

## editorial

### Pleading for more EU

May has a particular significance for the European Union and, of course, for Romania. On the 9th of May, we celebrated Europe Day, marking 71 years since the memorable speech delivered by the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, which gave birth to the underlying concept of the European Union as we know it today.

The context of the Schuman Declaration is already well known as reflecting the need for a European economic recovery after the most devastating armed conflict experienced by humanity: World War II. Peace and prosperity are closely interlinked and Robert Schuman designed a long-term pacification process for Europe, based on an area of prosperity and European cooperation.

The European Union - which Romania is now part of - has fully carried out its mission as **the only integrative construct having provided stability and development for all its members for decades**. Over time, the EU institutions and its Member States have developed a unique culture of cooperation, based on the principle of solidarity and enabled by integration processes. All these happened alongside the EU enlargement, a process that Romania has benefitted from and has promoted further, for its part.

The respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights are the EU fundamental values and, at the same time, the elements that render the Union appealing. They guarantee that every citizen may aspire and have access to a decent living, in full respect of his/her rights. This warranty of prosperity, freedom and democracy has attracted new members to the Union. For the Romanian citizens who became EU citizens 14 years ago, the guarantee that the Union offers in terms of rights and freedoms is also the most cherished asset of this ... p. 2



## opinion

### Conference on the Future of Europe: a brief history and how it unfolds

In March 2019, the French President presented a series of proposals on the future of the European Union in a manifesto titled "[For a European Renaissance](#)". At the time, one of the ways to put this vision into practice was a Conference on the Future of the EU, inspired by the citizens' panels that took place in France and later throughout Europe. A few months later, France and Germany presented a non-position paper drafting key elements and questions on what was to be developed as the *Conference on the Future of Europe*. As indicated in the [document](#), the Conference was designed to have the role of discussing pressing issues on the European agenda and of reaching concrete results by 2022, in several areas such as: Europe's role in the world, security and defence policies, neighbourhood, digitalization, environment, migration, reduction of inequalities, social market economy, European values, rule of law, etc.

In January 2020, the European Commission published a [communication](#) announcing that the Conference would be launched on 9 May 2020 and proposed two parallel work strands for the debates: the first one regarding EU priorities and what the Union should seek to achieve, and the second one focused on addressing topics specifically related to democratic processes and institutional matters. At the same time, the European Parliament presented a [resolution](#), stressing that... p. 3

## in this issue

- 4 The Portuguese Presidency of the European Union 4.0
- 6 Two new events organised within the Dialogues@EIR series
- 7 RJEА - summer 2021 edition
- 7 New publications launched by EIR
- 8 The effect of the pandemic on EU democracies
- 8 Amendments to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms under Protocol No. 15
- 9 The positive changes on the training market

## Pleading for more EU

*[continued from page 1]* membership. **What they expect most from the EU is a comparable standard of living for all Europeans, regardless of the Member State or region in which they reside.**

And, as I have mentioned the citizens' perspective on the EU, I cannot overlook the recent symbolic launch of the **Conference on the Future of Europe**, which took place on 9 May in Strasbourg. It was a great pleasure for me to take part in this virtual event. Within this process, **the European citizens have, one more time, the opportunity to express their expectations regarding the future of the Union.**

I would very much like **the voice of Romanian citizens to be strong in this dialogue**, that is mainly happening online for the time being, on the dedicated platform especially designed for the debate on the future of Europe.

**The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has come with some important lessons.** We have the chance to learn these lessons and get better prepared for such shocks affecting society and economy at large. Our expectation is that **we will be better prepared if we are more resilient, if we have a larger capacity to influence global affairs and if we will adopt pragmatic decisions on policies and actions meant to help us build our future in line with EU values and objectives, in a solidary way, and to further strengthen the Union's cohesion.**

A more shock-resilient Union, able to regain its balance as quickly as possible, has proved to be an important condition for European citizens to feel safe.

From this point of view, **resilience ingredients are not complicated, but require to be clearly built on solidarity and cohesion.** First, we need to have a **completely functional Single Market.**

At European level, we need to evaluate all barriers and bring them down, especially those impeding on the four freedoms. **To have more Europe, citizens need to directly benefit from the opportunity to do business, study and work within an area free of artificial obstacles.** For a more integrated Union, we also need to strengthen the Euro and Schengen areas. We see this strengthening as related to the Treaties implementation, i.e., including the integration of those Member States, such as Romania, that committed to prepare themselves to become members of the Schengen and Eurozone in their respective EU Accession Treaties.

