

## Press conference of the President of the European Court of Human Rights

The press conference by the President of the European Court of Human Rights was broadcast live on the Council of Europe's Internet site on Tuesday 25 January 2022. A video recording of the conference will be made available on the Court's [Internet site](#).

President Robert Spano, accompanied by Marialena Tsirli, the Registrar of the Court, and Abel Campos, the Deputy Registrar, took stock of the year 2021.

In 2021 the Court ruled on more than 36,000 applications. The number of Grand Chamber or Chamber judgments rose to 428 (relating to 1,037 applications), an increase of 9% compared to 2020. At the end of 2020 there were 62,000 pending applications. At the end of 2021 this figure had increased by 13%, to 70,150 applications. 70% of the pending cases still concerned four countries: the Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine and Romania.

A new strategy for processing "impact cases" was introduced in 2021, in addition to the prioritisation policy which has been functioning since 2009 to speed up the processing and resolution of the most important, serious and urgent cases. These "impact cases" raised issues of great importance for the applicant and the respondent State or for the development of the Convention system in general. As of 1 January 2022, more than 500 cases fell into this category, and concerned freedom of expression, the right to a fair trial, wiretapping and secret surveillance of journalists, pandemic cases, discrimination against sexual minorities, the right to information and environmental nuisance. In addition, as of 1 September and for a two-year trial period, cases falling within the jurisdiction of the three-judge committees will be drafted in a much more concise manner.

Another major event in 2021 was the entry into force of Protocol No. 15, which added a reference to the principles of subsidiarity and margin of appreciation to the Preamble to the Convention. Furthermore, from 1 February the time-limit for bringing a case before the European Court of Human Rights will be four months.

The President noted that few areas of life had remained untouched by the Coronavirus pandemic in 2021. The Court had processed 80 interim measure requests under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court, the vast majority of which had been submitted by detained persons.

In conclusion, the President emphasised that, despite the serious challenges facing the Court, which were emblematic of events in the wider European legal space and in the world at large, "the Convention's core purpose is and has always been exactly to meet the test of precarious times like these. Preserving at all cost the principles of democratic governance and the rule of law has now become more vital than ever. Let's never forget : A world without these fundamental principles is a world that is no longer free."

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**The European Court of Human Rights** was set up in Strasbourg by the Council of Europe Member States in 1959 to deal with alleged violations of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights.