

editorial

The Values-Based Future of the European Union

In the wake of the Second World War, the European Union (EU) was built as a peace project, firstly with an economic focus within the framework of the post-war reconstruction. Nevertheless, as the history of the European project showed, the cooperation cannot work unless the partners share the same values. It is the crises of recent years that highlighted the importance of fundamental values upon which the European Union is founded. **It is important to underline that the European Union is as strong as its capacity to protect and promote its values.** Politically adapting or misinterpreting these values would be a fundamental issue for the EU.

Today even more than before these values and principles should infuse the decision-making processes. The EU's management of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the EU's capacity for action and assistance to other countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, showed the EU's potential in the international arena. In the same way, **the EU's swift and substantial response to Russia's military aggression against Ukraine confirmed that the EU is a relevant international actor.** It is therefore understandable why [Ursula von der Leyen pointed out](#) that Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine was an attack on the European values shared both by the EU and Ukraine. ... p. 2



opinion

The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union: Managing the European Agenda in a Time of Crisis

The French Republic held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) during the **first semester of 2022**, opening the current trio formed together with the Czech Republic and Sweden. The French term was marked by the **military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine**, which led to the fast adoption of response measures to the crisis, thus reaffirming the cohesion and solidarity at the European Union level. In this context, the French Presidency worked towards achieving a number of ambitious objectives in order to ensure the green transition, adapting the European social model, economic recovery, mitigating the security context and also reaffirming the European interests and values' significance. During this period, concrete steps were taken for the adoption of 130 legislative texts regarding priority political topics on the European agenda.

During the [press conference](#) held at the end of the term, Emmanuel Macron stated: „Europe of June 2022 is very different from the one of January 2022.” The firm and united response of the member states against the Russian Federation's aggression, through the military, financial, political and humanitarian support granted to Ukraine and the adoption of six sanctions packages, are a standing proof of the European solidarity and the Union's capacity to act rapidly. Granting Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova the candidate status during the European Council of 23-24 June represents an achievement of the French Presidency of the Council of the EU, being a recognition of the European vocation and orientation of the two states.

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The Values-Based Future of the European Union

[continued from page 1] The European Commission must consistently insist that the European values are upheld, avoiding double standards between member states and partner countries. The member states should not jeopardise the EU's global position and ought to work towards strengthening the unity of the EU's action. The priorities and challenges to the future of the European Union are many, but an essential element in implementing the agenda and overcoming the obstacles resides in the close cooperation between the European Commission and the member states. **As such, EU's priorities should be seen as national priorities, encompassing a reflection of the common European values and attitudes.** However, if one or few states underestimate or use the measures taken at European level for individual purposes, the unity and effectiveness of such actions will be compromised. Such loopholes or weaknesses can be exploited by disinformation campaigns and populist leaders, putting into question EU's coherence and performance at the international level.

Values determine the direction of policies; their content must be engrained in concrete activities and instruments. This is something that the European Commission has succeeded in relation to Ukraine, although it does not always have unequivocal support. The sanctions packages against Russia have been adopted gradually, requiring a great deal of political negotiation. In the context of eliminating dependence on the Russian energy supplies, the value of solidarity has once again proved to be essential in upholding human rights, peace and solidarity, despite the national interests of the member states. Such decisions are not always easy to take, personally or politically. During the past few months, we have seen that the EU's aid for Ukraine or the common positions regarding the sanctions have become the subject of political struggle and a tool of political propaganda in several member states. Unfortunately, the use of the "Ukraine card" in national politics is one area where the European Commission's options are fundamentally limited. Therefore, it is precisely the consistent application of other instruments such as the rule of law conditionality that can prevent their circumvention. **By granting candidate status to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, the EU is sending a crucial political message: these countries share common values with us and their future is therefore closely linked to the EU.**

Another area where values have become increasingly relevant is that of digital environment. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the spread of disinformation in election campaigns have raised the awareness regarding the importance of digitisation for effective sectoral policies implementation and management, thus accelerating the European Commission efforts in this regard. **Recent Eurobarometer findings confirm that 82% of the European citizens find it useful to define and promote a common European vision on digital rights and principles to ensure a successful digital transformation.**

The European Union has adopted specific measures to counter Eurosceptic campaigns and the spread of misinformation, which have also been undermining democracy in the member states, but also at the EU level. The consistent efforts of the European Commission, supported by the European Parliament, have led to the successful adoption of the Digital Services Act (DSA) in April 2022. **The DSA has the ambition, tools and capacity to systematically prevent disinformation campaigns, creating a safer digital space where the fundamental rights of users are respected.** Nonetheless, it is not always legislation alone, but its implementation that is decisive.

