

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CRISIS SITUATIONS. THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON EQUALITY AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

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ABSTRACT: Human Rights in Crisis Situations. The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Equality and Social Rights.

In retrospect, there is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has had, among other things, serious consequences for the exercise of social rights by citizens. Even if the extent to which they were affected was not equal, large segments of the world's population faced an increased risk of poverty, problems related to employment, problems that affected digital infrastructure, healthcare, assistance social or even limitations in terms of access to education. Not to be neglected in the consequences chapter is the excessive mortality rate, limitations in terms of participation in social life or major imbalances between professional and private life, all consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the EU level, the European Commission made available to the member states, through the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism, a huge amount: 723.8 billion euros. Amount within which European states have proposed over 850 measures to improve the exercise of social rights, in the context of post-pandemic recovery. It remains to be seen the effectiveness of the measures adopted in the recovery and resilience plans in order to promote social rights. Or if the respective measures targeted the real dimension of the impact of the pandemic on equality and social rights.

Keywords: *discrimination, excess mortality, inequality, mental wellbeing, racism, rights protection, rule of law, social exclusion, social isolation, work-life imbalance, xenophobia.*

Introduction

The contract with reference to the social rights that the European Union has assumed towards its citizens has its origin in the legal order of the EU described by several articles of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU

(4, 9 and 151), the Treaty on the EU (article 3) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (Title IV concerning solidarity).

Basically, each of them describes the assumed responsibility of the EU regarding the defense of the social rights of its citizens.

Below we find the exact references from these treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, which covers the specific legal order of the social rights of EU citizens.

1. The legal framework for the EU's commitment to social rights

1.1 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)¹

Article 4 (2): Shared competence between the Union and the Member States applies in the following principal areas:

- a) internal market;
- b) social policy, for the aspects defined in this Treaty;
- c) economic, social and territorial cohesion;
- d) agriculture and fisheries, excluding the conservation of marine biological resources;
- e) environment;
- f) consumer protection;
- g) transport;
- h) trans-European network;
- i) energy;
- j) area of freedom, security and justice;
- k) common safety concerns in public health matters, for the aspects defined in this Treaty.

Article 4 (3): In the areas of research, technological development and space, the Union shall have competence to carry out activities, in particular to define and implement programmes; however, the exercise of that competence shall not result in Member States being prevented from exercising theirs.

Article 4 (4): In the areas of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, the Union shall have competence to carry out activities and con-

1 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT>

duct a common policy; however, the exercise of that competence shall not result in Member States being prevented from exercising theirs.

Article 9: In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health.

Article 151 (ex-Article 136 TEC)

The Union and the Member States, having in mind fundamental social rights such as those set out in the European Social Charter signed at Turin on 18 October 1961 and in the 1989 Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, shall have as their objectives the promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions, so as to make possible their harmonisation while the improvement is being maintained, proper social protection, dialogue between management and labour, the development of human resources with a view to lasting high employment and the combating of exclusion.

To this end the Union and the Member States shall implement measures which take account of the diverse forms of national practices, in particular in the field of contractual relations, and the need to maintain the competitiveness of the Union economy.

They believe that such a development will ensue not only from the functioning of the internal market, which will favour the harmonisation of social systems, but also from the procedures provided for in the Treaties and from the approximation of provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action.

1.2 The EU Treaty²

Article 3 (ex-article 2 TEU)

- 1) The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples.
- 2) The Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, in which the free movement

² https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd-71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

of persons is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime.

- 3) The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance.

It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child.

It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States.

It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.

- 4) The Union shall establish an economic and monetary union whose currency is the euro.
- 5) In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.
- 6) The Union shall pursue its objectives by appropriate means commensurate with the competences which are conferred upon it in the Treaties.

1.3 EU Charter of Fundamental Rights³

Title IV

SOLIDARITY

Article 27

Workers' right to information and consultation within the undertaking

Workers or their representatives must, at the appropriate levels, be guaranteed information and consultation in good time in the cases and under the conditions provided for by Union law and national laws and practices.

Article 28

Right of collective bargaining and action

Workers and employers, or their respective organisations, have, in accordance with Union law and national laws and practices, the right to negotiate and conclude collective agreements at the appropriate levels and, in cases of conflicts of interest, to take collective action to defend their interests, including strike action.

Article 29

Right of access to placement services

Everyone has the right of access to a free placement service.

Article 30

Protection in the event of unjustified dismissal

Every worker has the right to protection against unjustified dismissal, in accordance with Union law and national laws and practices.

