

EIR activity

The activity of the European Institute of Romania in 2022

In recent years, the key word at the level of the European Union (EU) has been resilience, regarding both external relations, as well as the strengthening of the internal capacity of the European project to withstand challenges and adapt accordingly. To a certain extent, we can say that 2022 represented a new test for European, national, but also institutional resilience, as was highlighted also during the annual conference organised by the European Institute of Romania.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic does not seem to have ended, the European states have already been able to benefit from a part of the measures included in the Recovery and Resilience Facility, thus also contributing to the accomplishment of the twin green and digital transition. The Russian Federation’s illegal and unjustified aggression against Ukraine, launched on 24 February 2022, has sent shockwaves throughout European security and generated new multi-sectoral challenges to the security and resilience of the European Union.

2022 was a significant year for Romania, through the 15th anniversary since the accession to the European Union. In this sense, at the level of the European Institute of Romania, the communication, research, training and translation activities responded to the needs of the Romanian public, contributing to a better understanding of the benefits, rights and obligations arising from the EU membership, as well as the EU’s prerogatives in the current security context... p. 2



opinion

in this issue

The 2022 Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union: The second term - better results

For the Czech Republic, half a year as the head of the European Union (EU) flew by quickly, but frankly, it was not the easiest period. There is not much left of the original plans for the three-leaf clover of the presiding countries (France, the Czech Republic and Sweden). Topics such as “protection of citizens and their freedoms” or “advancement of European interests and values in the world” had to give way to the reality of war, which for almost a year has affected European and Czech politics more than we would all like.

Vladimir Putin’s illegal and unprovoked aggression changed everything: the feeling of relative safety, the economic model built on Western technologies and cheap Russian raw materials, and finally, the understanding of Russian Federation as a peculiar, but important partner for international security. All this is past, and for six months the Czech Republic had an exceptional chance to set a new direction for the European Union. How did it manage this opportunity? Laconically summarized: better than the first term, but the grade “A+” is still far.

The key to success is a stable coalition

Comparing the 2022 performance of the Czech representation with the previous presidency in 2009, it was better this time and the reasons are simple. Firstly, Petr Fiala’s government comprises five parties with diverse ideological orientations, but its stability is incomparably higher than Mirek Topolánek’s one (2007-2009).

Secondly, even if it does not seem so, the relations between the government coalition and the opposition were much better in 2022 than in 2009. The current government also faced an [impeachment attempt](#) due to the appointment of Petr Mlejnek as director of the Office for Foreign Relations and ... p. 4

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The activity of the European Institute of Romania in 2022

[continued from page 1] The communication activity was mainly pursued online, which facilitated the participation of a large audience from outside of Bucharest, thus increasing the impact of our efforts. [11 events](#) were organised, two of them in-person, and more than 600 participants were present in total.

In the margins of the **Conference on the future of Europe**, two debates were organised in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, regarding the transatlantic relationship, respectively the perspectives of Romanian agriculture in the current European context. The ideas presented in the second event can also be found in a [policy brief](#) published in March (available in Romanian). To mark the completion of this series of debates, we have published [the Final Report: Conference on the Future of Europe. Opinions of Romanian citizens](#), which presents the conclusions of all the debates organised in this context under the auspices of the Institute, including through EUROPE DIRECT Bucharest, between April 2021 - March 2022.

We would like to mention the launching of a new series of *online debates*, generically entitled **European News in the Spotlight**, with the objective of informing the general public about the importance of the Council of the EU in coordinating policies in specific areas. The first event, organised in partnership with the Embassy of Romania in the Czech Republic on 14 October, focused on the topic of "[Energy security in the European Union: between green ambitions and ensuring supply](#)", and gathered a significant number of participants from Romania and other European countries.



The **Dialogues@EIR** series continued in 2022 with debates on the digital decade of young people and climate diplomacy resources and projects. Moreover, in April, an exchange of views was organised with the experts involved in the elaboration of the collective report "[Views on the Future of Europe from the EU's Neighbouring Countries](#)", published by EIR in December 2021. In addition to these, we were happy to host again an in-person event at the end of November, on the occasion of the launch of the volume *Last Train West: Revisiting Romania's Accession to the EU* in the presence of the author Jochen M. Richter, former director at the European Parliament, lecturer at the University of Luxembourg and the University of Düsseldorf.

