



opinion

## The Follow-up of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU

Taking over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) is an important moment for each Member State, regardless of the power that it grants, at any given time. The Treaty of Lisbon significantly changed its meaning, by reducing the Presidency’s impact on the foreign policy agenda of the EU and on major European decisions. Therefore, the Member States found themselves limited to influencing EU domestic decisions. Furthermore, the new legal and political framework has affected, to a greater extent, small and medium-sized countries, such as Portugal, which might have a lower capacity to tackle all the policy areas in discussion.

Against this background, Portugal held its 4<sup>th</sup> Presidency, during the global pandemic, with the country partially confined and in a state of emergency. Besides these internal conditions which limited the visibility, notoriety and agenda-setting power of the Presidency, Portugal had to deal with external challenges, such as the end of the transition period following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU and the beginning of relations with the new Biden administration.

Compared to the previous Portuguese Presidencies, the 2021 mandate was marked by a number of controversies, especially related to public spending. At the internal level, these issues deepened the gap between citizens and EU institutions and lowered the expectations.

Even before the beginning of the term, it was formally known that the EU-Africa Summit would not take place under the Portuguese Presidency, due to the pandemic and the increased tensions with the African Union. This announcement contributed to a decrease in expectations about the role of Portugal on this matter, which traditionally had been a key moment in the previous Portuguese presidencies. This also grounded the Presidency’s priorities in the economic and social areas bringing it closer to the first one in 1992, in contrast to the directions of the previous two Portuguese presidencies.

During its term, Portugal organised a series of ordinary and high-level meetings on various topics related to the economic recovery in the context of green and digital transition (e.g., European start-ups and unicorns; sustainable blue economy; green deal; the pandemic crisis and the roadmap to the economic recovery). One of the biggest achievements was the approval, in due time, of the EU Own-Resources Decision which allows the EU to raise funding for the ... p. 2

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## Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union - Resilience, Rule of Law and the Future of Europe

On 1 July 2021, Slovenia took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) from Portugal. It is the first of the Central and Eastern European countries which comes back at the “helm” of the EU, 13 years after its first term. Like in the first semester of 2008, when it formed a trio with Germany and Portugal, Slovenia fulfils its mandate in difficult times, marked by the recovery measures in the pandemic context. Under the slogan “Together. Resilience. Europe.”, the Slovenian Presidency aims at strengthening the European Union, based on four lines of action: resilience, recovery and strategic autonomy; facilitating and encouraging debates in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe; raising awareness about the respect for fundamental European values, as well as increasing the EU’s credibility, internal security and stability in the neighbourhood.

Slovenia focuses firstly on **increasing the capacity of the Union and the Member States to protect the citizens’ health**, including by creating the European health union and the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority - HERA. The goal is to identify the measures to ensure the European strategic autonomy by providing access to medical equipment and products, together with reducing ... p. 2

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## The Follow-up of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU

*[continued from page 1]* Recovery and Resilience plans. Another major breakthrough was the unanimously approved recommendation to establish the “European Child Guarantee”, which is the first EU instrument devoted to combating social exclusion among children.

On the other hand, some of the failures we should mention are connected to the lack of a solid intervention in the Covid-19 vaccination campaign, and the setup of common criteria for the EU Digital Covid Certificate.

An important milestone was the Porto Social Summit, which provided an impetus to the Member States to commit to three targets for 2030 set in the Commission’s European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, although its practical results were not foreseen. The [Porto Social Commitment](#) included that: at least 78% of people aged 20 to 64 should be in employment; at least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year; and the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by at least 15 million. In this dossier the major advances are expected to happen under the French presidency in 2022. Regardless of this breakthrough, the Porto Social Summit did not receive the usual importance this kind of event has, as Germany was not represented in person by Angela Merkel. Moreover, the French President, Emmanuel Macron, took a more visible lead, by launching the Conference on the Future of Europe.

On the foreign policy agenda, the EU-India Summit - even if held in virtual format - was also a good moment for the Portuguese Presidency to stress the importance of the relationship between the EU and India.

