

interview

**Interview with the new General Director of EIR**

The current issue of our Newsletter includes an interview with Ms Oana-Mihaela Mocanu, Director General of the European Institute of Romania (EIR). On this occasion, we have invited Ms Mocanu to tell us more about the start of her career at EIR, her motivation to run for the highest position within the Institute this spring, but also about the lessons learned since the COVID-19 outbreak.



Your professional journey with the European Institute of Romania started almost 20 years ago. With that in mind, which would be the most memorable and inspiring moments throughout the years that made you stay with EIR for that long?

My journey here started in August 2000, but my active preparation for this professional path goes back to the mid-90s. I first discovered my incipient passion for the European Union (EU) and EU affairs in general during my college years; I was always eager and curious to learn more about the European institutions, the internal architecture and the decision/policy-making processes, which eventually led to my PhD thesis on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Almost three years after my graduation, I applied for a position at and started to work for the European Institute of Romania, ready to deepen my knowledge and excited to put into practice all that I knew in theory about the running of EU affairs.

As such, not only that I've stayed close to the Institute for 20 years, but I've fully embraced its mission and principles and I am still doing everything in my power to make sure that, together with my colleagues, EIR fulfils its *raison d'être* of supporting the healthy development and the deepening of the European integration process of Romania. My personal creed has always been that this country not only deserves to be an integral part of the European family, but also to constantly grow and bring its fair share of added value to the European project. ... p. 2

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The current pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-COV-2 took the whole world by surprise at the start of 2020 and represents a global borderless challenge, both for political leaders and ordinary citizens around the globe. We are not speaking of an American, Chinese or European virus, but rather of a human virus that, at the time of writing, had already killed more than 294,000 people worldwide. The outbreak marks an unprecedented public health crisis in post-war history and is arguably the gravest since the Spanish influenza of 1918. Although, for the time being, uncertainty remains the watchword, there are some voices, not few, that already predict a bleak future for the existing world order (assuming that one actually exists), built on the bedrock of liberal democratic values, a globalized economy and international norms and institutions meant to safeguard common peace and promote equitable prosperity<sup>2</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic is a stress test for all of them.

In spite of seeming a little hesitant at first, the European Union (EU) quickly came to grasp that effectively mitigating the pandemic required not only European solidarity, but a real, not just nominal, positive synergy between national and supranational interests, translating into a coordinated and concerted crisis response. On the other hand, it soon became obvious that Member States were not just fighting a vicious pandemic, but also an infodemic, just as contagious, with numerous disinformation attempts focused on the virus and the related disease. As such, a report issued by the European Commission (EC) in April, dedicated to the measures taken to counter the political, ...p. 3

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## Interview with the new General Director of EIR

[continued from page 1] Without surprise, there have been many memorable and inspiring moments during my stay so far at the Institute. I remember, for instance, with great joy and pride, the first years, when I had the opportunity to work together with and learn from the team led by the Chief Negotiator of Romania's EU accession process. Later on, the years spent with the Studies and Analyses Unit opened my eyes to the real importance of quality research in Romania. It was during that time that I met and learned a lot from some of our distinguished external collaborators - professors, researchers and practitioners in the field of EU affairs, with an economic, political or social touch. Another important landmark was the launch of our academic journal - the *Romanian Journal of European Affairs (RJE)* - which has recently celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday and is still going strong. Last but not least, EIR was actively involved in the preparation and smooth running of Romania's first Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2019. That was another fulfilling and enriching experience in itself.

**Your mandate as an acting head of EIR started in August 2019 and was followed by the official selection process for a new Director General of the Institute, for which you applied. What was your drive and what are your priorities at the start of your term?**

Having fresh in my mind the experience of closely working with Professor Gabriela Drăgan, the former Director General, I wanted to continue on the same path and build upon the good things already in place. My interim mandate came, in a way, as an acknowledgement of my previous experience acquired while working for EIR, in various positions, during all those wonderful years. It was both an honour and a challenging task, for which I am very grateful. For me, the months spent as acting Director General were rather intense, but I was lucky enough to have the entire EIR team by my side and to immediately engage in a productive collaboration with the members of the Administrative Board, the Scientific Advisory Board and, of course, our institutional coordinator - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

The European Institute of Romania's team (in its entirety) remains our main asset and represented my main motivation to apply for the top position within this institution. I want to further develop the ongoing projects, and also to implement some new initiatives meant to support the Romanian public administration, the academic milieu, our social partners and the civil society at large in a concerted effort to *deepen Romania's EU membership*.