Partnerships represented an important element of our activity in 2022 as well, the relations with various relevant entities in the field of European affairs being continued and developed. Among these we mention the Liaison Office of the European Parliament in Bucharest, the Robert Schuman Foundation (Paris), the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Romania and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs - SWP (Berlin), with whom we organised a series of events through which we promoted the European spirit and values. At the same time, new collaboration opportunities were explored and our goal is to consolidate and develop them in the upcoming period.

As in previous years, the EIR team participated in numerous thematic events and current affairs programs of national and international televisions, both as speakers and moderators. Increasing the visibility of the results of EIR's activities in the online environment has been a constant priority of the entire team, by distributing news published both on the institutional web page and through the social media channels ([Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#)).

Regarding the **research activity**, the European Studies Unit proposed and coordinated three studies included in the **Strategy and Policy Studies (SPOS) 2022 project**, aimed at supporting the public administration in the decision-making process and in the positioning in the national and European negotiation formats. The studies focused on topics such as *food security, interconnectivity and transport policies*, respectively *young people and climate change*, and are available, in Romanian, [here](#). Each research includes an executive summary in Romanian and in English. At the same time, the studies included in the SPOS 2021 project were disseminated and presented during national events regarding European affairs.

During 2022, the EIR benefited from its membership in the **Trans-European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA)** by disseminating the results of research published under the auspices of the Institute or other activities, as well as participating in relevant events organised by TEPSA and its members. The EIR experts' contributions included analyses of the European Council conclusions and of other current European events, focusing on topics such as the EU Strategic Compass, EU-NATO relations, migration reform, the EU response to the Russian military aggression in Ukraine, as well as granting candidate status for Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. EIR experts also participated in the development and presentation of recommendations for the Czech Republic and Sweden, as the upcoming Presidencies of the Council of the EU. Furthermore, in the [July edition of the EIR Newsletter](#), we were honoured to host an editorial on European values signed by **Prof. Lucia Mokrá**, TEPSA Chairperson.



EUROPEAN COUNCIL EXPERTS' DEBRIEF

March 2022

The scientific journal published by EIR, **Romanian Journal of European Affairs**, went through a process of evaluation and improvement of the editorial activity. In this sense, a series of measures were implemented aiming at continuing to attract quality contributions. In the pages of our Newsletter you could find information about the published researches' topics, which were also promoted through the [RJE Facebook page](#), followed by more than 1500 people.

In 2022, the frequency of the **EIR Newsletter** became quarterly, and the materials published in the four editions included sections that had already become traditional, such as the presentation of priorities and results of the Presidencies of the EU Council, as well as the highlighting of the results of the EIR activities. The April edition proposed an interview on current issues with **Daniela Gîțman**, Secretary of State for European Affairs within the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**.

EIR activity

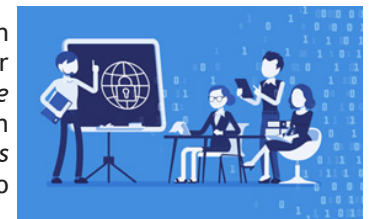
At the same time, we were honoured to host the opinions of some invited experts on relevant issues on the European agenda. Thus, in the January edition, the evaluation of Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council was signed by Prof. **Maja Bučar** from the University of Ljubljana, while the April edition included a comment from **Tania Lațici**, a specialist within the European External Action Service, regarding the Romanian citizens' position on the European security and defence agenda in the context of the Conference on the future of Europe.