Finally, other accomplishments were the adoption of the European Climate Law and the political agreement on the new Common Agricultural Policy, set to be implemented from January 2023.

As this brief overview has shown, over the course of six months, Portugal secured several developments in European integration, mainly technical and bureaucratic, most of them with little to no public visibility. Despite the unique context in which the Presidency took place, setting mainly economic and social priorities, Portugal managed to confirm once more its European maturity, the know-how it has regarding European affairs, and its full engagement with the European Union, its institutions and values.

**Reinaldo Saraiva Hermenegildo and Alice Cunha**

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## Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union - Resilience, Rule of Law and the Future of Europe

*[continued from page 1]* the vulnerabilities in industrial, energetic and food value chains. Using a multidimensional understanding of the concept of resilience, the Slovenian Presidency is preoccupied both by the socio-economic recovery based on a digital, green and fair transition, and by the various types of cybersecurity threats and risks. Furthermore, Slovenia will approach the topic regarding the negative demographic trends within the European Union, along with means to address them.

Slovenia intends to **contribute to the debates on the future of Europe**, by highlighting the need to involve the youth in outlining solutions and concrete proposals. Therefore, the Slovenian Presidency will organise two plenary sessions and several European Citizens’ Panels, as well as the 16<sup>th</sup> Bled Strategic Forum under the title *The Future of Europe*. The purpose of these events stems from the necessity to debate the issues regarding the fundamental European values, in order to identify concrete solutions for improving the institutional and operational structure of the European Union.

Through the third priority, the Slovenian Presidency underscores **the role of the fundamental European values in ensuring the success of the European integration**. Slovenia will devote special attention to the second annual report within the framework of the comprehensive rule of law monitoring mechanism. Based on it, Slovenia will coordinate the annual dialogue regarding the state of rule of law in the European Union and the Member States, with a view to share best practices and create a European culture of rule of law. Among the proposals put forward in the Presidency’s programme are the creation of a **European foundation for constitutional democracy**, which would monitor the fulfilment of obligations by the Member States and provide expertise to the European and national institutions for defending and

enhancing the rule of law.

Through the fourth priority, the Slovenian Presidency will focus on the **internal security dimension**, both through the perspective of the effectiveness in implementing the Schengen area legislation, and the protection of external borders, combating illegal migration and improving the asylum system, in the framework of the negotiations of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. Besides the sanitary protection dimension, the defence against cyber and hybrid threats is another priority for enhancing the European strategic autonomy. In the field of foreign policy, **cooperation with the United States of America and NATO**, based on common principles, values and interests, represents a means to maintain the European Union's position at the international level. Slovenia's emphasis on the European path of the Western Balkans states and on strengthening the credibility of the European engagement towards the region is visible through the intention to organise, in the autumn of 2021, a EU-Western Balkans summit.



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The programme of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union can be found [here](#).

**Ana-Maria Anghelescu**  
European Studies Unit

## research

### The Start of the SPOS 2021 Research Project

After a two-years break, during the implementation of the POCA project „Consolidating and promoting Romania's position as a relevant actor in the decision-making process at the European level”, the European Institute of Romania resumed the Strategy and Policy Studies (SPOS) series. Therefore, for 2021, five research topics have been selected, in accordance with the national and European priorities:

1. *The future of the European Union: risks and scenarios for 2030. A cohesive Union facing global challenges;*
2. *The strategic resilience of the European Union, technology and digital fields included: future scenarios and Romania's contribution;*
3. *The European Green Deal: opportunities and challenges for Romania's sustainable development;*
4. *The post-pandemic economic recovery. Opportunities for Romania on medium and long term;*
5. *The consolidation of the EU-US relationship in the new geopolitical context, including the challenge of emerging technologies. Opportunities for Romania.*

For the materialization of the research priorities, an open call for experts-researchers was launched this spring. As a result, 19 applications were received for the five studies. The selected teams are coordinated by:

- Study no. 1 - **Octavian-Dragomir Jora**, Associate Professor (Bucharest University of Economic Studies).
- Study no. 2 - **Ioan-Cosmin Mihai**, Associate Professor (“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Police Academy).
- Study no. 3 - **Mihaela Ștefănescu**, Superior Counsellor (Ministry of the Environment, Waters and Forests).
- Study no. 4 - **Dumitru Miron**, Professor (Bucharest University of Economic Studies).
- Study no. 5 - **Radu-Cristian Mușetescu**, Professor (Bucharest University of Economic Studies).