From the lessons learned while facing the challenges posed by the current pandemic, I would like to mention two aspects related to **the European capacity to guarantee access to strategic goods and raw materials.** In the first days of the national implementation of the sanitary crisis response measures, we noticed the existence of supply issues. The creation of the Green Lanes to ensure the free flow of goods and services was an extraordinary important measure, which should be kept as an example of good practice to be replicated in other crisis situations.

Another lesson that this pandemic has taught us is the need for a secure and seamless supply of essential goods and raw materials in crisis situations. That's why we need to have a comprehensive debate at EU level, which should lead to clear decisions regarding **the industries needed to be developed more within the Union**, but also the type of partnerships that are instrumental for ensuring the EU response capacity in case of crises or emergencies. Romania was in the front line of support, being the first Member State to host the European common reserve of emergency medical equipment - RescEU, which manages the transport of medical supplies to the EU Member States and the neighbouring countries.

Always in the context of the current pandemic, we have realised, once more, **the importance of consular cooperation at European level.** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, both at the level of its Headquarters and through the Romanian network of diplomatic missions, has offered its full support for the repatriation of Romanian citizens. There have been situations in which we had the support of other Member States and of the EU Delegations in the field. We have tried to respond to this European solidarity by assisting, in our turn, within our means, to the repatriation of the nationals of other Member States and neighbouring countries. Considering this experience, I wish to express my confidence that the proposals to be presented by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and the Security Policy in regard to consular protection at EU level will strengthen this key area for the European citizens.

The scale of partnerships is also important in regard to **EU's global role.** By its nature and also by its **commitment to support a rule-based multilateral order** (otherwise an essential principle of Romania's foreign policy as well), the Union is a global player dedicated to cooperation. It is an ally of open systems, which respects the fundamental rights and the rules enshrined in agreements and conventions. Therefore, partnerships are part of EU's deep core. It makes sense for us, as we work with like-minded third countries and organisations, to create a supportive environment for the protection of our interests, the promotion of the values and rules we believe in, and a sustainable development worldwide. The EU may continue to do this in the best possible way through cooperation with its partners sharing similar values and objectives, first of all.

**The global Community of Democracies has to speak out**, as its voice is strong and diverse. Democracy and the desire for democracy are revealing themselves on all continents. That is why we - the EU and its Member States, together with our partners - have to make sure that our values and principles stay alive and remain close to citizens, while being also constantly projected outside the EU borders.

It is also clear for us, as EU citizens, that **our prosperity and security depend on the stability of our neighbourhood.** That is why I think that the Union has to commit to a long-term strategic investment in the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership countries and the Southern Mediterranean neighbourhood. We cannot afford to leave our relations with this

neighbourhood to be managed bureaucratically. We need to be present on site, active, both as a Union and as individual Member States, and we have to cover a more comprehensive cooperation array, also incorporating a strong security element. **From hybrid attacks to radicalisation and organised crime, all these developments in our neighbourhood also affect our Union, either directly or indirectly.**

So that the Union's response, materialised in its policies and instruments, may lead to enhanced resilience and increase EU's capacity to project its principles and objectives on global level, we have to reflect on how we could better prepare ourselves in advance. We need to have the capacity of creating models for the future in order to be ready for a fast-paced transition to a green and digital economy or to find answers to hybrid and asymmetric security threats that will widely use the new technologies. **This is one of the reasons we believe that the debate on the EU's medium and long-term evolution will need to pay more attention to our anticipatory governance capacity.**

In this respect, we can see the potential in the initiative of the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who mandated Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight, to work in order to increase this anticipatory capacity. We think that, if we build on it, we can move in a more comprehensive and strategic direction, **able to combine European resources with those of the Member States.**

Although Europe has passed through an unprecedented crisis and focus should be put on the management of the economic and social recovery, it is high time to **make room for dialogue and reflection regarding our future.** So far, we have proved that, together, we can make Europe stronger and more effective. **We have to make sure that we will deepen our Union in order to ensure its sustainability for the next generations.**

**Bogdan Aurescu**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Translation by **Liliana Comănescu**

**About the author:**

**Bogdan Aurescu** was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania on November 4, 2019. He is a career diplomat (since 1996) and holds the diplomatic rank of ambassador (since 2014). He is a member of the UN International Law Commission, for the 2017-2022 mandate.