The EU is not a perfect project, but it is one based on close cooperation and common values. Most importantly, it is a peace project. However, after seven decades, we have another conflict that is pushing the boundaries of the EU as an organisation based on the values of peace, democracy, human rights, solidarity and the rule of law. If we are talking about a voice to be heard, it is not just about the EU's voice in the international arena, but also **the voice of the EU's citizens** regarding the internal mechanisms of the European cooperation. The shift and update of priorities must also reflect the views from within, the views of the EU citizens. Consequently, the outcomes of the Conference on the Future of Europe cannot remain on the margins.

The EU is dealing with a number of internal challenges, such as the rule of law conditionality, populism and democratic backsliding, but as mentioned before, we live times when it is extremely important to send a clear message: **we are Europeans and we will work on realising our ideas; we are here for our citizens and we hear the voices of the Conference on the Future of Europe; we are here for our partners and we enforce and protect the common values we stand for; and last but not least, we are here for everyone who shares the same values and who needs our support.**

The European Union should be seen today as a peace project for Europe, not only for the EU member states. The future relies on safeguarding peaceful democracies and human rights. All related policies, objectives and instruments should be based on the values that are not only written in the Treaty, but that have been upheld for the past 70 years by the countries of this European family. These common values continue to inspire other countries to cooperate or to become members of the European Union.

Sustaining the project of European integration is not easy, strengthening political cooperation is challenging, but promoting and insisting on common values is motivating and important. **This inspires and equally encourages all TEPSA member institutes to work closely together internationally, providing their experience, expertise and knowledge to national governments and organisations, as well as to the European institutions. Evidence-based policies with public support and a clear pro-European orientation are the only alternative**



TEPSA
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for a sustainable and democratic society in Europe. These are also the values that the EU offers to all third-country partners who share them. Everyone can take part in this society.

Lucia Mokrá

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The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union: Managing the European Agenda in a Time of Crisis

[continued from page 1] In order to achieve a common European position during this crisis, several high level reunions, both formal and informal, were organized during the Presidency in France, Brussels, and Luxembourg. The informal summit of the European Council at Versailles, organised on 10-11 March 2022, was originally intended for discussing the new European social and economic model, but the crisis determined the European leaders to adapt their agenda. The [Versailles Declaration](#) condemns the Russian Federation's attack and restates the European support for Ukraine, by proposing key dimensions regarding the bolstering of the defence capabilities, reducing the energy dependency, and building a more robust economic base.



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During the French term, EU received more than [6.5 million Ukrainian nationals](#). The Council approved to provide them temporary protection for a year, making it possible [to redirect sources from cohesion funds](#) to assist the Ukrainian refugees to access education, employment, and social protection. In addition, the EU supported the Ukrainian army by activating the [European Peace Facility](#), and by providing unprecedented military assistance amounting to 2 billion euro. Ukraine [received](#) humanitarian aid from the EU totalling 335 million euro for ensuring basic goods and services. In addition, 30 states offered their support through the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#).

In line with the three dimensions agreed upon through the Versailles Declaration, a significant achievement regarding the EU's security and defence was the approval of the [Strategic Compass](#) at the European Council of 24-25 March. The document represents a concrete mean towards tackling the growing contestation of the EU's strategic environment, proposing specific objectives on four dimensions: act rapidly and robustly whenever a crisis erupts; citizens' security in the context of the ever-changing threats; invest more and better in defence capabilities and innovative technologies that the EU needs; partnerships with other actors for achieving common objectives. The European Institute of Romania prepared a [presentation](#) of the latter document in the context of its adoption, underlining that "The EU's Strategic Compass does not intend to reduce the importance of the relation between the United States of America and the European Union, but, on the contrary, it aims to deepen this partnership in complementarity with NATO, in order to define adequate solutions for present and future challenges of an international system in transition". These aspects regarding the strengthening of the European security and defence were highlighted by the speakers of the conference on the topic of "The Common European defence in the context of the war in Ukraine", organised by the European Institute of Romania and the Robert Schuman Foundation (Paris) on 9 June. The main conclusions of the discussions can be found in the summary of the event (in Romanian language), available on the [EIR's website](#).

The Ukrainian crisis accentuated the EU's need to reduce the energy dependence on the imports from the Russian Federation. Therefore, during the French term, **a number of measures were adopted in order to ensure the EU's energy autonomy while delivering on the European climate objectives**. The European Commission launched in May 2022 the RePowerEU plan in order to ensure affordable, secure and sustainable energy. Under French coordination, the [Council agreed on its negotiating positions \(general approaches\) on the legislative proposals regarding the energy field](#), included in the *Fit for 55* Package. The Council and the Parliament will now enter interinstitutional negotiations to agree on the final text of the two directives.

The French Presidency also marked the conclusion of the **Conference on the Future of Europe**. Following the yearlong consultations, a [report](#) was elaborated, comprising 49 concrete proposals and over 320 measures for the European institutions on nine dimensions: climate change and environment; health; a stronger economy, social justice and employment; the EU in the world; values and rights, rule of law, security, digital transformation, European democracy, migration, education, culture, youth and sport. The General Secretariat of the Council published a preliminary technical [assessment of the proposals, which will continue to be discussed at a technical level within the Council](#). The European



leaders [highlighted](#) that “the Conference has been a unique opportunity to engage with European citizens”, recalling also “the importance of ensuring that citizens are informed on the follow-up to the proposals made in the Report.” The debates on the opportunity to revise the European treaties as a follow-up of the Conference were analysed by Eliza Vaş, expert within the European Studies Unit, in [the most recent debrief on the conclusions of the European Council, published by the TEPSA network](#).

As far as the digital transformation is concerned, during the French Presidency, the [Digital Markets Act](#) and the [Digital Services Act](#) were agreed upon. These documents aim at ensuring the creation of a fair and competitive digital sector, while respecting the fundamental rights of the users.

With regards to the external relations of the EU, the French Presidency achieved the adoption of a [Joint vision for 2030 for the EU-African Union partnership](#), highlighting the coherence of the goals of the two organizations. Additionally, the European Council of June 2022 [initiated](#) the reflection process on the European political community, a project proposed by the French president, with the purpose of strengthening the connections between the European Union and other European states sharing the same values.

Regarding the goal of ensuring a more social Europe, during the French Presidency provisional agreements were reached on the [directive on adequate minimum wages in the EU](#) and on the legislation on a [more balanced gender representation on the boards of listed companies](#).

In a complicated international context, the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union allowed for the adoption of specific measures to consolidate the EU in the **defence and security area**, to accomplish the twin green and digital transition, and maintain it **closer to the citizens and their needs**.

Ana-Maria Anghelescu and Irina Grosu
European Studies Unit

The Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The Czech Republic took over the mandate of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the second time on 1 July 2022. The motto dedicated to the Czech Presidency is “**Europe as a task: rethink, rebuild, repower**”, inspired by a famous speech of the former President Václav Havel delivered in 1996, during the Aachen International Charlemagne Award Ceremony. The motto [calls for responsibility and action](#) based on common values such as freedom, security, democracy, the rule of law, and prosperity, to build a modern and functional Europe. The logo of the Presidency includes 27 stylized elements in the form of compass needles, each with the colours of a member states’ national flag, in a reinterpretation of the Czech Presidency logo from 2009. The image symbolizes current trends, the unity of the member states, and the orientation towards the future.