The research process began in June, with the first meetings held between the research team members, the EIR coordinators, and the representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the beneficiary of the studies). During these discussions, several aspects were mentioned, such as:

- The studies will have a pragmatic approach, with applicable recommendations, that will be put in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE).
- The study on the strategic resilience will present the connections with the strategic autonomy, open strategic autonomy respectively, analysing the political implications of these concepts.
- The topics that will be addressed by the study on the European Green Deal are those related to the energy transition, sustainable mobility, and ecological farming.

During this summer, draft studies will be elaborated and sent for feedback in September. Afterwards, the studies will be evaluated and edited for publication, as the launch event is expected to happen before the end of 2021.

**Eliza Vaș**  
European Studies Unit



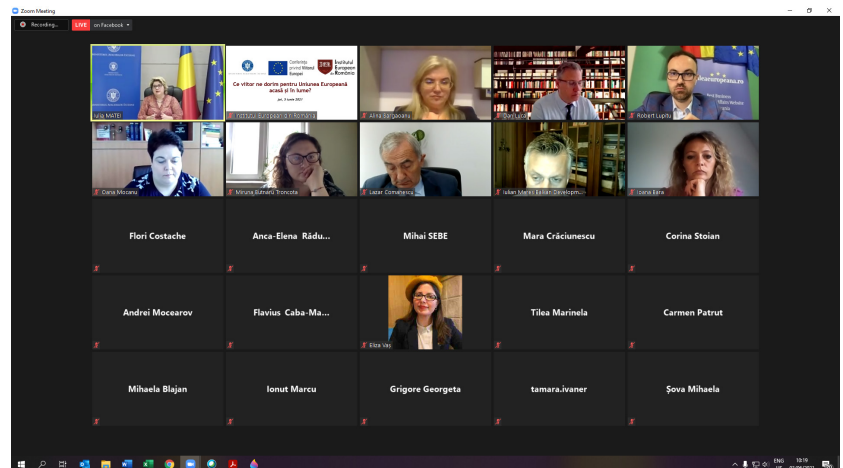
## EIR Debates the Future of Europe and Digital Transformation

The European Institute of Romania organised two events in June and July 2021, within the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe and of the series of *Dialogues@EIR*.

The first event, titled “*What future do we want for the European Union at home and in the world?*”, was organised in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was aimed at **identifying the citizens’ expectations regarding the Conference on the Future of Europe**. Among the speakers of this conference were Iulia Matei, Secretary of State for European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lazăr Comănescu, Ambassador, Secretary General of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Alina Bârgăoanu, professor, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration Bucharest, president, Administrative Board of the European Institute of Romania, and Dan Luca, vicepresident for Strategic Innovation, EURACTIV Brussels, the discussion being moderated by Robert Lupițu, editor-in-chief, Caleaeuropeana.ro.

The second event was focused on **discussing digitalisation and digital transformation, taking into consideration the perspectives on digital inclusion, digital public services and smart cities**. The dialogue guests were Mirela Mărcuț, lecturer, University of Oradea, founder of digitalpolicy.ro, Veronica Ștefan, founder and coordinator of Digital Citizens Romania, and Radu Puchiu, CEO H.appy Cities. The event was moderated by Flavia Durach, lecturer, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration Bucharest.