The collection of EIR **micro-studies** was expanded with 11 new materials (5 working papers, 5 opinions, and 1 policy brief), written both by our experts and by Romanian and foreign researchers. The topics addressed were diverse and in line with the current European agenda, focusing on the EU relations with other international organisations in certain areas, specifically peacekeeping (with the UN) and hybrid threats (NATO), European solidarity in the context of the early stages of the military aggression against Ukraine, the Strategic Compass, the European space policy, respectively the trends of the Eurozone 30 years after the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty. The end of the year was also marked by the publication of a new collective material entitled "[African and Romanian perspectives on the consolidation of the European Union - African Union partnership](#)". The collective working paper includes the views of 16 experts from Africa who analysed the strategic and political vision of the partnership, as well as aspects related to the digital transition, peace and security in the region, education and youth. The analyses were completed with the perspectives of five Romanian experts active in the area of African studies.



Regarding the **training in the field of European affairs**, the Training and Projects Unit analysed the results of the questionnaire on training needs targeting mainly the central and local public administration institutions, in order to design the EIR training strategy and scheduling for the 2022 - 2024 period. Throughout 2022, 21 training courses were organised, of which 10 were paid and 11 subsidised, with around 500 people participating. The quality and diversity of the topics of the EIR courses is reflected in the increasing number of participants willing to return in other training sessions.

To support the training activity, partnerships represented a significant element. Thus, on 25 February 2022, we signed a collaboration agreement with the Teacher Training Center of Târgu Mureș in order to organise courses on the topic of "*Personal data protection in the European Union*". Additionally, EIR was invited by the National Institute of Administration (INA) to join its initiative to create *ReForm - the National Network of Training Providers for Public Administration*, bringing together the most prestigious institutions that aim to train public administration employees.



In respect to the **project activity**, the team worked towards identifying the priority directions for the next period regarding non-reimbursable external financing suitable for EIR, respectively: *local administration development; digitalisation; circular economy*. The Institute was invited to join the EU-HYBNET consortium, which runs the European-funded project "*Empowering European Network against Hybrid Threats - EU-HYBNET*", which aims to identify current needs in the field of combatting hybrid threats and provide (academic and technological) solutions to detect and counter them.

The year 2022 also marked the completion of the project *Network of Eurofound correspondents: Romania*, where EIR and its partner Euractiv Network were part of the network of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). During the four years of implementation, 115 deliverables were produced that contributed to the expertise needed by policy makers to achieve an upward convergence of living and working conditions within the EU. The results of the project were presented in detail in the [April edition of the EIR Newsletter](#).

The EuranetPlus project also continued in 2022, EIR being a partner of the Romanian Broadcasting Society (SRR) in the production and dissemination of materials on current European topics published reciprocally on the partners' websites (Radio Romania International, respectively EIR or the EUROPE DIRECT Center Bucharest).

The **Translation Coordination Unit (SCT)** continued the translation activities into Romanian, the linguistic and legal review of the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), and of documents necessary for the Romanian state as a member of the United Nations (UN), as well as of other types of documents (usually EIR specific). The [ECHR Jurisprudence Bulletin](#) section, from the Publications menu, has been completed with five Bulletins, which include the judgments and decisions of the ECHR against Romania delivered in the last quarter of 2021, a summary of those from 2021, as well as those delivered in the first three quarters of the year 2022.

The experts from SCT have contributed to a series of notable results for EIR, but also for our country. At the moment, Romania is the country with the most guides translated into Romanian that are also available on the [ECHR website](#): over 30 published guides, of which 16 were completed in 2022. In addition, on [the ECHR website](#) 70 factsheets translated into Romanian are available. Also, the EIR participated in the update of the [ELRC Consortium White Paper](#) on the use of artificial intelligence in European multilingualism.

Last but not least, I would like to remind you that in 2022 the European Institute in Romania continued to host the **EUROPE DIRECT (ED) Bucharest Center**, whose activity contributed to the information and involvement of