As regards my management priorities, these are mainly related to the sound operation of EIR in its daily activities. The vision of my Management Programme, which I devised and presented during the selection process, is meant to secure both the continuity of those segments of activity that provided the best results, but also to explore some new and ambitious grounds. My desire is for EIR to remain a platform for dialogue and genuine exchange of ideas on EU topics, and also to further support, through its programmes and projects, the national decision-makers when dealing with relevant files. In my Management Programme, I highlighted the need to strengthen our cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the institution that has coordinated our activity since 2013, by meeting its needs in the field of European affairs in a more tangible and concrete manner. Research, training, communication and translation will remain the main pillars of activity within EIR, while trying to further expand the projects area, where there still is untapped potential.

**The start of your mandate unfortunately overlapped the COVID-19 pandemic. How did you cope with this unfortunate event and how did you ensure the continuity of EIR's activities?**

Of course, there were some tense moments at first, filled with uncertainty and a bit of confusion, as we were only beginning to explore practical ways to continue our activities in times of pandemic. Just like other public institutions. Part of our staff worked from home, while a small team ensured the continuity of operations at EIR's headquarters. In these troubled times, our main priority was to ensure the safety of our personnel, partners and collaborators.

Without any doubt, working in the studies and research area during the pandemic proved to be a rather vivid and intense activity and, unsurprisingly, throughout the last couple of months we've had several editorial products launched and promoted. One of them was the *policy brief* regarding the *Measures taken by the European Union in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic*, which contains useful information about the decisions adopted at EU level in the field, especially during a period of infodemic as contagious as the real pandemic. Also, two colleagues from the European Studies Unit contributed to a collective report named "*EU crisis response in tackling COVID-19. Views from the member states*", published by the European Policy Institutes Network (EPIN). Moreover, they published opinion articles on the subject in the previous issue of EIR's Newsletter.

The same goes for the Translation Unit, who continued to work on their translation projects related to ECHR case law and also produced a synthesis focused on the *Judgements and decisions delivered in 2019 by the European Court of Human Rights in cases against Romania*. I would also like to mention here the bilateral protocol signed between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and EIR regarding the translation and revision of documents in the field of human rights, but this time at the level of the Organisation of United Nations.

As for the *EUReKA* project, we published the *Country report on the rights of free movement and EU mobile citizens' inclusion*, which integrates contributions from our Romanian partners in the project - the Novapolis Association and Cartel Alfa, following the model recommended by the project coordinator - *Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS* from Italy.

We had to rapidly adopt a series of measures in order to adapt our activity to the new context created by the pandemic. As such, the colleagues from the Training Unit came up with the initiative of an *informative pill*-type of online show named "5+ European minutes". In our first episodes, we touched upon topics like the disinformation campaigns targeting

the coronavirus, and how to counter them, tips and tricks for hosting successful videoconferences, but also the impact of new technologies on the democratic participation of EU citizens. With the help of a dedicated video conferencing platform, we were able to launch our online training courses; the first two took place in the second half of May (*The normative system of the EU* and *Norms and techniques of legislative procedure*), and we hosted around 30 participants, with an excellent feedback. Also, we kick-started the online debates for our new research project, in line with our updated schedule of activities.

All our other partnerships went on, including Eurofound, EDIC and Euranet projects, which are on track with the initial graph. On the one hand, we were sorry for not being able to keep the doors of our Documentation Centre open and to ensure the public access hours of the Europe Direct Information Centre Bucharest, but these two entities continued to work online, according to the official rules of procedure and recommendations. On the other hand, we hosted a special Europe Day event on 9 May 2020, during which we all remembered and rejoiced the European spirit in a somewhat atypical way, through social distancing, but reunited online with our collaborators, friends and former interns.