Following these two events, a series of conclusions were drawn up:



### #FutureofEurope

- In the framework of the citizens’ dialogue, we will start from the lessons learnt during the pandemic and from the fact that we need a strong Union, capable of adapting its instruments of action in order to bring added value for the citizens;
- The premises for the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) include: the interdependencies between the Member States (including the means through which they were manifested during the sanitary crisis), the transformative processes within the society, strategic resilience understood both at the domestic level, and the external one; sharing of European values and the organisation of inclusive debates, during which the youth should be active participants;
- The Conference on the Future of Europe has the potential to be a more successful format of debate compared to the initial versions, but we have to be careful with the populist political actors who could appeal to the citizens by promoting Eurosceptic or even extremist attitudes;
- The pandemic highlighted, more than other contexts, the importance of solidarity, cohesion and subsidiarity principles; for them to be adequately applied, there needs to be a common understanding;
- Now is the right time for a discussion about the expansion of the European Union’s competencies in the field of health, education and digital/innovation;
- The four crises that can impact the future of Europe are: climate change, the financial crisis, the sanitary crisis and technological disruptions;
- There is a constructive European movement (a recent phenomenon, from 2-3 years ago), which refers to the people who are trying to understand the meaning of the European project, many of them looking to get involved in the discussions about the future of Europe;
- A way to attract more citizens towards the centre of the European debate is to discuss the topics related to people’s lives / the evolution of society / the development of a European social model.

### #Digitalisation

- Human capital is the centrepiece in every discussion we have about digitalisation; one of Romania’s problems in this domain is related to the limited understanding of digital competencies and how they can be developed among the population;
- It is important to look where mistakes were made during the pandemic, especially with regards to online education (e.g., devices which did not facilitate the appropriate online collaboration, and did not have customized content);
- Digital public services are fragmented at the local, regional and national levels in Romania; a somewhat inefficient policy was to move online a series of traditionally bureaucratic procedures which are not, in fact, applicable to the digital environment;
- In Romania, we talk a lot about digitalisation (which is just the first step), but in the European Union there are discussions about the digital transition/transformation (which involves processes of thought change, automatization, updating the ways of interaction between the public servants);

## events

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- Digital transformation cannot generate long-term changes without a multi-level governance structure to facilitate the policy-making process (in Romania, many decisions are made top-down);
- Unlike central administration, which is more oriented towards maintaining some bureaucratic procedures, in cities there are many conditions for involving citizens in the digitalisation processes, and there is a need for the local administration to be more proactive in this regard;
- Romanian cities want to become smart cities, but without using data (not necessarily in the policy-making, but regarding simple decisions which are not made based on data) or involving the people (the local brains for finding solutions to community's problems).

More details regarding the series of online events are available on EIR's website, [ier.gov.ro](http://ier.gov.ro), Communication/Events section.

Eliza Vaş  
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## news

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### European Institute of Romania - Full Member of the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA)

The European Institute of Romania (EIR) has become a full member of the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA), being currently the only partner institution of its kind in Romania. TEPSA was established in 1974 as an international non-profit association and is the first trans-European research network in the field of European affairs. The association brings together 46 renowned research institutes in the field of European affairs from 37 European states, and is based in Brussels.

TEPSA's aim is to provide high quality research regarding the European integration, based on the approach of "analysis, assessment and advice", in order to stimulate discussions on public policies and political options for Europe.

One of the flagship projects of TEPSA is the Pre-Presidency Conference, during which member institutes discuss with representatives of national and European institutions about the priorities of the future Presidency of the Council of the European Union and offer policy recommendations. For instance, for the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU, some of the suggestions presented were: the digital sovereignty of the European Union; externalizing European Green Deal through energy transition in third countries, and reviving EU enlargement (opening the negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia).

EIR's membership to TEPSA will benefit from increased knowledge on European trends, anticipating developments and building a strategic foresight. The involvement of the EIR in TEPSA network will foster a better connection at European level and will bring to the forefront the Romanian perspective on the European agenda (with the purpose of strengthening the European project, cohesion and unity between Member States).

More information about the TEPSA network can be found [here](#).



Full member of the network



TEPSA  
Trans European Policy Studies Association

Eliza Vaş  
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### The Role and Impact of the European Union Special Representatives for the Common Foreign and Security Policy

On 21 June 2021, Foreign Affairs Council appointed three new European Union (EU) Special Representatives: the Italian diplomat Emanuela Del Re for the Sahel region, the Finnish diplomat Terhi Hakala for the Central Asia region and the German researcher Annette Weber for the Horn of Africa. Since the creation of these roles in 1996, the European Union has selected over 50 representatives to signal the importance attached to regions and countries in conflict or crisis situations, as well as to support the human rights activities. At present, there are 9 special representatives for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, Belgrade - Pristina dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues, Central Asia, Middle East Peace Process, Horn of Africa, Sahel and for human rights.

The nomination for the European Union special representatives is a negotiation process resembling the debates between the Member States for the portfolios' distribution of the European commissaries. Their mandates are elaborated on the grounds of EU regional security and foreign policy interests and can either have a reactive or a preventive character. The aim of these offices is to increase the internal cohesion on topics considered to be a priority, as well as to develop the European Union's capacity to stabilise and manage external crises.

From a political point of view, especially following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, and the institutionalisation

of the European External Action Service, the special representatives are at crossroads between the states' interests, being appointed by the Council of the EU, and the supranational agenda, as they are working under the coordination of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. During her mandate, Catherine Ashton intended to terminate these positions and transfer their tasks to the EU delegations on the ground, but the proposal was rejected.

The European Union's involvement in Sahel, which includes Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, is based on the development-migration-security nexus. In 2011, the EU adopted a strategy for the region's development and security, following the spread of terrorist threats in the area. In 2013, the French diplomat Michel Reveyrand-de Menthon was appointed as the first EU special representative for Sahel, followed by the Spanish diplomat Ángel Losada Fernández.

In 2005, it was appointed the first EU special representative for the relations with Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). The aim of his mandate was to contribute to the elaboration of a strategy dedicated to the inter-regional partnership, by identifying common needs and facilitating consensus. Following the adoption of the strategy in 2007, the special representative complemented the activities pursued by the European delegations on the ground, ensuring a stronger visibility and political coherence at the regional level, as well as providing suitable information to the European and Member States' institutions regarding the developments in the area. The position was previously held by diplomats from Slovakia - Jan Kubis (2005-2006) and Peter Burian (2015-2021), France - Pierre Morel (2006-2012), and Germany - Patricia Flor (2012-2014).

The Horn of Africa, a region comprising 8 states (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan), is an area of interest for the European Union because of its high conflictual potential. Therefore, over time, the EU channelled a great part of its humanitarian and development aid towards the region. In 2007, EU and Africa signed a strategic partnership, which led to the adoption of a series of documents highlighting also the strategic importance of the Horn of Africa. In this context, in 2012, the Greek diplomat Alexander Rondos was appointed as the first special representative for this region.

The nominations of the new EU special representatives in 2021 are happening in the context of the redefinition of the strategic framework for foreign policy, by highlighting regional priorities and the enhanced coherence between political involvement and development assistance. The adoption of new regional strategies for Central Asia (2019), Sahel and Horn of Africa (2021) constitute a basis for the mandates of the new EU special representatives, which will have the role to deepen the inter-regional partnerships within the lines of post-pandemic economic recovery and local developments.

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## European Court of Human Rights: Case-Law Guides and Research Reports

The European Court of Human Rights is known to the general public as the court to which an applicant appeals when considering oneself wronged by the national courts.

In the media, most news on the Court's case-law refer to those cases which provoke immediate emotional reactions to the public (cases that Romania lost, especially those where the state has to pay large sums of money, cases which involve well-known people or refer to the "Mineriads", the 1989 Revolution, prisoners' rights, vaccination, etc.). Unfortunately, it's quite rare to get news that educate the general public on what every right in the European Convention on Human Rights actually entails.



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One of the objectives of the European Institute of Romania is to improve the access to the case-law of the Court. In order to facilitate this, the EIR publishes on its website the translations of numerous cases and other types of documents, such as guides, research reports, factsheets, etc. Most of the documents translated and revised by the Translation Coordination Unit (TCU) are available on the respective websites of the EIR and the Court.