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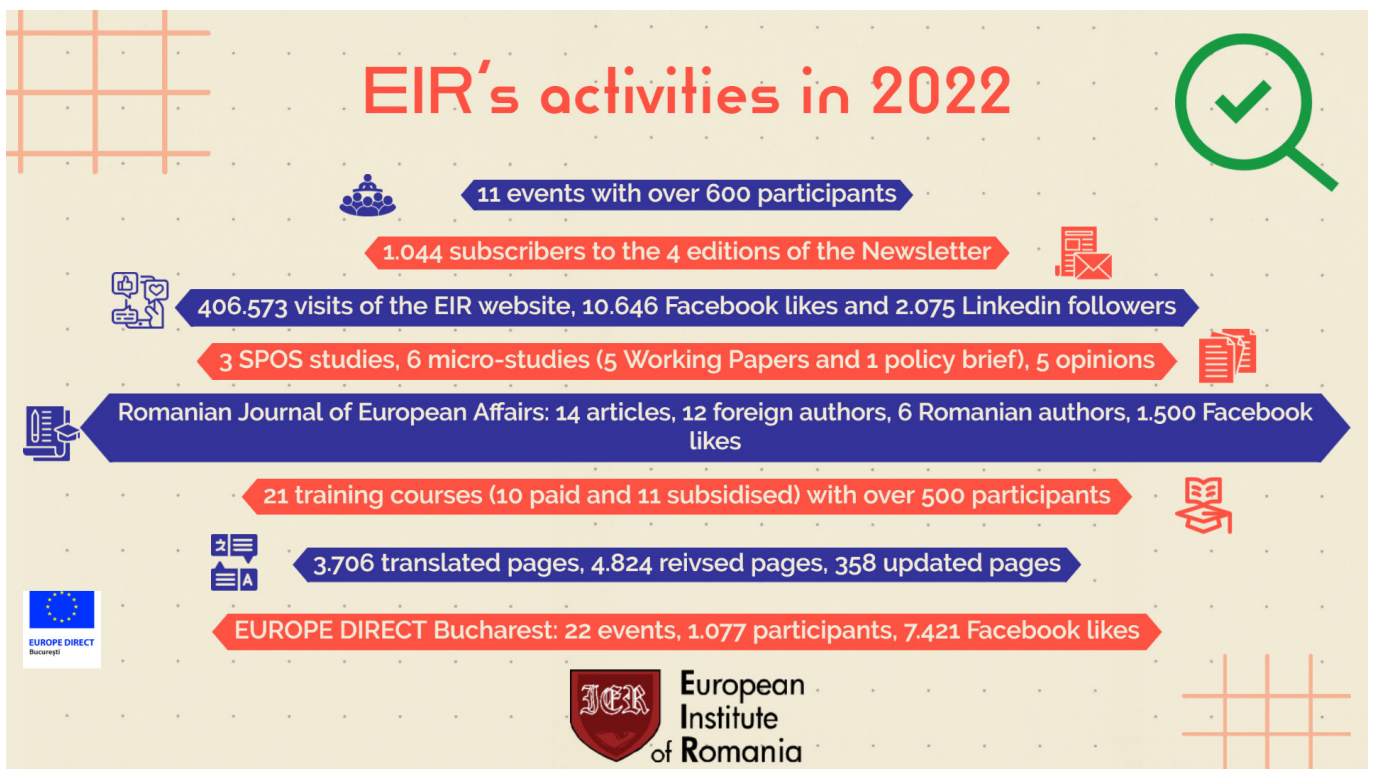
EIR activity

citizens at the local and national levels regarding the European topics, as well as to the strengthening of the relation with the mass media and other relevant partners. The 22 events organised by ED proposed current topics (European Green Deal, professional development of young people, e-commerce, energy transition, cyber security and digitalisation), which were developed in innovative formats such as forum theater, foresight simulation, world café, training sessions, workshops, exchange of experience etc. More than 1000 people from various categories participated in these events, such as: young people, entrepreneurs, NGOs, teachers, disadvantaged people from the rural localities of Ilfov county, seniors, the general public.

I would like to express again my gratitude to all my colleagues who have made constant efforts for the EIR activities to take place in good conditions, and who have professionally managed all the challenges that have arisen throughout the year.

We invite you to follow us in 2023 as well, by checking [the institutional website](#) and social media channels ([Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#)) where we will continue to present analyses, opinions, courses, events and translations in the field of European affairs.

Oana-Mihaela Mocanu
Director General of EIR



opinion

The 2022 Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union: The second term - better results

[continued from page 1] Information¹. However, given the clear majority in parliament and due to the discipline of government members, the proposal had no real chance of succeeding. Therefore, the animosity between the coalition and the opposition has not yet reached such a point that cooperation would become impossible.

