, a medical graduate turned businessman and a civil engineer who advised him without any remuneration. All of them had been selected by Romania's second president, to form his team of presidential advisers. Other persons, either from CDR or from university backgrounds, were subordinated to them. President Constantinescu was looking for people who had not been part of the political apparatus of the former Communist state, preferably with studies outside Romania or active in an academic environment and the

field of private business. These were the criteria which the third President of Romania employed to engage those who would assist him.

"Emil Constantinescu had previously been a university Rector and had supported the emergence of our Faculty of Political Sciences, and in his mind the faculty had to educate not only specialists in the interpretation of the political phenomenon, not only academics, but also senior public officials. In fact, he brought to Cotroceni, right from the beginning, people who had been my students. They were hired even before me." (Interview No. 3).

With Ion Iliescu, the selection constraints were not very high. He looked for trained and experienced people from either the party apparatus or from higher education institutions which had prepared political cadres for roles within the former regime, many of them with training periods abroad. With Emil Constantinescu, however, things were more complicated due to constraints related to public perception. He adopted a distancing from the old, politically experienced staff, preferring to keep those Cotroceni officials already employed during the time of Ion Iliescu, and to hire some more additionally. More and more new state counsellors coming from university departments, national and Western academic media, and NGOs were invited to be part of the Constantinescu Administration.

The consequences of such recruitment were numerous. Two of them are worth noting. The first consisted in the fact that the shift in power in post-communist Romania was put into practice at the Cotroceni Palace too. The second consisted in the fact that during the presidential mandate of 1996 – 2000, the type of work done and the actions taken were almost all chaotic.

"It was something new for us. Because you realize that at that time we really came from civil society and had no connection with the administration, especially since there was still this kind of enclosed administration from Ceaușescu's time, and with mentalities left over from that time. We really went there, each of us minding his own business, and did not get included into the rhythm of those already in office. We made our own organizational charts and job descriptions somehow. So - seeing and doing." (Interview No. 4).

The recruitment process remained and has not altered up to the current president, President Dan. Some of these people were appointed on political grounds because they provided support to candidate Constantinescu, and their lack of expertise in public administration and political life did not matter at all. Most of the staff had never been involved in politics before. Zoe Petre described the phenomenon in detail:

"The team was set up in part with those who had remained active in supporting Emil Constantinescu between 1992 and 1996" (Vancu, Ungureanu, Șerban, 2016).

A female adviser was also involved in the process of recruiting President Traian Băsescu's first team of presidential advisers. Her name is Ana Adriana Săftoiu, and at that time she was a deputy in the Democratic Party (PD). Before being called by the President, Ms Săftoiu had graduated from the Faculty of Letters, worked as a journalist for the press agencies ROMPRES and MEDIAFAX, served as Secretary of State and spokesperson for the Government, then worked as Cabinet Director for the Minister of Transport, Traian Băsescu (2000-2001). Her career in the field of political communication was growing, and being active in the electoral campaign for the local elections greatly helped her from a political point of view. The phone call from the president, which is what many of the interviewees said happened, did not come out of the blue.

The possibility of being called and invited to be part of the presidential team

increases if: 1) you are a member of the president's party, 2) you have worked with the president before or in his campaign, 3) you have a consistently expanding career and have made sure the public knows about it, 4) you share the same political ideology or are part of the same professional group as the president, 5) you have been recommended by someone in the president's entourage - or the president has simply noticed you by chance. It can be either all or just one of these possibilities, as far as I could see from the interviews I conducted. In the case of the Băsescu Administration, the recruitment was carried out in a direct manner and from an authoritarian position:

"He asked me if I wanted to go to Cotroceni. I was an elected deputy on the lists for Bucharest. I made no special effort towards this nomination. I was included on the lists when I was on vacation – the first holiday in three years, in the summer of 2004, after the City Hall campaign and supporting the PD in a complicated opposition. I answered "yes". "Then, after you take the oath, you resign. Who takes your place?" he asks. I have no idea "You make another man happy too." "Someone else", he continued. "Let's go the other way," I say. And we start to work on the function flowchart. For the post of national security adviser, he proposes Vasile Blaga. For me, very good news. At last, a man I know in the unknown world that opens before me." (Săftoiu, 2015: 27-28)

In his two terms as president, Traian Băsescu appointed and replaced approximately 29 presidential advisers. During the 10 years of his mandate he was the one who increased the organisational flowchart at the Cotroceni Palace from 6 to 10 departments, appointing a presidential adviser and several subordinate state councillors to each of them. In addition to the already existing departments, new departments for Public Communication, Education and Research, Public Health, Planning and Policy Analysis were created; the Planning and Policy Analysis department was different from the former Internal Policy Department, which was renamed as the Department for Relations with Public Authorities and Civil Society.