We therefore bring to your attention the case-law guides and research reports available in Romanian.

Out of the 31 guides published on the Court's site, 13 are available in Romanian [on the EIR's site](#) and [on the Court's site](#). The guides translated into Romanian cover subjects such as the right to a fair trial (civil and criminal limbs); the right not to be tried or punished twice; the right to liberty and security, the right to respect for private and family life; the principle that only the law can define a crime and prescribe a penalty; the prohibition of slavery and forced labour; the freedom of thought, conscience and religion; the right to an effective remedy; the protection of property; the right to education; the right to free elections; the binding force and execution of judgments.

In addition to the 13 guides available in Romanian, we plan to translate another 10 guides, covering subjects such as: the freedom of expression; the freedom of assembly and association; the prohibition of discrimination; the derogation

## translations

in time of emergency; the prohibition of abuse of rights; the limitation on use of restrictions on rights; immigration; prisoners' rights; mass protests; terrorism.

Out of the 32 research reports, 7 are available in Romanian both [on the EIR site](#) and [on the Court's site](#). The research reports available in Romanian cover subjects such as cultural rights, bioethics, Internet, national security, child abuse, expression and advertising of political positions through the media/Internet in the context of elections/referendums, the new admissibility criterion under Article 35 § 3 (b) of the Convention.

This year, the TCU planned to translate other three research reports regarding health, the detention of persons of unsound mind, and violence against women.

To consult the translation planning of the guides and research reports, regardless of the target language, please access the [Pending translations](#) document available on the Court's site. Our activity seeks to help both the specialized and the general public, bearing in mind that not everybody is fluent in the Court's official languages (English and French).

In order to be up to date with the translations of the Court's case-law, we invite you to visit the [related section](#) on EIR's website.

**Laura Mihăilescu**  
Translation Coordination Unit

## publications

### Editorial Release: Romanian Doctors on the Move: the Loss of a Strategic Resource in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

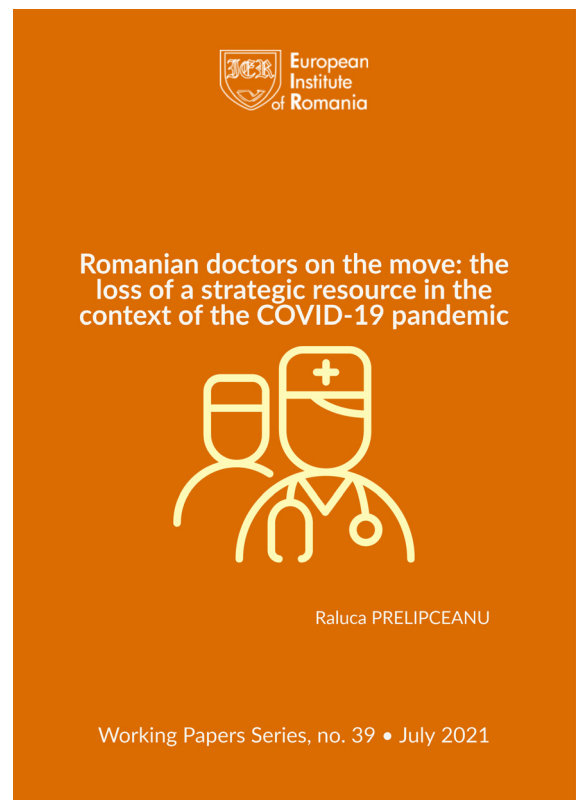
In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the states often found themselves competing for medical personnel, who became a strategic resource.

By analyzing the migration of doctors from Romania to other countries, especially within the European Union, **Raluca Prelipceanu**, independent researcher, proposes, in a new entry in the Working Paper series, several policy recommendations for mitigating this worrisome phenomenon.

The full text of the working paper, available in English, can be accessed [here](#).

We invite you to discover the Policy Briefs and Working Papers collection, available [here](#).

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