Article 31

Fair and just working conditions

- 1) Every worker has the right to working conditions which respect his or her health, safety and dignity.
- 2) Every worker has the right to limitation of maximum working hours, to daily and weekly rest periods and to an annual period of paid leave.

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>

Article 32

Prohibition of child labour and protection of young people at work

The employment of children is prohibited. The minimum age of admission to employment may not be lower than the minimum school-leaving age, without prejudice to such rules as may be more favourable to young people and except for limited derogations.

Young people admitted to work must have working conditions appropriate to their age and be protected against economic exploitation and any work likely to harm their safety, health or physical, mental, moral or social development or to interfere with their education.

Article 33

Family and professional life

- 1) The family shall enjoy legal, economic and social protection.
- 2) To reconcile family and professional life, everyone shall have the right to protection from dismissal for a reason connected with maternity and the right to paid maternity leave and to parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child.

Article 34

Social security and social assistance

- 1) The Union recognises and respects the entitlement to social security benefits and social services providing protection in cases such as maternity, illness, industrial accidents, dependency or old age, and in the case of loss of employment, in accordance with the rules laid down by Union law and national laws and practices.
- 2) Everyone residing and moving legally within the European Union is entitled to social security benefits and social advantages in accordance with Union law and national laws and practices.
- 3) In order to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognises and respects the right to social and housing assistance so as to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, in accordance with the rules laid down by Union law and national laws and practices.

Article 35 **Health care**

Everyone has the right of access to preventive health care and the right to benefit from medical treatment under the conditions established by national laws and practices. A high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all the Union's policies and activities.

Article 36 **Access to services of general economic interest**

The Union recognises and respects access to services of general economic interest as provided for in national laws and practices, in accordance with the Treaties, in order to promote the social and territorial cohesion of the Union.

Article 37 **Environmental protection**

A high level of environmental protection and the improvement of the quality of the environment must be integrated into the policies of the Union and ensured in accordance with the principle of sustainable development.

Article 38 **Consumer protection**

Union policies shall ensure a high level of consumer protection.

2. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on equality and social rights

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on social rights. Many people (especially vulnerable, children and young people) faced a multitude of problems (reduced access to health and social care services, education and the Internet, employment, etc.). Put to work together in an equation describing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on equality and social rights, they have generated very large increases in rates of mortality, poverty, unemployment, social exclusion. Practically, a process that signals even more the dynamics of growing social inequalities in the EU

space. But what appears to be much more serious signals threats to the EU's social cohesion.

The FRA report on fundamental rights 2022⁴ is otherwise telling and invites serious reflection on the “shortcomings in the field of human rights protection” in the EU space.

A review of the most significant challenges that the EU has faced in the field of fundamental rights during the pandemic seems from this perspective more than necessary, as a large part of the EU population faced huge problems, the most relevant of which are the following:

a. Excess mortality⁵

- During the month of March 2020, the number of deaths rose rapidly in some European countries when compared with the average number of deaths in the period from 2016 to 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic affected every part of the EU, however, its impact was not evenly spread. The highest peaks of a higher-than-average number of deaths during the first increase in COVID-19 cases in March-April 2020 were initially recorded in Italy and Spain, followed by France, Belgium and the Netherlands. During the period between March 2020 and February 2021, the EU experienced two waves of excess mortality: the first between March and May 2020 (reaching a 25.2 % excess rate in April) and a second between August 2020 and the end of the year (reaching a 40.0 % excess rate in November, the highest rate for the whole year). In this second wave, excess mortality rose in all EU Member States, this time with a geographical prevalence in the eastern part of Europe (Poland, Bulgaria and Slovenia reached an excess of more than 90.0 % in November 2020).
- In May 2023, the month when the World Health Organization declared an end to the COVID-19 public-health emergency, excess mortality in the EU stood at 2.9% above the baseline, a slight decrease compared to April 2023;
- In May 2023, excess mortality continued to vary across the EU. Ten EU Member States recorded no excess deaths. More than

4 See <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/fundamental-rights-report-2022>

5 See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Excess_mortality_-_statistics

half of the EU Member States recorded excess deaths, with the three most affected EU countries, Luxembourg, Finland and Ireland having excess mortality rates between 13.3 % and 17.5 %.