As with President Constantinescu before him, President Băsescu recruited as presidential advisers people from his narrow political circle with whom he had won political battles, as well as professionals from academia or civil society who had not been involved in politics until then. He started with two journalists, an engineer from the Democratic Party, an economist-politician who had withdrawn from the electoral race in his favour, a human rights lawyer and a philosopher known to the general public. The rotation of the staff around Mr. Băsescu took place permanently, and most of the people he recruited at the Cotroceni Palace were subsequently appointed to strategic positions in the state, heads of diplomatic missions or political positions in the parties he influenced - the Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L) and the People's Movement Party (PMP).

In an attempt to outline a profile of the people who President Băsescu sought out and invited to be part of his team during his two terms in office, I will say from the start that he was interested in intellectuals with high visibility in the public arena, who criticized the Social Democratic Party, usually without them having been active in politics or having shown any ambition to become party leaders. He was also interested in experienced diplomats or career military personnel. Here, for example, is the recruitment process of the civil society adviser on constitutional and legal matters, a woman coming from civil society:

"One day I simply received a phone call from Traian Băsescu, whom I did not know. He was already the President of Romania, but his voice was unmistakable. I remember it was in the afternoon, towards evening, and he told me that he would very much like me to be a presidential adviser. I said yes, but we still need to meet and talk. It

was kind of a yes, we need to talk, but he was going to take the oath quickly. I admit that the next day I went to the Bucharest City Hall where I met him and that was it. (Interview No. 5)

Very few of Traian Băsescu's councillors had been politicians before their appointment. With the exception of Vasile Blaga, Theodor Stolojan and Mihai Stănişoară, all the presidential advisers became politicians only after they left Cotroceni Palace. Data from interviews reveal that President Băsescu usually noticed someone during meetings he was attending, or following reports he was reading; then he was in the habit of contacting that person and make him an offer to join his team at Cotroceni.

"The President didn't know me before becoming president. I got a phone call at some point where I was told he wanted to meet me. I went to a meeting with several intellectuals. There was a wider discussion, after which I received another call and was asked if I wanted to join the presidential administration. It's not something to turn down, so I accepted". (Interview No. 6)

Described during the interviews as a leader who read most of the documents put in front of him very carefully, President Băsescu had moments when he met and debated with people outside Cotroceni who had drawn up analyses on foreign policy issues or international security issues. Subsequently, in some cases, he asked the people concerned to become his presidential advisers or permanent state advisers.

"I was working with the Presidential Administration at the level of the National Security Adviser and the Foreign Policy Adviser, with Anca Ilinoiu and Iulian Fota. The President called me regularly, let's say even once a week, to discuss different issues. … He invited me to Cotroceni. He said that he needed this alternative opinion, because that's what he was always looking for, and that he needed to have this kind of expertise every day." (Interview No. 7)

Despite displaying openness towards varied expertise opinions and an appetite for oppositional debates with his own advisers, we found that the frequent changes within this administration, either through resignation or through transfer to other positions within the state, were due to the difficulty of working with Băsescu as leader. At the same time, Mr Băsescu preferred to reward loyal advisers with elevated positions.

President Klaus Werner Iohannis came the closest to matching the Băsescu administration in terms of the number of presidential advisers recruited to Cotroceni Palace. According to the data we were able to gather, a total of 21 people were appointed to these positions during his administration. It started with two politicians with political experience from the National Liberal Party (PNL), where he also hailed from; with an economist who had advised him during the election campaign; with a female writer working for the press; and with a historian who was close to the Liberals. A total of six presidential adviser positions that he constantly tried to keep in the organizational structure, only replacing the office holder, as needed. Unlike Traian Băsescu, Klaus Iohannis preferred to get to know his advisers better before hiring them. Klaus Iohannis usually sent the invitation after several work meetings, numerous discussions and a period of so-called probation - and only if he was attracted to the ideas and behaviour of the person he was targeting.