Bogdan Aurescu has an extensive diplomatic career. From May 2016 to November 2019, he was Presidential Advisor for Foreign Policy to the President of Romania. Between November 2014 and November 2015, he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania. He also served as Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, managing the fields of strategic affairs (2009-2010; 2012-2014), European affairs (2004-2005; 2010-2012) and global affairs (March - June 2012).

Bogdan Aurescu also served as Undersecretary of State/Government Agent for the European Court of Human Rights (2003-2004), Director General for Legal Affairs (2001-2003), Director for International Law and Treaties (2000-2001), Head of Cabinet to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (1999-2000), Deputy Director for International Law and Treaties (1999), Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (1998-1999), attaché (1997-1998) and desk officer (1996-1997) in the Legal and Treaties Directorate. He is a university professor within the Department of Public Law of the Faculty of Law of the University of Bucharest and author of several books, studies and articles on international law.

## Conference on the Future of Europe: a brief history and how it unfolds

*[continued from page 1]* citizens and youth meetings should be at the cornerstone of the Conference on the Future of Europe. The Parliament proposed Citizens' Agoras to be organized on various topics, of which at least two should be dedicated to young people.

With the pandemic crisis, the subject of the Conference lost ground in the decision-making calendar. The measures to contain the pandemic took precedence, and blockages (e.g., the structure of the executive committee or differences of vision between representatives of the European institutions) could not be resolved up that moment.

A new [resolution](#) was voted by the European Parliament in June 2020 calling on the Council of the EU to adopt a position on the format and organization of the Conference,

stating that **work should begin as soon as possible in the autumn of 2020.** At the end of June, the Council of the EU reached [an agreement](#) on the Conference and proposed a number of recommendations, including: building on the citizens' dialogues and consultations which have taken place across Europe; the use of digital tools so that citizens can be involved in the debate despite the pandemic crisis; the conference could be placed under the authority of an eminent European personality, selected by the three EU institutions (Parliament, Commission and Council of the EU).

During 2020, several positions were published by civil society organizations from the EU calling for an inclusive, transparent, and accessible format of the Conference. [Proposals](#) were also made on the issues to be addressed, as well as on how to concretely involve civil society, one recommendation being that of granting the right to vote in plenary sessions.



Copyright: European Union

Following the agreement of the European institutions, 9 May 2021 was set as the starting date for the Conference. **The launch event took place in Strasbourg (France) in the presence of the European leaders** and included speeches addressed by the President of France, the President of the European Parliament, the Prime Minister of Portugal (Presidency of the Council of the EU from January to June 2021) and the President of the European Commission. Speeches were also held by the three representatives of the European institutions to the Executive Board of the Conference: Guy Verhofstadt (European Parliament), Ana Paula Zacarias (Council of the EU) and Dubravka Šuica (European Commission).

At the same time, the rules of procedure establishing the **composition of the plenary session of the Conference** and the way the proceedings will be conducted were adopted. According to the [methodology](#), the plenary session of the conference will be composed of:

- 108 representatives from the European Parliament, 54 from the Council and 3 from the European Commission, as well as 108 representatives from all national Parliaments.
- 108 citizens will participate to discuss citizens' ideas stemming from the Citizens' Panels and the Multilingual Digital Platform:
  - 80 representatives from the European Citizens' Panels, of which at least one-third will be younger than 25, and
  - 27 from national Citizens' Panels or Conference events (one per Member State), as well as the President of the European Youth Forum.
- 18 representatives from both the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, and another eight from both social partners and civil society.
- The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will be invited when the international role of the EU is discussed.

**The proposals that will be analysed in the plenary session will also come via the digital platform of the Conference.** It is multilingual and it aims to facilitate the exchange of ideas and contributions from European citizens. Shared perspectives are collected, analysed, and monitored throughout the Conference, and the moderation of the platform is assured. Events that discuss the topics of the Conference can also be added on the platform, and both those who send contributions or register events are invited to adhere to the [Conference Charter](#). Among the principles included in the Charter we can mention:

- **Respect the European values**, as set in Art. 2 of the Treaty on the European Union: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.
- **Contribute to the Conference with constructive and concrete proposals**, respecting the opinions of other citizens and building Europe's future together.

To add a proposal or an event on the platform, an account is needed. The platform includes **nine topics for which contributions can be submitted**, as follows: climate change and environment; health; a stronger economy, social justice, and jobs; EU in the world; values and rights, rule of law, security; digital transformation; European democracy; migration; education, culture, youth, and sport. Proposals can also be made for other topics and included in the special category created.

The platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe can be accessed [here](#).