On a more personal note, I have to admit that I've really missed my colleagues (considering that some of them are still working from home as we speak), but I am happy to confirm that the pace of our activity has not slowed down at all and that we've managed to adapt without any (serious) problems. What is more, in some cases, working from home translated for some of us into a plus of creativity, documentation, rapid dialogue and fewer endless administrative meetings, all of which fuelled efficiency and greater productivity overall.

**Taking into account the feeling of uncertainty that will most likely follow in the post-pandemic period and the metamorphosis into various working models at national and European level, how would you sum up the future of EIR in a few keywords?**

Flexibility and adaptability. Given that we still do not know how the post-pandemic world will look like (granted, we all long for a return to normality, but my guess is that a new type of normality is in store for us), we will need to display flexibility and to adapt to the new realities.

It is expected that this transition and adaptation will entail additional costs, but maybe it is time to start seeing the glass half full as well, and to capitalise on this opportunity to build a new type of reality together, with new means and methods. With regard to Romania's and EU's reactions in times of pandemic, I have said it before and I will repeat it: the motto *United we stand, divided we fall* best reflects, painfully accurate, the reality of our times, both on a national and a supranational level.

An interview made by **Eliza Vaș**  
EIR Newsletter Editor-in-Chief

## EU vs. COVID-19 Infodemic

*"fake news spreads faster and more easily than this virus, and is just as dangerous"*<sup>1</sup>

[continued from page 1] economic and social effects of the pandemic, warned that over 2,700 articles containing coronavirus-related disinformation were identified on a daily basis<sup>3</sup>. Disinformation affects citizens' ability to make informed decisions and confuses them, especially during periods of intense emotional stress and social anxiety, and this "can cost lives", as EC President Ursula von der Leyen remarked<sup>4</sup>. All the more when some world leaders publicly wonder whether coronavirus might be treated by injecting disinfectant into the body<sup>5</sup>.

"The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated", American writer Mark Twain, one of the most misquoted authors of all time, allegedly said when commenting on the newspaper reports of his own death back in the 19th century. According to the working definition of the EU, disinformation refers to "verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public"<sup>6</sup>. The main purpose of disinformation is to undermine the citizens' trust in national and European authorities and institutions, to destabilise our democratic regimes and processes and to distort public debate. And, during the current pandemic, to fuel various conspiracy theories, seed polarization and provoke unjustified panic. It is worth differentiating between disinformation and misinformation, the latter being a case of spreading false news or rumours unknowingly and without the intention of causing public harm or gaining any material benefits. Both instances imply the spread of a false or manipulated piece of information, which, at times, may have severe consequences. However, EU's efforts to counter disinformation are not of recent date.



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Back in 2015, after a call from the European Council to address the ongoing disinformation campaigns deployed by Russia, the East Stratcom Task Force was created within the European External Action Service (EEAS). So far, the Task Force has catalogued, analysed and raised awareness of over 8,400 cases of pro-Kremlin disinformation, while significantly improving the understanding of the tools, techniques and intentions of disinformation campaigns conducted by Russian sources<sup>7</sup>. Later on, the EU adopted, in December 2018, the Action Plan against Disinformation, its most comprehensive document in the field, with a concrete set of actions meant to further enable a joint and coordinated EU approach to fight disinformation. Its four pillars were: improving the detection capabilities of European institutions, strengthening coordinated and joint responses, mobilising private sector to tackle disinformation and improving state and societal resilience by raising awareness about the spectre of disinformation<sup>8</sup>. The importance of strategic communication as a tool to combat disinformation was also outlined.

A March 2020 report issued by East Stratcom counted over 110 corona-related disinformation cases in the public EUvsDisinfo database since 22 January 2020. These were used in order to further deepen divisions, sow mistrust and chaos, and exacerbate crisis situations and issues of public concern<sup>9</sup>. Among the false narratives circulated and spread online were: the coronavirus crisis is a fabricated hoax, it does not really exist; the EU is going to impose mass vaccinations; the coronavirus is linked to the spread of 5G technology; the new virus is a biological weapon developed in the United States of America (USA) or China; there are natural remedies to cure the virus, like garlic or Vitamin C. The case regarding the intravenous administration of Vitamin C as a remedy against COVID-19 was reported in Romania, China and the Republic of Moldova, according to the same source.