Copyright: The Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Considering the current security dynamics generated by the war in Ukraine, the Czech Republic has given particular importance to the EU-NATO partnership in ensuring security, while asserting the EU’s strategic resilience and increasing the competitiveness of the European economy. [The Czech Republic’s program](#) is structured around five priorities: **managing the refugee crisis and post-war recovery of Ukraine; energy security; strengthening Europe’s defence capabilities and cybersecurity; the strategic resilience of the European economy and the resilience of democratic institutions.**

The Russian military aggression against Ukraine caused the **biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War**. In this context, the first priority of the Czech Presidency focuses on supporting the EU’s efforts to defend Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, strengthening resilience and economic recovery, by using all the tools and programs offered at the European level. At the same time, the Czech Republic will focus on child protection and access to education, as well as the integration of women into the labour market.

The organization of a summit on post-conflict reconstruction of Ukraine and the launch of a “Marshall Plan” are [initiatives that the Czech Republic wants to materialize during its term](#) in order to demonstrate the unity of action at the European Union level.

In terms of **energy security**, [the rapid implementation of the REPowerEU plan](#) is considered essential for the diversification of energy sources, by strengthening infrastructure, energy saving, and the transition to renewable sources and low greenhouse gas emissions. Launched in May, REPowerEU is the European Commission’s plan to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels from the Russian Federation, thus mitigating global market disruptions and accelerating the green transition. **Strengthening the EU’s energy resilience** is an urgent task, and the Czech Republic will support enhancing the role

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of nuclear energy in this regard, as well as meeting climate goals. The development of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) in order to facilitate transport flows between the member states, and decarbonization are also on the agenda of the Czech Presidency.

Strengthening security and defence capabilities, in partnership and complementarity with NATO, is a central element of the Czech Presidency, which will support the implementation of key elements of the Strategic Compass, but also enhance the EU's industrial capabilities to reduce technological dependencies. Cyberspace has become an area of confrontation between states, so the Czech Republic will pay more attention to cyber threats by developing the EU Hybrid Toolbox, fighting against misinformation, and securing of cyberspace, together with aspects referring to the European plan for a secure space-based communications system.

The global economy is facing an inflationary shock as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, with negative consequences for markets, which highlight the vulnerabilities of global supply chains. The current international environment determines the EU to strengthen its **strategic resilience in the economic field** and to rely on its own production capacity. Measures such as increasing technological competitiveness or digitizing and automating industries, especially in strategic sectors, are supported, along with ensuring economic convergence in the process of twin green and digital transition. Accelerating the conclusion of trade agreements with democratic states and deepening transatlantic cooperation within the EU-US Trade and Technology Council (TTC) are other priorities of the Czech Republic. Another issue on the agenda is to deepen the digital single market, the Czech Presidency being concerned with the respect for fundamental rights in the digital environment, as well as facilitating consensus between the member states on the European digital identity.

Democracy and the rule of law are fundamental values of the EU, and the prosperity and stability of the European project are closely linked to them. As such, the Czech Republic will focus on **strengthening the resilience of democratic institutions**, both at the EU level and in relations with partners, supporting the protection of fundamental rights, including in the online environment. Actions envisioned in this sense by the Czech Republic include transparent funding of political parties, independence of the media, open dialogue with citizens and the press, and the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024. Capitalizing on citizens' contributions to the Conference on the Future of Europe, as well as involving young people in public debates in the context of the European Year of Youth, are mentioned as priority issues for the next six months.

In view of its upcoming Presidency, the TEPESA network formulated a series of [recommendations for the Czech Presidency](#), which also include a contribution from the European Institute of Romania, signed by Mihai Sebe, Head of the European Studies Unit. Considering the question "*How does the current humanitarian crisis affect the reform of a common EU asylum policy?*", the author presents the current state of the migration and asylum policy and offers recommendations focused on the member states and their relations with neighbouring countries. On the occasion of the presentation of these recommendations within the [Czech Pre-Presidency Conference](#), organised on 23-24 May 2022 in Prague, Mihai Sebe gave a speech on the elements included in his published contribution.

Detailed information on the Presidency of the Czech Republic to the Council of the European Union can be found on the [official website](#).

Laura-Ştefania Anton
Communication Unit

publications

The Summer Issue of the RJE: Quality Research About Recent Developments from Europe

In 2022, the journal is focused on publishing quality research on topics such as **climate change, energy, digital transformation, economic and monetary affairs, single market, social policies, and security**, all resulting from a European perspective. Papers which cover related matters have been selected to meet this end and to bring a scientific contribution to the general debate on key European policies. With a non-acceptance rate of more than 75% and a strong double-blind review process, the papers that have been accepted for the June issue address the following themes: the hybrid threats in the Western Balkans, the geopolitical power of the EU, the level of financial literacy in EU's member states, the digital euro project, the smart city in the EU, the reform of the Economic and Monetary Union, and European digital sovereignty.

Martin Solik (assistant professor at the Department of Human Geography and Regional Development at Ostrava University in Czechia), **Jan Graf** (PhD student at the Department of Human Geography and Regional Development at Ostrava University in Czechia) and **Vladimir Baar** (professor, political and cultural geographer at the Department of Human Geography and Regional Development at Ostrava University in Czechia) examine the nature of hybrid threats posed by Russia in Bosnia and Herzegovina and analyse to what extent the Kremlin is successful in destabilising the political situation in this country. With a methodology built around disciplined interpretative case study, the authors argue that the paper may contribute to the understanding of how Russia constructs its hybrid threats, possibly leading to further

research on hybrid threats in the Western Balkans. The full article is available [here](#).

Oana-Antonia Colibășanu (lecturer on international relations at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania) employs a geopolitical perspective and looks at the way the European Union has shifted its policymaking process to adapt to the crisis in Ukraine. She argues that the EU has upgraded its geopolitical posture, through cohesive policies adopted against the aggressor. Following close monitoring of the EU working sessions and the flow of news and considering focused interviews on the future of the EU, this research brings forth two main scenarios for the EU, commenting on the potential risks for the bloc's unity considering the Russian aggression in Ukraine and beyond. The full article is available [here](#).

Dorina Clichici (senior researcher at the Department of Economic Integration and Financial Markets of the Institute for World Economy) and **Simona Moagăr-Poladian** (senior researcher, director of the Institute for World Economy, and professor in Economics at the Romanian Academy) investigate the levels of financial literacy and provide a cross-country analysis. The researchers examine Romania's position on financial literacy indicators, by comparing it to other European countries, and explore the link between financial literacy, economic development, and financial development at a cross-country level. The findings reveal that Romania has the lowest level of financial literacy, although its income per capita is not the lowest in the European Union. The full article is available [here](#).

Iulia Monica Oehler-Șincai (senior researcher at the Institute for World Economy of the Romanian Academy) assesses the potential of the digital euro project as part of the international payments' architecture. The author points out that the debate on the digital euro adoption is in line with the international one, but there are several distinctive aspects. Various scenarios are considered, starting from general principles for retail central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), results of the public consultation on a digital euro, experts' opinions regarding privacy, security, usability, costs, offline use, acceptance, potential disintermediation, standards, and international implications of the digital euro. The research also outlines the relations between the major actors involved, while identifying the prerequisites for a swift functioning of the Eurozone payment system with digital euro at its core. The full article is available [here](#).

Mirela Mărcuț (lecturer at the Department of International Relations and European Studies, University of Oradea) shares the assertion that the EU is building a value-based digital society, and in her research, she aims to recapture the narrative of the smart city and to introduce the latter as an actor in the EU digital policy. The paper argues that smart cities are reduced to mere business-led strategies and lack direct grassroots engagement that would bring value to the urban landscape. The author deconstructs the main pillars of the digital society as proposed by the current Commission and searches for areas of congruence between smart cities and the model for the digital society. To illustrate this congruence, the article analyses policy documents at the European and local level and features a case study of Darmstadt, designated Germany's Digital City in 2019. The full article is available [here](#).

