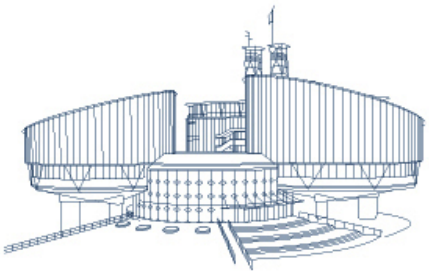
EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

PRESS RELEASE

ROMANIAN LAWYER BARRED FOR TWO YEARS FROM REPRESENTING APPLICANTS BEFORE THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS OVER UNVERIFIED AI-GENERATED CITATIONS

ECHR 290 (2026) 18.11.2026

Press release issued by the Registrar of the Court



On 13 November 2026, following a reasoned proposal by a Chamber, the President of the Court decided, under Rule 44D §§ 1 and 2 of the Rules of Court, to exclude a Romanian lawyer from representing or otherwise assisting litigants before the Court, for a period of two years.

This came after the Chamber that was dealing with the application in which the lawyer was acting as one of two representatives found that the observations which she had submitted on the case contained numerous errors concerning the Court's case-law. These included the citation of non-existent ("hallucinated") cases; the citation of fictitious paragraphs in genuine judgments and decisions of the Court; and the citation of existing case-law that was irrelevant to the propositions advanced or that plainly contradicted the submissions they were intended to support.

The lawyer acknowledged that she had used Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to draft the observations and described the mistakes as "inaccuracies" and "citation errors". The Chamber found that the lawyer's submissions contained a pattern of numerous, repeated, substantive errors rather than isolated citation mistakes and concluded that her conduct fell short of the professional and ethical duties imposed by the Court, duties that are also found in domestic law.

The Chamber submitted a reasoned proposal to the President of the Court that the lawyer be excluded from representing applicants before the Court for two years. The President approved that proposal.

In line with Rule 44D of the Rules of Court, the Chamber took into consideration the comments that the lawyer, the Romanian Government and the Romanian National Bar Association had been invited to submit on the proposed exclusion. Those comments were exchanged between the parties, who were then invited to submit comments in reply. The Iași Bar Association had also been invited under Rule 44D § 2 to submit comments but had not done so.

The Chamber noted that, under the Legal Profession Act (Law no. 51/1995), the rules governing the legal profession, and the Court's case-law, lawyers had a duty to act as reasonably competent

professionals and, before the Court, to display a high level of professional prudence. That duty meant that the lawyer in question should have independently and carefully checked all the case-law references and arguments generated by AI tools against authoritative sources such as the Court's case-law database (HUDOC) before submitting them to the Court.

The Chamber also considered the lawyer's admission that she had not sufficiently checked all the case-law she had cited. It concluded that the admission was an understatement. In respect of certain case-law references, no checks whatsoever had been carried out. That conclusion was supported by the fact that many of the errors were repetitive and would have been easily detectable by a cursory check of HUDOC.

The Chamber further concluded that her conduct had caused prejudice to the administration of justice. The errors had meant that the Court had had to spend considerable time verifying the observations, to initiate proceedings under Rule 44D, and to correspond extensively with other stakeholders. The Chamber considered that this work was incompatible with the Court's real functions under the Convention.

All things considered, the Chamber concluded that the lawyer's conduct met the "exceptional circumstances" threshold set out in Rule 44D for an advocate or other person to be excluded from representing or assisting a party before the Court. The decision does not prejudice the possibility of her having her rights of representation restored under Rule 44D § 3.

It should be noted that the exclusion concerns only one of the two representatives in the case. The lawyer in question has been notified of the decision and the reasons for it. The applicants, the Government, the Romanian National Bar Association and the Iași Bar Association have also been informed.

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