**Eliza Vaş**  
Editor-in-Chief EIR Newsletter

---

## The Portuguese Presidency of the European Union 4.0<sup>1</sup>

From the southwestern periphery of the European Union (EU), Portugal is presiding over the EU Council in the first half of 2021 for the fourth time after 1992, 2000 and 2007. Despite being geographically peripheral and small, since its membership in 1986, the country has been an active supporter of deepening European integration. Understood as a way towards modernization after decades of authoritarian rule - both in the sense of reinforcing its democratic process after the Carnation revolution in 1974, but mostly as a way to access economic development - Lisbon has assumed a strong commitment vis-à-vis the EU. Since the mid-80s, even against the backdrop of crisis, and particularly during the 2011-2015 bailout, Portuguese public opinion polls have constantly maintained a positive view on EU membership.

Portuguese foreign policy is, firstly, based on the European pillar, in close interconnection with the Atlantic and the Lusophone priorities. As a consequence, in its external relations, Portugal prioritizes multilateral environments beyond the European Union, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP). In this way, the country participates in several political centers, materializes its global vocation and, eventually, avoids the marginalization of a state that is small, but has a self-perception of a medium size country.

Having a global vocation and a diplomacy revolving at 360 degrees has structured Portuguese external action which, according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has been translated into the Portuguese "at ease with multilateralism". In short, from Lisbon's perspective, the three pillars of its foreign policy are closely linked and contribute to the

<sup>1</sup> Opinion submitted on 11 May 2021.



country’s participation in various political arenas. Additionally, Portugal’s strategic geographical placement allows the country to punch above its weight by consistently enacting a global vocation, specifically by being a staunch defender of multilateralism.

In the above-mentioned context, the Presidency of the EU Council is seen by Lisbon as an opportunity to promote the EU external agenda in line with the country’s multiple interests and priorities. Not surprisingly, the outward dimension of the Presidency has been entitled “Global Europe”, being the fifth goal of the agenda. Amid fierce USA-China competition and the worsening of relations with Russia, Lisbon has a clear understanding that most of the challenges to the EU are, indeed, external. The government initially planned to promote multilateralism as a political value and a principle of EU action. But then came the COVID-19 pandemic. However, under Portuguese view, there is still the hope that the EU can contribute to global leadership amid illiberal waves and the redefinition of the transatlantic agenda under American President Joseph Biden and USA-China competition.

International institutions are a cornerstone for Portugal and its elites that recurrently promote a more active Europe on the global scene. This means pragmatism and dialogue with powerful states on a case-by-case basis. However, this move raises the issue of what does a pragmatic approach to illiberal China and Russia mean. Portugal is seen as China’s “special friend” in the EU due to the openness of the country to Chinese investments and acquisition of key assets, namely in the energy sector. Lisbon portrays Beijing as an indispensable partner with whom the EU needs to engage on interdependencies. With the same reasoning behind the relations maintained with China and India, based on unique historical and cultural ties, Portugal aims to rebuild the EU’s relations with Africa, specifically because of the increasing Chinese presence on that continent.

During the first half of 2021, and under the motto of “promote Europe’s openness to the world”, Lisbon aimed to strengthen EU-Africa relations by centralizing African economic recovery and exploring areas of mutual benefit. These areas included sustainable trade and investment, job creation, peace and security, combating climate change, energy transfer and cooperation in the justice and home affairs domain. The postponed 6th EU-African Union Summit is expected to deliver on these issues and follows in the footsteps of the first summit organized by Portugal in 2007. Other ongoing initiatives include the revitalization of the dialogue with Washington and with New Delhi and a renewed focus on EU-NATO cooperation.

Amid several crises (financial bailout, migration, COVID-19 pandemic, etc.), Portugal continues to see itself as a country committed to deepening integration and as a bridging force (see for instance the negotiations for the Multiannual Financial Framework), under European liberal and humanist values. However, a change has been looming in the Portuguese mindset: from a dedicated listener and Europe’s “good student” towards an active speaker with a voice that stands out because the country can add value to the integration project. Although this is not straightforwardly visible on Russia ties, this is certainly the case on China and the transatlantic linkage where Lisbon wants to be a game changer for more EU.

**Sandra Fernandes**



*Copyright: Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union*

**About the author:**

**Sandra Fernandes** holds a Ph.D. in Political Science, with specialization in International Relations, by Sciences Po (Paris). She is Assistant Professor with tenure at the University of Minho (Portugal) and member of the Research Centre in Political Science (CICP) at the same University. She received the 2005 Jacques Delors Prize for her research on the European Union and Russia. More information is available [here](#).