All in all, Petr Fiala prepared a safer position for the Czech Presidency, and it paid off. In addition to the responsibility for the successful course, the coalition was also held together by the fact that the presidential elections were scheduled for 27-28 January 2023, thus the incumbent government was careful not to provoke its supporters by its own behaviour - and especially with mutual bickering. If it is enough for us that we did not embarrass ourselves a second time, then it is a success, even if that imaginary evaluation bar is set very low.



Copyright: Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU

¹ Official name for the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Czech Republic

Successes, failures, and normal people

The success or failure of an EU Council Presidency can be evaluated based on two main variables: what was achieved or initiated, and how the government was able to communicate that specific topic to the public.

[During the January 2023 press conference](#), Prime Minister Fiala counted as successes the common steps taken in the field of energy security and securing gas supplies for the European Union. However, the decision on the gas ceiling must not be understood as final, but rather as an agreed corridor within which the member states would move when determining the maximum gas price. This procedure is intended to limit significant price fluctuations, but at the same time preserve sufficient profit margin for energy companies. What the Czech government presents as a tremendous victory is more of a preliminary step for a future agreement.

The environmental obligations represent a pressing problem considering that their adoption led to intense debates in the Czech Republic. The agreement on expanding the EU allowances (EUA), tightening the regulations for new buildings, the ambitious replacement of internal combustion engines by 2035 and the new emission standard for Euro 7 unpleasantly affected [the supporters of the Civic Democracy², who consider the modern environmental program less of a priority and rather the preoccupation of the “Euro-federative Brussels elites”](#). The fact that the Czech Presidency was praised by the vice-president of the European Commission, [Frans Timmermans, seen by the Czech public as synonym for socialism and green enthusiastic](#), did not help Prime Minister Fiala either.

What the experts and government politicians will praise as an extremely difficult adjustment of the priorities of the individual member states, the voters of the government will accept rather with disdain. The ODS is thus reaping the fruits of its environmental division, considering that within its ranks there is still [Václav Klaus with his understanding of global problems as a conspiracy](#), thus more of a media topic than a real danger. In this area, the Czech Presidency of the EU Council fulfilled its mission perhaps more than the individual government representatives wished to, but the inability to properly explain the decision-making reasonings to the public lowers its success.

Macron and Fiala at the Prague Castle

In addition to individual priorities, the Presidency is also an opportunity for the respective member state to shine at the global level. The biggest event during the Czech Presidency was the summit of the European Political Community at the Prague Castle, which was organised as a reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Although Prime Minister Fiala was overshadowed by the French president, Emmanuel Macron, who made no secret of the fact that the event was rather his idea, for the Czech Republic it was important to gather all the relevant players in European and world politics at the same table especially during such a complicated period.

The significance of this initiative is interconnected with the war in Ukraine, and, given the evolution of the conflict, where neither side is likely to have sufficient means to win quickly, therefore the necessary coordination of the European positions toward Russia will become increasingly important. The Czech Presidency contributed to closer future cooperation between the EU and other European states - the UK, Turkey, and the Caucasus countries -, which may be considered a great success, similar to the Eastern Partnership project in the past.

In terms of the implementation of the program proposed by the Czech Presidency, it was possible to achieve successes, some of which may have been too boldly defined. Technically, it was a positive term, as there were no significant clashes or scandals during this period, with no complaints raised regarding the Czech Republic's work. If the government of Petr Fiala could have also satisfactorily explained its actions, we could consider giving the Czech Presidency to the EU Council a “B” grade. However, considering the limited communication on EU with its own citizens, there can be no question of a better rating than “C-”. Hopefully, the third time will be a charm.

Karel Sál, Ph.D.³

[Karel Sál](#) is a political scientist focusing on electoral systems, electoral behaviour, and electoral groups targeting. He is also an expert in opinion polls and new research techniques. He cooperates with several Central European parties, where he primarily helps tailor election campaigns to their target audiences, seeks campaign topics, and analyses media. His work for [Institute for Politics and Society \(IPPS\)](#) focuses on the disintegration of traditional ideological systems, the issue of freedom of speech, the future of European integration, and Czech domestic politics.



² The Civic Democratic Party (Czech: Občanská demokratická strana, abbrev. ODS) is a liberal-conservative and Eurosceptic political party in the Czech Republic. From December 2021 it is the senior-governing party, holding the prime minister office.

³ The article was prepared and submitted for publication on 16 January 2023, the final version being agreed on 18 January 2023.

The Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

On 1 January 2023, Sweden took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the following six months. “A greener, safer and freer Europe” is the motto driving Sweden’s priorities in its third term at the Presidency of the Council of the EU. The Swedish natural light’s variation between January and June inspired the visual identity. The colours used, yellow and blue, represent a common element for Sweden and the EU, while the logo highlights, through its various elements, the European values of solidarity and community.

Regarding the program proposed by Sweden, the [four main priorities](#) faithfully reflect the current difficult context, characterised by multiple crises that we are undergoing at the EU level. In this context, 2000 meetings have been scheduled in Brussels and Luxembourg, 150 meetings in Sweden, and the debates will address around 350 current policy issues.

Security - unity. Sweden took over the Presidency of the EU Council in a time marked by major security challenges, both for the member states and for the EU as a whole. The illegal and unprovoked aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine is a threat to the European security, with extremely serious consequences for migration, as well as for the global food and energy supplies. Faced with a different security dynamic, the EU has shown solidarity with Ukraine by providing unprecedented support. In this respect, [the Swedish Presidency program](#) emphasises permanent cooperation with partners, as well as the need to strengthen the transatlantic link.

Security in Europe was among the topics highlighted by [Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson](#) in his speech regarding the government’s priorities for the next six months. At the same time, the official emphasised the importance of Sweden’s membership to the EU and NATO, especially in conflict situations such as the present one. Even if the disastrous effects of the war are felt by all member states, Ukraine is the country that pays the highest price, fighting for the freedom of the entire Europe. In this regard, several support measures for Ukraine were mentioned, which will be continued in the upcoming period such as maintaining European unity, expanding economic, humanitarian and military assistance, as well as the member states’ support for the post-conflict reconstruction, and the close monitoring of Ukraine’s progress as a candidate country for the EU.

Competitiveness. In addition to the humanitarian and security consequences, the war in Ukraine is putting pressure on Europe’s economies. That is why competitiveness is considered decisive for the European economic future. According to the Swedish Presidency, the EU must continue the effort to provide the best conditions for a solid and open economy based on free competition, private investment and digitalisation. The EU’s internal market, which celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2023, is the foundation of the prosperity and well-being of the member states, being interdependent with the four fundamental freedoms. Providing a level playing field for the European companies also has a key role, therefore the Swedish Presidency will focus on clear competition policies and better regulations for the European industry.

At the same time, competitiveness also means resilience, and in the context of the current energy crisis, it is necessary for the EU to avoid dependence on Russian gas. Creating diverse and enhanced opportunities for trade with third countries, mainstreaming digital services in new trade agreements and on the internal market are topics of major interest for the Swedish Presidency. During its term at the helm of the EU Council, Sweden will monitor the development of the European semiconductor ecosystem (The European Chips Act) project.

Green and energy transitions. The EU is a world leader in climate transition, and Sweden plans to strengthen this position during its term. Thus, the EU’s reduction of net greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 is essential for the global climate transition. The “Fit for 55” package will play a decisive role in this process, and one of the objectives of the Swedish Presidency is to advance the negotiations on the issues that are still on the discussion agenda.

A relevant area of the climate transition refers to energy use, and Sweden will prioritise efforts to speed up the electrification of the EU’s automotive industry. The agreement of the EU institutions to phase out all new fossil fuel cars by 2035 is a significant step in this regard. Activities during the Swedish Presidency will focus on the new Regulation on Batteries, the continuation of negotiations on increasing renewable energy production, advancing the work on proposals for the natural gas market package to replace fossil energy from the Russian Federation with other energy sources with low emissions of carbon. The program of the Swedish Presidency also emphasises the relevance of the regulatory framework and appropriate policies to attract investment for renewable energy.

Democratic values and the rule of law. The Swedish Presidency aims to provide a constructive leadership to improve the EU’s strengths and to find compromises within the European Council. Protecting common European interests and respecting the diversity of member states are extremely important. The European Union is built on democratic values, which are the cornerstone of cohesion, individual freedoms, non-discrimination, increased economic output and its global influence. The respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights, with the aim of giving the European Union a strong voice in the world, is therefore a key element of the Swedish Presidency.

Additional information about Sweden’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union can be found on the [official website](#).



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The winter edition of the *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*: key research on European developments

Including seven research articles and a book review, the December 2022 edition of the *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* (RJE) brings to the forefront the conclusions of the analyses written by seven foreign authors and two Romanian researchers. Thus, the most recent RJE issue proposes topics such as: de-Europeanisation and the case of Armenian community in Turkey, Euroscepticism and the Turkish media during the pandemic, the European Integrated Border Management, the “Fit for 55” legislative package, national recovery and resilience plans in Bulgaria and Lithuania, the link between REPowerEU and the European Union’s Hydrogen Strategy, the implications of the war in Ukraine for the world order in transition and a book review about the current role of the foreign affairs ministries.

Serap Güneş (PhD candidate at the International Relations and European Studies Department of Masaryk University, Brno) analyses the case of Armenian minority in Turkey through the de-Europeanisation process. Focusing on one of Turkey’s Christian communities, Armenians, this paper aims at analysing the impact of EU candidacy period between 1999-2022 on Turkey’s minority policies. Using semi-structured interviews, the author brings together the results of the discussions with the representatives of the minority examined with the scientific literature and offers a perspective on the development of the research theme in relation to the different stages of the accession process to the European Union. The full article can be read [here](#).

Çiğdem Üstün (PhD, Assoc. Prof. at the International Relations Department, Faculty of Administrative, Economic and Social Sciences, Nişantaşı University, İstanbul) analyses the Eurosceptic and de-legitimisation attitudes in Turkey in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The author chose 15 March 2020 - 30 May 2021 as study period and looked at the articles published by five newspapers in Turkey, containing the following keywords: EU, Europe, vaccine, BioNTech, Sinovac, Coronavirus, COVID-19, and the pandemic. Corroborating the literature review with the results of the text analysis, the researcher concludes that, regardless of the political ideology of the newspapers investigated, Euroscepticism has become a common attitude among them. The full article is available [here](#).

Mustafa Ameyahid Mohamed (PhD candidate in Law and Social Sciences and associate researcher at Murcia UCAM University in Spain) and **César Augusto Giner Alegria** (Professor at Murcia UCAM University in Spain) focus on the cooperation aspect within the European Integrated Border Management (EIBM). By analysing the legal frameworks enabling Frontex agency to implement its external dimension, the authors examine the level of international cooperation in the field of border management through the new European regulations and show that Frontex can now provide support through joint operations on the territory of any third country. The full article is available [here](#).

Beatriz Pérez de las Heras (Professor of European Union Law at the University of Deusto, Spain) presents an analysis of the “Fit for 55” legislative package in the context of the climate neutrality goal set by the European Union for 2050. By referring to the legal framework and analysing the instruments proposed by the European institutions, the author examines the potential to accelerate the green transition within the Union. The article shows that the regulations represent the main legal act used to support the environmental ambitions, and the author concludes that we are witnessing a superior level of legislative integration of the European climate policy. The full article can be accessed [here](#).

Maria Kotseva-Tikova (Chief assistant at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in Bulgaria) and **Jaroslav Dvorak** (Professor at Klaipėda University, Lithuania) analyse the climate policy and activities envisaged by the national recovery and resilience plans of Bulgaria and Lithuania, using the methodology proposed by the Bruegel think tank. The authors show that the membership to the European Union provides the necessary financial resources to implement green projects within short-term periods, but the economic and environment effects largely depend on the capacity of the two countries to invest smartly and not just to receive the financial allocations. The article can be read [here](#).

Florin Bonciu (Professor at Romanian-American University in Bucharest) looks at the implications of the adoption of the REPowerEU in the context of accelerating the implementation of the European Union’s strategy on hydrogen. The author draws attention to the challenges arising from the implementation of this plan and proposes a common approach, at the level of the single market, leading to the creation of the necessary infrastructure for the production, storage, transport and distribution of hydrogen in the EU. The full article is available [here](#).

Fulvio Attinà (Professor Emeritus at the University of Catania, Italy) refers to the international order changes generated by the Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine. The author underscores that this geopolitical event marks a turning point in the global order transition and leads to the reconfiguration of international coalitions. The researcher points that the current common response system of the European countries could be only temporary in the absence of the adoption of long-term institutional mechanisms. The full article is available [here](#).

Lastly, we invite the readers to access the book review prepared by **Irina Grosu** (PhD candidate within the University of Bucharest) regarding the current role of the foreign affairs ministries. The review is available [here](#).

The articles published in the *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* are also promoted through the dedicated Facebook page, which can be accessed [here](#).



Vol. 22 No. 2
December 2022

The European Year of Skills - a new impetus to lifelong learning

The state of the European Union address, delivered on 14 September 2022, by the European Commission's President, Ursula von der Leyen, represented [a moment of reflection over the major challenges of the previous year, as well as an opportunity to present the main proposed measures for the upcoming period](#). In this context and in order to protect the social market economy, President von der Leyen emphasised the importance of supporting the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which need a friendly business environment, access to raw materials, but also a skilled labour force. Thus, the Commission President proposed to dedicate 2023 to education and training, to draw attention especially to the need for increased investment in this area and the priority given to the employees' skills.



Copyright: European Commission

[European Commission's proposal to make 2023 the European Year of Skills was adopted on 12 October 2022](#). The measure represents also an outcome of the debates and activities organised throughout 2022 as the European Year of Youth, which highlighted that [an inclusive Europe is based on education](#). Eurostat data show that one of the challenges of the European labour market is that only [37% of adults undertake training regularly](#). The phenomenon prevents the employers from identifying adequate candidates, and the data confirm that [77% of companies are dealing with this issue](#). The Commission already proposed a [European Skills Agenda](#) for boosting sustainable, fair, and resilient competitiveness of the economy, an important component being the Pact for skills. The Pact brings together [1000 member organisations and fostered over 12 large-scale partnerships in strategic sectors](#), contributing to the upskilling of up to 6 million people.

By acquiring adequate skills, the European citizens can adapt more easily to the labour market changes generated by the green and digital transition. This issue was also underlined by the European Commissioner for Research, Innovation, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya Gabriel: ["Building on the successes of the 2022 European Year of Youth, next year will be about equipping people with the relevant skills to match the labour market needs."](#)

Through the European Year of Skills and with the aim of supporting lifelong learning, the Commission seeks to consolidate the cooperation between the European Parliament and the member states, social partners, public and private employment services, chambers of commerce and industry, education and training providers, workers and businesses. In addition, another proposal refers to the inclusive investments in training and upskilling processes. Moreover, the need for relevant skills for the market's demands underscores the opportunities generated by the green and digital transition, while also matching people's aspirations. The EU also committed to attracting citizens from third countries with the skills needed by the European economy. All these goals are supported through various funding sources from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the Digital Europe programme, Horizon Europe, or Erasmus+.

The European Year of Skills represents a logical continuation of European steps undertaken during the past years. It is important to recall, in this context, the objectives of the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#) to achieve a 78% employment rate by 2030, respectively to have 60% of the adults participating in training activities. Another target set in the context of the digital era is set by the [2030 Digital Compass](#) aiming at equipping minimum 80% of adults with basic digital skills, considering that the current level is 40%, according to the [Digital Economy and Society Index](#) (DESI).

The European Union targets proposed through these programmes, as well as the priority given to skills throughout 2023 gives confidence to the young employees or the ones in training that they will benefit from adequate personal and professional development opportunities, considering the labour market dynamics and the anticipated major changes.

Irina Grosu
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ISSN 2065 - 457X

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