- Between March 2020 and May 2023, the EU recorded four distinct waves of excess mortality, with peaks in April 2020 (25.2 %), November 2020 (40.0 %, the highest), April 2021 (20.9 %) and November 2021 (26.6 %).

b. Increased risk of poverty and social exclusion⁶

- In 2022, 95.3 million people in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion; this was equivalent to 21.6 % of the EU population;
- Between 2019-2022 the number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex in the EU-27 increased from 21.1% to 21.6%;
 - ✦ Between 2019-2021, the biggest increases were observed in Germany (from 17.3% to 21%, Spain (from 26.2% to 27.8%) and Luxembourg (from 20.1% to 21.1%).
- In present, **Romania (34.4 %)**, Bulgaria (32.2 %) and Greece (26.3 %) reported the highest shares of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- The risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU was, in 2022, higher for women than for men (22.7 % compared with 20.4 %);
- Over one-fifth (22.4 %) of the EU population living in households with dependent children was at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2022.
 - ✦ In the EU between 2020 and 2021, the risk of poverty or social exclusion for children increased from 24.0 % to 24.4 %;
 - ✦ In seventeen EU Member States, the risk of poverty or social exclusion for children was higher in 2021 than it had been in 2020;

⁶ See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_peps01n/default/table?lang=en

- ♦ In 2021, 24.4% of *children* (aged less than 18 years old) in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared with 21.1% of adults.

c. EU labour market been hit by the COVID-19 crisis⁷

- Economic activity, and therefore the labour market across the EU, has been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been visible effects on employment, but people have also changed from being unemployed to being outside the labour force because their availability to work or their ability to seek work has been affected.
- In the EU, the employment rate of people aged 20-64 was 72.6% in Q4 2020, still below the levels before the COVID-19 crisis (73.2% in Q4 2019) but above the level recorded in Q2 2020 (71.7%), the first quarter affected by COVID-19.
- Compared with other age groups, young people aged 15-24 saw the sharpest drop in employment during the health crisis. The employment rate of young people slightly decreased from 33.5% in Q4 2019 to 33.3% in Q1 2020, dropped to 30.5% in Q2 2020, after which it increased and remained stable at 31.1% in Q3 and Q4 2020.

d. Lack of access to digital infrastructure

- UNICEF estimates that more than 168 million children have lost an entire year of education due to school closures following the restrictions on the movement of people imposed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, while UNESCO data shows that education has been significantly disrupted for 800 million students worldwide, who have lost an average of two-thirds of a school year;
- According to UNICEF, **a third of children worldwide do not have access to the internet**, creating a barrier to access to distance/digital learning;
- Distance learning and teaching programs will also be needed after the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in countries affected by natural disasters and conflicts;

⁷ See <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20210427-3>

- Online learning has created new challenges for teachers in terms of facilitating student learning and maintaining social interaction;
- Distance learning programs were not accessible to all children, given the socioeconomic challenges children faced;
- The COVID-19 pandemic showed that the lack of access to digital infrastructure creates problems related to the continuation of the learning, socializing and work process;
- In the same times secure business services, e-government and e-health ensure the continuity and availability of public services, while trusted security systems protect our online identity and ensure our activities remain private.⁸

e. Reducing access to medical services⁹

- Understanding the health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will require further data analysis for years to come;
- The COVID-19 pandemic has temporarily erased years of life expectancy gains in most European countries;
- The striking increase in mortality triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic halted this trend, causing an estimated decline of life expectancy in 2020 in all European countries except Latvia and Cyprus – in which life expectancy remained constant – and Denmark, Finland and Norway, which witnessed slight gains also in 2020. Overall, life expectancy in the EU decreased by more than eight months between 2019 and 2020. The analysis from the State of Health in the EU's Country Health Profiles 2021 shows how countries such as Spain, Italy, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Sweden had not seen decreases in life expectancy of this magnitude since World War II;
- Excess deaths across the EU were 12 % greater than reported COVID-19 deaths;
- The pandemic disrupted access to non-COVID care for many patients;
- COVID-19 exacerbated socio-economic health inequalities;

⁸ See https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2022-0058_RO.html

⁹ See https://health.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-02/2021_companion_en.pdf

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people's mental wellbeing;

- COVID-19 brought health workforce shortages under the spotlight;
- COVID-19 has tested an already strained health workforce to the limit;
- The increase in demand for healthcare caused by COVID-19 exposed frontline workers in health systems that were already understaffed before the pandemic to an unsustainable workload that significantly affected their wellbeing. There are worrying signals that this is leading to many health workers leaving the profession through burn out or early retirement;
- Strategies to expand health workforce capacity were essential to avert health system failure in the countries hardest-hit by COVID-19.