## Two new events organised within the Dialogues@EIR series

The European Institute of Romania has continued the series of online events Dialogues@EIR, organising in April two events focused on the **transatlantic relationship** and on **gender equality**.

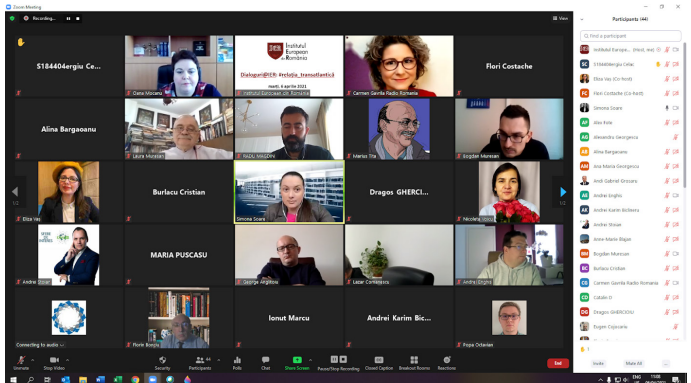
The dialogue under the theme #transatlanticrelationship took place on April 6th and had as guests **Simona Soare**, Senior Analyst, European Union Institute for Security Studies - EUISS (Paris/France), and **Radu Magdin**, CEO, Smartlink Communications (Romania). The event was moderated by **Bogdan Mureşan**, Expert, European Studies Unit (EIR).

On April 20th, we organised the event dedicated to the theme of #genderequality, with the participation of **Diana Elena Neaga**, Lecturer, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, member of AnA Society for Feminist Analyses, and **Aurora Martin**, Senior Advisor for International Relations, National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men. This event was moderated by **Liliana Popescu**, PhD, Vice-Rector, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration.

Both topics raised the interest of the participants, the debates being interactive and rich in knowledge and useful information. Moreover, the speakers' interventions and the comments/questions addressed by participants within debates highlighted the following ideas:

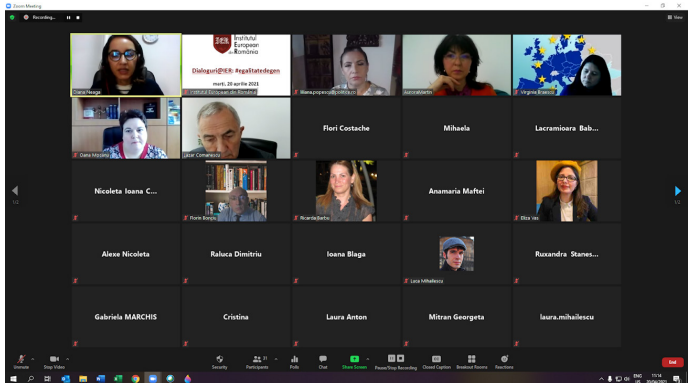
### #transatlanticrelationship

- The transatlantic relations were called into question during the Trump administration, but they are now regaining momentum, at least in terms of statements; however, symbolic gestures will require concrete actions in order to get results and bear out the partnership relaunch and the European optimism regarding the Biden administration;
- Competition and cooperation are not mutually exclusive when it comes to the transatlantic relations, as they are organic consequences of this extremely dynamic bond;
- The pandemic has exposed the international system's fragility, also underlining the need for a multilateralism supported by both transatlantic partners; at a more general level, this pandemic has catalysed a whole range of geopolitical rivalries and global tendencies;
- Transatlantic relations are not only dependent on the relationships between the United States of America and the European Union, but also on those with third parties such as China, Russia and Turkey, the latter also being a troublesome dialogue partner within NATO;
- For Romania, an EU and NATO Member State which has a strategic partnership with the USA, it is vital to have options, to make its voice heard and to strengthen its position within the transatlantic community, in all the matters of interest.



### #genderequality

- The EIR event reiterates the normative importance of gender equality, given that the anti-gender discourse has surged in the last years against an increase in the far-right influence and the rise of illiberalism at international level;
- Anti-gender movements in Romania argue that gender studies are not sustainable and would not produce the skills required to meet the labour market needs;
- The pandemic has created a context with multiple vulnerabilities for Romanian women, considering that many of them are frontline workers (doctors, nurses, retail workers, cleaning and care staff, etc.);
- Moreover, the categories most affected by the sanitary crisis have been the older women (in a higher percentage than men of the same age group), Roma women (30% of Roma people live in households with no access to running water), unemployed women and women at risk of losing their jobs, women who are victims of domestic violence, etc.;
- In terms of workplace dynamics, during this pandemic, women have been the demographic category most affected by the changes incurred with the significant increase in the number of working hours or their dramatic decrease (e.g., as a result of furlough).