"I met him in my position as a 'Political Specialist' at the US Embassy in Bucharest. We interacted several times in preparation for the visits of some American diplomats to Sibiu. In 2014 we discussed the possibility of me joining his team of counsellors. I responded positively to his invitation." (Interview No. 8)

During this administration, a large part of the team served as state counsellors at

Cotroceni, and only after working closely and satisfactorily with the President were they offered positions as presidential counsellors.

"I did not know the President beforehand. The recommendation came from my colleagues in the health field. He wanted to meet me, I had an interview and after the interview he invited me to be part of the team of advisers. At that time I was, at least during my first term, a state counsellor; later, during the second term, I was appointed presidential counsellor. (Interview No. 9)

Counsellors Simona-Livia Maftei, George Vladimir Duhan, Anișoara Ancu, Ioan Oprișor, Diana-Loreta Păun or Delia Dinu all went through this process. This president cared a lot about the professionalism of those he recruited, but also about the professional experience of future advisers. Experiments were not part of President Iohannis' style of selecting and leading. For this reason he relied, like his predecessor, on career diplomats grounded in central and European administration who also held political positions, selecting them without taking into account whether they had previously been part of the team of a prime minister of a different political colour. For President Iohannis, what mattered about being an adviser was the ability to keep things under control immediately, without any adaptation period. The adaptation was intended only for those who performed the function of state counsellor.

"In the case of President Iohannis, before the vote, before the start of the electoral campaign, he asked me if I wanted to be his adviser on European Affairs. I said yes. Obviously, this depended on the outcome of the elections, but later I said yes and the deal materialized." (Interview No. 10).

If you had previously been a presidential adviser, if you were a minister, deputy, senator or secretary of state - even from the Social Democratic Party - but you had achieved political results and significant experience in politics at that time, you qualified for the role of adviser to President Iohannis. This selection grid resulted from the fact that President Iohannis did not have a rich experience in national politics; and also, most likely, because he needed to be surrounded by safety and tranquillity. Experienced people could provide him with the stability he needed. Consequently, the fields where the advisers of the Iohannis Administration came from were mainly legal and diplomatic, comprising people from state institutions, with just three exceptions of persons coming from outside state institutions.

A slightly different case of organization, though not of recruitment, is represented by the Dan Administration. The VII-th President of Romania has surprisingly increased the number of presidential advisers within the administration - from six advisers to eleven. The organizational chart of any presidential administration in Romania had never had more than seven presidential advisers at the same time. If we also take into account the state and honorary counsellors, President Dan has a total of 29 official counsellors, the largest number of people employed at the same time to assist the Head of State in the exercise of the five-year mandate.

In terms of recruitment and the areas from which he selected his advisers, President Dan relied on a person with diplomatic experience that he had known for a long time, and invited two university professors and three old-guard politicians to join him. Among the political advisers, it is worth pointing out that Dacian Cioloș has close relations with people within the political circles of the French Republic; Ludovic Orban massively supported Mr. Dan when he ran for the City Hall of the Capital, as well as during the presidential campaign; and the third, Eugen Tomac, also collaborated with President Dan and worked effetively with former President Traian Băsescu, being perceived as one of

his disciples. At the same time, President Dan invited a specialist from the Romanian business environment as well as several lawyers to join his team - all, former collaborators, in various fields, from the General City Hall of Bucharest. Most of them were called and offered positions on the team only after he was elected to office. He knew them all very well beforehand, and had negotiated with them previously.

"I had spoken to the President a few times before, when he was the Mayor of Bucharest and I think we had spoken to each other on the phone a few times following some public statements of mine. I remember that at one point the President had called me and asked me to explain to him about the VAT gap and what should be done. We had two phone conversations like this. He is the kind of man who, when he wants to understand somehting, he calls." (Interview No. 11)

Analysing each appointment made by President Dan, we can highlight the fact that he relies on a team of former collaborators from the time when he was Mayor, people with positions in the administration, and several experienced political figures; counting on continuity, loyalty and expertise in the management of the state apparatus. He did not manage to work with Ludovic Orban for more than a month because of some political statements that Orban made - proof that there is, however, a big difference between being a politician and being an adviser on domestic policy issues. The roles are similar, but the qualities required for the two political positions differ greatly. President Dan has recruited more people who have built a career outside state institutions than his predecessors did. He has four honorary counsellors, two of whom are MEPs.

Conclusions on the profile of recruited presidential advisers

Summing up the data I have collected from interviews and from the database of all the people who have been appointed as presidential counsellors since 1990, I have tried to outline a social profile of the people in the presidential entourage.

I took into account their social origin and used the classic indicators of studies, profession and workplace from which they come, and this observation highlighted a very small number of counsellors from the private sector (business owners, professionals and senior managers from the private sector). We found an under-representation of the private sector of about 1 in 10, which can be explained by the fact that Romania was part of the Communist area, where the private sector of the economy accounted for only 12.8% of gross domestic product in 1989.

Centralized data reveal that almost 9 in 10 presidential advisers in these 36 years came from a state position before their appointment, while just over 1 in 10 came from either the private sector or from civil society, as broadly defined by Alam, Martinache and Nollet.

Regardless of the period or political orientation, the Romanian presidential administrations recruited mainly from the state bureaucratic and academic elite: zero counsellors from the private sector in Ion Iliescu's first period, with the first notable appearance of counsellors from the private sector under Emil Constantinescu (almost 29%) and the Dan administration (currently); Iliescu's 2000–2004 mandate recorded the highest combined share of private plus mixed (~35%), signalling a relative diversification compared to the 1990s. The two longer administrations, Băsescu and Iohannis (10-11 years each), had similar patterns: around 77-86% state, 14% private.

Regarding the educational trajectory of the respondents, a relative balance between occupational categories is observed. Presidential advisers in Romania

overwhelmingly have higher education. There is only one case of a presidential counsellor with just secondary education (Dan Iosif). Counsellors with a legal background predominate — almost a quarter of those who have held or still hold this position have studied law, which reflects the central role of counsellors on legislative/constitutional issues in the Romanian Presidential Administration. Engineers, economists and diplomats form the second important group, each around 13-15%, representing a significant proportion of the technical/economic profile alongside that of foreign policy. The military and historians have a constant presence (~7% each), especially in posts related to national security, defence and domestic politics. The combination of lawyer and diplomat appears several times (Traian Chebeleu, Cristian Diaconescu, Bogdan Aurescu), suggesting that legal training is often a bridge to a high-level diplomatic career. Here it is worth mentioning that the Faculty of Commerce, within the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, was the place where most foreign policy advisers were trained (Luminița Odobescu, Anca Ileana Ilinoiu, Lazăr Comănescu, Ioan-Mircea Pașcu), having a high share in recruiting and training staff for state institutions both during the Communist regime and after its change. The School of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences was also a place where the first teams of presidential and government advisers came from. Another thing that caught my attention is that a large number of presidential advisers graduated from the National College of Defence, in addition to their basic studies (Iulian Fota, Dorin Marius Marian, Vasile Blaga, Mihai Stănişoară, George Scutaru, Bogdan Aurescu), and some of the respondents were professors in this institution of political-military education (Sergiu Tudor Medar, Cristian Diaconescu).

Unlike the previous division by state - private - mixed categories, in terms of educational background we chose to place the same counsellor in several categories of studies, because many counsellors have completed studies/training in several fields (for example Ioan Talpeș is both historian and has a military background; Cristian Diaconescu is both a lawyer and a diplomat).

In one sentence, the blueprint of the presidential adviser in Romania looks like this: he has higher education, he has built his professional career inside the state, he has completed his studies in various state educational establishments, he has political ideas similar to those of the president, he is loyal and aims to be appointed to a position of constitutional judge, ambassador or minister before his mandate is finished.

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Article Info

Received: October 14 2026
Accepted: November 09 2026

How to cite this article:

Cupcea, R. (2026). The presidential advisers in Romania. Recruitment process. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques,* no. 92, pp. 58 - 70.