Alina Bârgăoanu, former member of the EC High-Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation and expert affiliated with the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE), has identified three dominant narratives specific to the Romanian informational milieu: the virus was engineered by a criminal hand in the USA, China or Israel; there already are available magical cures for the disease; we are facing a global conspiracy devised by the likes of Bill Gates or George Soros meant to impose vaccination and to implant chips against our will and track our movement<sup>10</sup>. All of this against clear evidence and documented grounds certifying that: the source of COVID-19 is of natural animal origin; there is currently no recommended or officially approved cure for the coronavirus; nobody is using the coronavirus crisis as an excuse to impose mass vaccinations<sup>11</sup>.

But how can we distinguish between truths and lies in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, given that, according to the Avaaz civic network, related viral disinformation on social networks recorded over 1.7 million shares on Facebook, and an estimated 117 million views by mid-April?<sup>12</sup> Here are some simple recommendations, that can go a long way, made by the European Commission: rely on and get informed from official sources in order to stay up to date with the evolution of the pandemic; follow the official recommendations of public health authorities and those posted on the websites of relevant EU and international organizations; do not share alarming or conspiracy-based news coming from questionable sources and, last but not least, beware of online scams related to products that, in theory, may cure or prevent COVID-19 infections, which proliferated in the online environment.

The same Mark Twain may have well said that “a lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes”. So, it is up to each and every one of us to make sure that this hypothesis does not confirm during the current crisis which, as it has already happened in the past, may have as fortunate side effect the strengthening of the European unity and the deepening of the sense of solidarity among its people. Seventy years after the Schuman Declaration, the cornerstone text for European integration that proposed the cooperation of European countries in two key economic domains central for warfare, Europe Day was celebrated on 9 May 2020 in a completely unusual manner, by respecting social distancing and organising numerous online events. Nevertheless, the leitmotif of the messages sent by the European leaders was as strong and timely as ever: **Together we are Europe.**

**Bogdan Mureşan**  
European Studies Unit

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, *Munich Security Conference speech*, available at <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/munich-security-conference>.

<sup>2</sup> Atlantic Council, *What World Post COVID-19. Three Scenarios*, available at <https://atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/What-World-Post-COVID-19.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, „NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) CRISIS STATE OF PLAY OF MEASURES TAKEN BY THE COMMISSION”, available at [https://storage06transcoder.rcs-rds.ro/storage/2020/04/12/1177030\\_1177030\\_raport-comisie-europeana.pdf](https://storage06transcoder.rcs-rds.ro/storage/2020/04/12/1177030_1177030_raport-comisie-europeana.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, *Fighting Disinformation*, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/fighting-disinformation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/fighting-disinformation_en).

<sup>5</sup> BBC News, “Coronavirus: Outcry after Trump suggests injecting disinfectant as treatment”, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52407177>.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, “Questions and Answers - The EU steps up action against disinformation”, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO\\_18\\_6648](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_18_6648).

<sup>7</sup> EUvsDisinfo, the dedicated site managed by East Stratcom, may be accessed here: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>.

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, “Action Plan against Disinformation”, available at [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/54866/action-plan-against-disinformation\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/54866/action-plan-against-disinformation_en).

<sup>9</sup> EUvsDisinfo, “EEAS SPECIAL REPORT: DISINFORMATION ON THE CORONAVIRUS - SHORTASSESSMENT OF THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT”, available at <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/eeas-special-report-disinformation-on-the-coronavirus-short-assessment-of-the-information-environment/>.

<sup>10</sup> Euractiv, Alina Bârgăoanu, "Global conspiracies, local panics", available at <https://www.euractiv.com/section/eastern-europe/opinion/global-conspiracies-local-panics/>.

<sup>11</sup> Although the EU has already mobilized €140 million for research towards a cure and vaccine, there is as yet no vaccine or cure available for coronavirus.

<sup>12</sup> Avaaz, "How Facebook can Flatten the Curve of the Coronavirus Infodemic", available at [https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/en/facebook\\_coronavirus\\_misinformation/](https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/en/facebook_coronavirus_misinformation/).