Peter Halmaj (correspondent member of Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Jean Monnet professor, Budapest University of Technology and Economics, National University of Public Service) frames the topic of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) by referring to two perspectives: responsibility versus solidarity. The author argues that it is necessary to create a better balance between the common shock absorption instruments (i.e., risk sharing) and to give a greater role for markets as incentives for fiscal and financial discipline (i.e., risk reduction). A new synthesis of the two dominant narratives could form the conceptual core of the EMU reform. The full article is available [here](#).

Cosmina Moghior (PhD Candidate at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania) investigates what is digital sovereignty, who is the "owner" of this new concept and its impact of the rhetoric on European integration. The author addresses these questions by engaging the theoretic lenses of principal-agent framework, drawing on the development path of the European policymaking in the technological area, from the 1980's until today. The paper concludes that the heterogenous preferences of the member states create the impetus to delegate powers to the European Commission. Furthermore, digital sovereignty rhetoric helps overcome the problems of delegation politics by building coalitions and consensus. The full article is available [here](#).

The next issue of the *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* will be published by the beginning of December. More details about the international scientific databases the journal is part of can be accessed [here](#).



Eliza Vaș
Editor-in-Chief, *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*

EIR's Activities in the Last Quarter

European Studies Unit

The Three Seas Initiative (3SI), a flexible informal political platform reuniting 12 EU member states situated between the Adriatic, Baltic and Black Seas (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia), garnered increased attention during the past months, being a topic of interest for the European Studies Unit experts.

In this regard, we highlight the conference *Three Seas One Opportunity (3SIO)*, which represented a contribution to a research gap in the field of broadly understood security, covering the area of cooperation between the Three Seas countries. In this sense, Mihai Sebe, Head of the European Studies Unit, had an intervention within the framework of this international conference, which took place at Zielona Gora, Poland, between 18-19 May 2022. For further details, we invite you to visit the [event's website](#).

Furthermore, within the collective book "*Three Seas Initiative: Mapping National Perspectives*", Mihai Sebe published a chapter on Romania's history and priorities within the 3SI. These topics have been featured during the launching event of the book, which took place on 20 June, in Riga. The book launch was organised by the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, in cooperation with the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of Poland in Latvia.

The publication includes a collection of articles discussing the priorities of the Three Seas Initiative from the perspective of member states. Insights into the diverse perspectives on 3SI are provided together with an academic point of view concerning the future of 3SI format. The publication also showcases the effects of the current security evolutions in Ukraine on the 3SI. The e-book and the recording of the launching event are available [here](#).



Communication Unit

On 22 June 2022, the EIR organised the event titled "Young people from Romania and the digital future of Europe", within the *Dialogues@EIR* series. The debate presented the opportunities and challenges for young people, derived from the digital transition, by proposing alternative means through which they can contribute to defining Europe's Digital Decade. Lifelong learning, equipping oneself for the future of work, as well as the development of digital competencies have also been discussed during the event. The summary and the recording (in Romanian) are available on [EIR's website](#).



Translation Coordination Unit

Between April-July 2022, the Translation Coordination Unit continued the publication on the EIR's website of the Romanian translations for documents in the area of [UN review mechanisms](#), as well as of judgements and decisions which are part of the [case-law of the European Court of Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#). Within the latter area, we invite the readers to consult the translations of a series of guides prepared by the Registry, on topics such as: [prohibition of abuse of rights](#), [immigration](#), [freedom of assembly and association](#), [mass protests](#), understood as a form of large-scale assembly or demonstration, [prisoners' rights](#), expulsion of aliens ([prohibition of collective expulsion of aliens](#), as well as [procedural safeguards relating to expulsion of aliens](#)), [prohibition of expulsion of nationals](#), as well as the [right to marry](#).

Additionally, the Translation Coordination Unit published two Bulletins of the European Court of Human Rights case-law, amounting to 44 judgements and 88 decisions issued by the ECHR between January-June 2022: the [Judgements and decisions against Romania \(January - March 2022\)](#) and [Judgements and decisions against Romania \(April-June 2022\)](#). For a better understanding of the text, the documents mention the Court's conclusion for each case, the article or articles infringed, references to the full text in French or English published on the Court's website, as well as, where applicable, references to the Romanian translation prepared by the European Institute in Romania.



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