For more details on the online events series Dialogues@EIR, please visit [ier.gov.ro](http://ier.gov.ro), Communication/Events section.

**Florentina Costache**  
Communication Unit

---

**Romanian Journal of European Affairs – Summer 2021 edition**

The summer issue of the *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* brings to the readers' attention topics of major importance for the European agenda, such as: the reform of the capitalist economic system, the causes behind Brexit, the EU-China agreement on investments, the East-West divide in the European Union etc.

**Daniel Dăianu** (Member of the Romanian Academy, Chairman of the Romanian Fiscal Council, Professor at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration - SNSPA), analyses how the economic crisis generated by the pandemic can become an opportunity to reform, on a more equitable ground, the capitalist economic system. Pointing out the close relation between economic welfare and democracy, the authors concludes that economic discrepancies endanger the liberal democracy regimes. The reform of capitalism should combine economic freedom with social fairness and cohesion.

The article proposed by **Miklós Somai** (Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of World Economics within the Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungary) discusses the deep causes behind the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the European Union. The causes behind Brexit are divided into two categories. First of all, there are long-term causes, linked to history, geography and culture. Second of all, there are the contingent causes, such as the economic inequalities or the shifts in the European balance of power.

**Nataliia Khoma** (Professor at the Political Science and International Relations Department, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ukraine) and **Oleksii Kokoriev** (Lecturer at O.S. Popov Odessa National Academy of Telecommunication, Ukraine) evaluate how the Baltic States have complied with the EU standards and values, following their European integration. The article concludes that Baltic States are now experiencing a phase of stagnation in their liberal-democratic development.

The research of **Valentin Cojanu** (Professor at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania), **Adriana Petre** (PhD candidate at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania) and **Cristina Porumboiu** (PhD candidate at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania) is focused on the emergence of Romanian life sciences clusters, in the context of the New EU Industrial Strategy. Given the advantages of life sciences in transferring research results into innovation, there are important premises regarding the further development of such clusters in Romania.

**Iulia Monica Oehler-Şincai** (Senior Researcher at the Institute for World Economy of the Romanian Academy) has as main research objective, in her article regarding the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, to elaborate on the provisions, advantages, and the risks related. Three main topics prove to be problematic for the agreement: technological transfers, the relations between state-owned Chinese companies and the European market, and the roles of subsidies.

Underlining the fact that international tensions have deepened the division between Western European states and the countries from Eastern Europe, **Clara Volintiru** (Associate Professor at the Faculty of International Business and Economics, Bucharest University of Economic Studies - ASE), **Alina Bârgăoanu** (Professor and Dean of the College of Communication and Public Relations, SNSPA), **George Ştefan** (Assistant Lecturer at the Faculty of Theoretical Economics, ASE) and **Flavia Durach** (Lecturer at the College of Communication and Public Relations, SNSPA) conclude that, while there are significant progresses in economic convergence at the national level within Eastern European countries, at the subnational level economic disparities are still present. The authors argue that the West-East divide is very much related to economy, rather than politics or ideology, and the stability and legitimacy of the European project are directly connected to the real cohesion between all EU member states.

The article published by **Melania-Gabriela Ciot** (PhD Associate Professor at Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of European Studies, Cluj-Napoca) and **Ramona Sferlic** (PhD student in International Relations and European Studies at Babeş-Bolyai University) highlights the interdependencies between EU Member States, during the pandemic crisis. From a perspective of globalisation and power relations, the authors point out that the EU should acknowledge more these interdependencies.

The last article of the issue, by **Csaba Lentner** (Professor in Public Finance at the Faculty of Governance and International Studies of the National University of Public Service in Budapest), **László Vasa** (Professor of the Széchenyi István University in Győr) and **Szilárd Hegedűs** (Lecturer and Researcher at the Faculty of Governance and International Studies of the National University of Public Service), employs a comparative perspective on the debt dynamics of municipalities and municipally owned corporations, with a special focus on Hungary.

The full issue is available at <http://rjea.ier.gov.ro>.

Our readers are also invited to access RJEa's [Facebook](#) page.

**Ionuţ Mircea Marcu**  
European Studies Unit

---

**New publications launched by the European Institute of Romania**

April was a busy month for the experts of the European Institute of Romania (EIR), who were involved in various research activities in the field of international relations and European affairs. They produced two papers dedicated to both a Romanian and an international audience. As such, **Bogdan Mureşan**, expert within the European Studies Unit (ESU), has prepared an opinion paper (available [here](#), only in Romanian) dedicated to the prospect of relaunching the Euro-Atlantic relations against the backdrop of the new American Administration led by Joseph Biden. In the author's view, support for democratic resilience in the world may provide the key argument for recalibrating the partnership between the European Union (EU) and the United States of America on a more equal footing in the age of COVID-19 pandemic. The brief served as a background paper for an event organized in the framework of the *Dialogues@EIR* series, which took

place at the beginning of April and sparked significant interest among participants.

In the same month, **Ionuț Marcu** (ESU expert) has published a working paper on the topic of the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries. In his text, the author argues that the practice of postponing the accession talks for the region risks exposing it to growing influences originating from third countries like the Russian Federation or China. In this context, the important deliberative exercise represented by the Conference on the Future of Europe, officially launched on 9 May 2021, is perceived as a good opportunity to bring the discussion back into the spotlight and, eventually, help overcome the paradigm of “enlargement fatigue”. The text, available only in Romanian, may be accessed [here](#).

**Bogdan Mureșan**  
European Studies Unit

---

## The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on EU democracies

The European Policy Institutes Network (EPIN) has recently published a collective report comprising 19 national perspectives on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic for the EU democracies. Among the states that were analysed we can mention Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain or Sweden.

The main conclusions presented by the report are grouped in a few thematic areas: parliamentary workings, shift of power to the executive, trust and distrust in the political elite, geographical comparison. For instance, when it comes to the parliamentary proceedings, the editors of the report note that working digitally certainly left less room for (informal) exchange and debate within the assemblies and hindered the quality of democratic deliberation.

The European Institute of Romania, which is part of the EPIN network, has contributed to the drafting of this report. Two researchers within the European Studies Unit have analysed the effects of the pandemic on the Romanian democracy. Their analysis showed that the pandemic has exposed some sensitive issues related to Romanian democracy, but opinions are divided about how different government decisions may have affected it. While parliamentary control over executive action has not been hampered, the ongoing state of alert is still causing public discontent and political friction between the government and the parliamentary opposition.

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

**Eliza Vaș**  
European Studies Unit

## Amendments to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms under Protocol No. 15

On 21 April 2021, Italy deposited its instrument of ratification of Protocol No. 15, according to the [press release](#) published on the website of the European Court of Human Rights. This ratification by the last state fulfils the conditions for the entry into force of the Protocol in respect of all the Council of Europe Member States. Under its Article 7, this Protocol enters into force on the first day of the month following the expiration of a period of three months after the date on which all High Contracting Parties to the Convention have expressed their consent - thus, the date of entry in force is 1 August 2021.

Romania signed Protocol No. 15 on 24 June 2013 and ratified it under Law No. 157/2014, published in the Official Gazette No. 886 of 5 December 2014<sup>1</sup>. *“Signing Protocol no. 15 on the very first day when it was opened for signature, Romania eloquently reconfirms its constant position in support of the ECHR reform by acknowledging the importance of this new instrument”*, Bogdan Aureescu, currently Minister of Foreign Affairs, said on the occasion of the signing. Romania’s commitment to make the Court in Strasbourg more efficient was highly prominent by placing at its disposal efficient tools for the management of the complaints submitted to it, thus guaranteeing the efficacy of the right to individual redress, which the Romanian party considers essential.

The Protocol will introduce the following amendments:

1. Adding to the Preamble to the Convention a reference to the principle of subsidiarity and the doctrine of the margin of appreciation, according to which States have a certain margin of maneuver in the interpretation of the Convention. They are the ones responsible for securing the guarantees of the European Convention on Human Rights in their territory, and not the Court, which acts only as a subsidiary. In other words, the Court intervenes only to review, as a last resort, whether the State Party applied the Convention in its case-law, taking into account the fact that the authorities of States Parties are better placed to decide on a case, as they have the best information on local mentalities and sensibilities.
2. A new paragraph is introduced to Article 21 of the Convention, requiring that candidates for the position of Court judge be less than 65 years of age. The age limit applied in Article 23 is, at the same time, eliminated.
3. Under Article 30 of the Convention, the parties may no longer object to the relinquishment of a case in favour of the Grand Chamber. The words “unless one of the parties to the case objects” is deleted.

---

<sup>1</sup> The translation of the Protocol by the European Institute of Romania can be accessed [here](#). For the English or French version, please consult the Court’s website.



## translations

---

- Paragraph 1 of Article 35 of the Convention is also amended. The time-limit within which an application may be made to the Court following the date of a final domestic decision is now four months. It should be noted that, under Article 8 § 3 of the Protocol, the provisions in Article 4 of the Protocol shall enter into force following the expiration of a period of six months after the date of entry into force of this Protocol, i.e. from 1 February 2022. Moreover, the four month time-limit does not apply in cases where the final domestic decision was taken before the entry into force of the Protocol, i.e. before 1 August 2021.
- Regarding the admissibility criteria laid down in Article 35 § 3 (b) of the Convention concerning “significant disadvantage”, Article 5 of the Protocol deletes the second proviso, according to which no case may be rejected on this ground which has not been duly considered by a domestic tribunal.

**Costin Leonard Fălcuță**  
Translation Coordination Unit

## training

---

### The positive changes on the training market

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought not only threats, but also new opportunities for the training market. One of these opportunities is related to online courses, which more and more organizations have started to offer since 2020. Initially seen as a forced manner to assure the continuity of training sessions, online courses have become independent and are no longer just transitional measures in the post-pandemic world.

Suddenly, this type of course facilitated the access of a higher number of potential participants to professional development. The absence of travel and of the associated costs, the possibility to attend a course from the comfort of one's home or office were solid arguments for those wanting to attend certain types of courses, but did not have viable options in their places of residence.

The appetite for online courses has been registered at the Institute, on one hand, through an increased number of participants for certain trainings and, on the other hand, through a variety of students.

In brief, looking at the list of people enrolled in 2020 at the EIR courses versus those from 2019, we can acknowledge that the average number of participants increased from 24 participants in 2019 to 32 participants in 2020. All the courses from last year were held online.

At the same time, we noticed a slight increase in the share of participants from the public administration. If in 2019, 55% of the participants came from public bodies, 26% from the private sector and 19% from academic institutions, in 2020, 63% of the participants were public administration employees, while 24% came from the private sector and only 13 % from the academic milieu.

The biggest gain brought by the online courses is given by the fact that people from different cities were able to participate at the learning events organized by the Institute. In 2020, 11% of the participants came from other cities than Bucharest, three of them residing in a country other than Romania. In 2021, we already noticed that almost 20% of the participants are from other places, and four of them live abroad. We had the opportunity to meet people from Argeș, Cluj, Constanța, Craiova, Sibiu, Timișoara, but also people who live in Italy, France, the United Kingdom or Azerbaijan.

One of our international participants shared the following feedback: *“EIR, by quickly and professionally adapting to the new social and learning context, responded to existing needs and even expanded its scope to give students from different parts of the world access to training. Lucky to find out about this possibility from a student already enrolled in a course offered by EIR, I immediately decided that it is an opportunity for me to be part of this type of training. The courses I attended met my need to create a cohesion between my practices here and the theoretical foundation needed for a better development of my work in the field of cultural diplomacy. Therefore, I welcome such an initiative and believe that a mix of face-to-face education and training in the virtual environment should be maintained, precisely to expand the opportunities offered to those in locations other than the city of Bucharest.”* (Mrs. Iosefina Blazsani-Batto, senior lecturer, ADU, Baku, Azerbaijan).

We welcome the efforts of all our participants to develop professionally and personally and we are looking forward to seeing what 2021 will bring next in terms of new places of residence and international participation to our courses.

**Monica Ingeaua**  
Training Unit

**Editor-in-Chief:** Eliza Vaș  
**Editors:** Bogdan Mureșan, Ionuț Marcu, Mihai Sebe  
**Revision RO:** Mariana Bara  
**Translations RO-EN:** Liliana Comănescu, Bogdan Mureșan, Ionuț Marcu, Ionela Haralambie, Monica Ingeaua  
**Graphics & DTP:** Mihai Paraschiv

\* The texts published in this Newsletter express the authors' opinion and do not represent the official position of the European Institute of Romania.

ISSN 2065 - 457X

In order to receive future issues of the EIR Newsletter, you can subscribe [here](#).



**European Institute of Romania**  
7-9, Regina Elisabeta Bvd., RO - 030016, Bucharest, Romania  
Phone: (+4021) 314 26 96/ 133 / Fax: (+4021) 314 26 66  
Contact: [newsletter@ier.gov.ro](mailto:newsletter@ier.gov.ro), Web: [ier.gov.ro](http://ier.gov.ro)