## **Romanian Journal of European Affairs - Summer 2020 edition**

The June issue of the EIR academic journal *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*, also recently indexed in the Central and Eastern European Online Library (CEEOL), proposes articles on topics such as: measures taken against the spread of fake news on the Internet, the place of the EU on the post-Brexit global arena, the Europeanisation process in countries such as Armenia, Ukraine or Albania, the relations between the EU and countries from the Southern Mediterranean region.

**Flavia Durach** (Lecturer, College of Communication and Public Relations, SNSPA, Bucharest), **Alina Bârgăoanu** (Professor, Dean of the College of Communication and Public Relations, SNSPA, Bucharest) and **Cătălina Nastasiu** (PhD student at the Doctoral School in Communication, College of Communication and Public Relations, SNSPA, Bucharest) give a broad perspective on the measures taken by the European Union in the fight against the spread of fake news on the Internet, identifying and analysing four possible types of answers: self-regulation, co-regulation, direct regulation, and audience-centred solutions. In his paper on the role of the EU on the post-Brexit global arena, **Valentin Naumescu** (Associate Professor of International Relations, Faculty of European Studies, Babeş-Bolyai University) underlines the significant consequences of the Brexit process on the EU security. After the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, the Member States need to rethink and reshape their security strategy, in the context of a very complex international order.

The next article, signed by **Aram Terzyan** (Visiting Senior Lecturer, Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences), sets forth a comparative analysis of the Europeanisation process in Ukraine and Armenia. As the author argues, this topic needs to be researched in order to understand how national decision-makers react to the European integration process.

**Ana Damaschin** (Ph.D. student in International Relations and European Studies, Babeş-Bolyai University) and **Melania-Gabriela Ciot** (Ph.D. Associate Professor, Faculty of European Studies, Babeş-Bolyai University) focus on the political elites at the EU level, trying to define their available strategies in adapting to contemporary challenges.

Starting from the fact that trade policy has been a key-element from the very beginning of the European integration, **Tamás Szigetvári** (Associate professor, Pázmány Péter Catholic University) analyses the free trade agreements signed by the European Union and countries from the Southern Mediterranean region, in the context of more bilateral agreement in the global system and less multilateral frameworks of cooperation.

The article published by **Elona Kodhel** (Lecturer, Department of Social Sciences, University of Korça) focuses on the impact of Europeanisation on the Albanian higher education between 2014-2019, and its convergence with the standards of the European Higher Education Area.

The last paper, wrote by **Annamária Artner** (Senior Research Fellow, Institute of World Economy, Budapest), looks at the Hungarian labour market in comparison with other EU Member States.

Full issue and articles are available at <http://rjea.ier.gov.ro>.

Our readers are also invited to access RJE's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/romanian.journal.of.european.affairs/>.



**Ionuț Marcu**  
European Studies Unit

## **The "5+ European minutes programme"**

In April, the European Institute of Romania launched the video programme "5+ European minutes", at the initiative of the Training Unit. Being an interdepartmental programme, several EIR compartments were involved and a series of recorded materials on current European topics and other subjects were produced.

The idea of the programme came up in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions, as a means to continue the activity of the Training Unit at a time when physical training was no longer possible. The programme also comes from the need of EIR experts to provide up-to-date information to our followers on EIR's Facebook page, YouTube channel or website.



Experts from the European Studies Unit and the Projects Unit joined the Training Unit team to identify topics of interest to the EIR's public and to outline information materials in current crisis-related areas.

The first episode of the programme focused on disinformation in the European Union and the concrete ways to combat it. Eliza Vaş and Bogdan Mureşan, members of the European Studies Unit, talked about the measures taken at European level to fight disinformation and the actions carried out at national level, respectively. Some recommendations on how to avoid fake news were also offered.

In the second episode, we approached the subject of video conferencing and related rules, pointing out a few things to keep in mind, both as a participant in a virtual meeting and as an online meeting host.

The third episode tackled the way in which technological advancement and digital progress could facilitate the deliberative process and the European citizens' engagement. On the one hand, we addressed the challenges arising from the widespread use of new technologies (disinformation and information manipulation) and, on the other hand, we highlighted the measures able to make the impact of new technologies on democratic participation predominantly positive. A detailed presentation of the topic can be found in the chapter signed by Mihai Sebe, Eliza Vaş and Bogdan Mureşan (European Studies Unit) in the collective volume "Deliberative Democracy in the EU: Countering Populism with Participation and Debate", coordinated by CEPS Brussels, under the project Towards a Citizens' Union (ZCU).

The "5+ European minutes" programme will continue to cover new topical issues, so we invite you to stay tuned and look for articles bearing its logo.

**Monica Ingeaua**  
Training Unit

## A new edition of the European Language Resource Coordination programme

The new European Language Resource Coordination (ELRC) programme started on 12 February 2020. The ELRC programme, funded under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), reunites the European Union (EU) Member States, Iceland and Norway.

The ELRC programme was designed to collect language and translation (mono- and bilingual) data needed to develop the CEF.AT automated translation platform, which will remove language barriers and will better respond to the current needs of public services in the EU Member States plus Iceland and Norway.

The CEF.AT platform supports the Digital Single Market and aims to facilitate multilingual communication and exchange of documents and other language content between national public administrations in Europe and between these administrations and citizens/business sector across the EU. The platform supports European online public services such as Europeana, e-Justice, e-Procurement, e-Health, Open Data Portal, Online Dispute Resolution, etc.

Unlike the first two editions, the new ELRC aims, in addition to continuing the process of collecting language resources, to reduce the development gap that exists in the states involved in the programme in terms of the language technology industry, by helping to adapt the latest innovations in research and artificial intelligence to local needs and by promoting the current language technology solutions.

The ELRC project network coordinates the process of collecting language resources for all official languages of the EU as well as those of the countries associated to the CEF and promotes the importance of language resources and of collaboration between participating States in order to continue to collect language resources and to develop the quality of automated translation solutions for current and future digital services.

ELRC is supported by the Language Resources Board. On 29 April 2020, ELRC's Language Resource Board held its 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. Originally scheduled to take place in Zagreb, the event was held online due to COVID-19. Here is some information useful to the general public, as selected from the presentations:

- In addition to the 24 languages of the European Union, the automated translation system eTranslation covers the Icelandic, Norwegian and Russian languages.
- In March 2020, the eTranslation service, previously available only to public institutions in the Member States, became available to SMEs across Europe.
- The deadline for submissions to the CEF-TC-2020-1 call for proposals was extended to 25 June 2020. The EUR 4 million budget will finance transnational projects that collect language resources and tools that will integrate eTranslation in public administrations, digital services, etc.; for further details, please consult <https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/connecting-europe-facility/cef-telecom/apply-funding/2020-automated-translation>.
- The catalogue of CEF services, which includes tools and services supporting multilingualism, can be found at <https://cef-at-service-catalogue.eu/>.

The third round of ELRC workshops will take place between September 2020 and December 2021. The workshops will be held in each Member State with the aim of facilitating a closer and more effective dialogue between language technology developers, those institutions or organisations that need services in this area, as well as decision-makers. All necessary data will be available on the ELRC page, in the Events section.

The presentations of the two workshops that took place in Romania are available at [http://www.lr-coordination.eu/romania\\_agenda](http://www.lr-coordination.eu/romania_agenda) (the workshop of 23 March 2016) and at [http://www.lr-coordination.eu/l2Romania\\_agenda](http://www.lr-coordination.eu/l2Romania_agenda) (the workshop of 1 November 2018).

The presentations during the 29 April 2020 event can be found at <http://www.lr-coordination.eu/vlrb>.

**Laura Mihăilescu**  
Translation Coordination Unit  
ELRC Public Services National Anchor Point

## Country Report on free movement rights and EU mobile citizens' inclusion Research Survey, EUREKA project

In April 2020, the European Institute of Romania released the Country Report on free movement rights and EU mobile citizens' inclusion, carried out under the EUREKA project - A Key Access to EU Rights.

The Romanian report was drawn up by the European Institute of Romania, with the support of its Romanian partners in the project - Novapolis Association and Cartel Alfa, within the framework set by the Project Coordinator - Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS.



The research identified good practices and made policy recommendations, capitalizing on data collected at national level, through a survey conducted between November 15, 2019 and January 31, 2020. The survey aimed to map and evaluate existing technological tools (mainly websites), able to provide easy access to information, services and guidance for EU citizens and their family members living in another Member State. The results are used to develop a unique innovative web portal and an application, to be tested and implemented in six EU countries (Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Romania).

The processing of collected data highlighted 21 websites and 59 ordering criteria. The ranking was achieved by calculating a complex index, based on the respondents' assessments. Thus, the best practices identified are offered by two European Union websites (EURES and Consilium), common to all Member States, and two national websites: one public (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), which mainly targets the Romanian diaspora, and the other one private (KPMG).

The report integrates recommendations and highlights the respondents' preferences and knowledge, as well as their focus on a sample of stakeholders, as a source of knowledge and expertise. It is estimated that Romania - known for its relatively good performance in terms of fast-growing IT services and internet speed - remains nonetheless one of the least wealthy EU Member States. Accordingly, the report underlines the urge for Romanian authorities to strengthen investment in technological tools and expand networking capabilities for smart governance.

The general conclusion is that European support and private sector development seem to complement Romania's need for services and information in order to fully leverage the benefits of the single market.

More information about the project is available on [EIR's website](#), where the Country Report can be consulted in full, in English, or in summary, in Romanian.

**Iulian Oneaşcă**  
EIR Project Manager, Projects Unit

## Judgments and decisions delivered in 2019 by ECHR in cases against Romania

According to the last [activity report](#) of the European Court of Human Rights, on 31 December 2019, there were 7883 applications against Romania registered before the Court, at various procedural stages. Thus, Romania ranked 4<sup>th</sup> among the 47 countries of the Council of Europe, after Russia, Turkey and Ukraine, and much higher than the next country in line, namely Italy. Over the period 1994-2019, the Court delivered 1496 judgments against Romania, which holds a leading position, having the 5<sup>th</sup> highest number of judgments, lower than Turkey, Russia, Italy and Poland, and higher than Ukraine.

As regards 2019, the Court examined 3263 applications concerning Romania - of which 3016 were declared inadmissible or were struck out of the list of cases (their examination was discontinued) - and delivered 62 judgments (on 247 applications): 56 with at least one article of the European Convention on Human Rights having been breached, 5 with no violation found, and one in which a friendly settlement was reached.

Depending on the Convention article that was violated, the 56 convictions can be structured as follows: Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment) - 30; Article 3 (lack of effective investigation) - 1; Article 5 (right to liberty and security) - 2; Article 6 (right to a fair trial) - 4; Article 6 (length of proceedings) - 5; Article 6 (non-enforcement) - 2; Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) - 4; Article 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) - 1; Article 10 (freedom of expression) - 1; Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) - 1; Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 (protection of property) - 6; Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 (right to education) - 1; Article 4 of Protocol no. 7 (right not to be tried or punished twice) - 1; other articles of the Convention - 1.

The detailed statistics and the analysis of the most important judgments and decisions can be consulted [here](#) (available only in Romanian).

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### **The European Commission unveils a massive European recovery plan to counter the impact of the coronavirus crisis**

On 27 May 2020, the European Commission (EC) has unveiled a major recovery plan to help the European Union (EU) and its Member States mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and prepare a better future for the next generation. Meant to ensure a sustainable and fair recovery favourable to social inclusion in all Member States, the initiative will consist of the combined efforts of the “Next Generation EU” instrument and the targeted reinforcements of the long-term EU budget for the 2021-2027 period.

**The massive recovery plan is estimated to have a total financial firepower of EUR 1.85 trillion, being the EU’s coordinated response in the face of the greatest collective challenge since the birth of the European Union,** European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said while addressing the European Parliament. The Commission’s plan still needs the European Council’s approval on 19 June in order to become reality, but a compromise seems to have already been reached among the political leaders of the 27.

The new recovery instrument “Next Generation EU” will have a total worth of EUR 750 billion, divided up into EUR 500 billion given to Member States as grants, while the remaining EUR 250 billion would be available as loans. Next Generation EU will invest in repairing the social fabric, protect the Single Market, and help rebalance balance sheets across Europe. This novel instrument, together with the core Multiannual Financial Framework for the upcoming seven-year period, **will go alongside the three safety nets of EUR 540 billion in loans, already agreed by the Parliament and the Council.**

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