f. Psychological consequences of social isolation

- Perceived social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic significantly has had an extraordinary global impact, with significant psychological consequences;
- Changes in our daily lives, feeling of loneliness, job losses, financial difficulty, and grief over the death of loved ones have the potential to affect the mental health of many;
- According to the specialists, “the most common psychological disorders emerging are anxiety and panic, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, insomnia, digestive problems, as well as depressive symptoms and post-traumatic stress (Rogers et al., 2020). These are not only a direct consequence of the pandemic but also largely driven by the effects of prolonged social isolation – that is the objective lack of interactions with others (Leigh-Hunt et al., 2017). The medical journal *The Lancet* recently published an article from which a clear and alarming picture emerges: periods of isolation, even less than 10 days, can have long-term effects, with the presence – up to 3 years later – of psychiatric symptoms (Brooks et al., 2020)”¹⁰

10 See <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02201/full#ref26>

g. Work-life imbalance

- The Covid-19 pandemic has led to an important increase in remote work in many European countries. In 2020, the first year of the pandemic, remote work has grown exponentially;
- Care work and increasing remote working have affected work-life balance, but also mental health;
- The increased flexibility and autonomy brought by remote working often translates into more work and extended working hours, which affects work-life balance. During the pandemic, remote work has posed many challenges for workers in terms of managing work hours, work-family balance, physical space for work, and overall mood;
- The pandemic has affected many people, but the latest data shows that women have been affected more than men. Data collected in February and March 2021 show that 7.4% of women and 5.7% of men find it difficult to concentrate at work because of family responsibilities. The numbers are even higher for full-time telecommuters with young children at home (27% women, 19% men). Work is not the only thing that has been affected;
- Some 31% of women and 22% of men who telecommute full-time with young children at home said work prevented them from giving the family time they would have liked;
- The coronavirus pandemic affected women and men differently. According to a study commissioned by Parliament's women's rights committee, the pressure to balance work and family life has had a serious impact on women's well-being, with more women than men saying they suffer from anxiety due to Covid-19. Women's informal caregiving role during the pandemic also had considerable effects on their mental health, with women reporting increased anxiety and worry about family well-being and finances. Women with younger children were disproportionately affected.

h. Discrimination and inequality

- In 2021, some measures to combat the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) coronavirus affected LGBTI peo-

ple, and EU citizens faced some problems in crossing EU borders and getting vaccines or registering them;

- Pandemic containment measures, including measures to limit the movement of people and restrictions on entry into Member States, have disproportionately affected partners and children of LGBTIQ people, as well as LGBTIQ youth in several Member States. These have led to an increase in domestic violence, hate speech and hate crimes, as well as limited access to psychological and health care;
- Discrimination against EU citizens on grounds of citizenship or nationality can create barriers to free movement, even if it is not directly related to the implementation of free movement legislation;
- According to the data, EU citizens and their family members continued to face discrimination on grounds of citizenship or nationality in various areas, including taxation, the right to practice their profession and access to goods and services, including health services or social benefits. During the COVID-19 pandemic, certain measures, including the implementation of vaccination plans or travel restrictions, have had negative effects on EU citizens in other Member States. Although discrimination on grounds of citizenship or nationality does not appear to be widespread compared to other grounds of discrimination, existing data on this are insufficient. Nor is there adequate awareness of when such discrimination occurs, although EU citizenship is one of the pillars of EU integration, as the CJEU has repeatedly reminded and as the Commission's triennial reports on citizenship have highlighted.¹¹

i. The rights of the child

- Covid-19 has negatively affected the wellbeing of children across Europe;
- In 2021 the report that reviewed effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on children in 25 European countries (including 23 European Union Member States) underlined that;

11 See https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2022-fundamental-rights-report-2022_en.pdf

- ♦ More families may have been at risk of poverty due to job losses following the COVID-19 outbreak in many Member States (Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Italy and Slovenia);
- ♦ There has been a rise in anxiety and mental health problems in children and in domestic violence in some Member States (Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Romania, Slovenia and Portugal);
- ♦ School closures revealed educational and digital disparity as low-income families struggled to support children's home schooling;
- ♦ The COVID-19 outbreak had increased the risk that children in precarious family situations will enter alternative care due to heightened financial distress and domestic violence in some Member States (particularly Greece, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia)
- ♦ Deinstitutionalisation reforms for children in alternative care were delayed due to COVID-19.

In the context the report recommended national and EU-level policy makers:

- Set national targets to reduce child poverty and ensure that national COVID-19 recovery plans focus on children;
- Establish and implement the European Child Guarantee;
- Adopt a multi-dimensional approach to fighting child poverty;
- Maintain, promote and increase investments in deinstitutionalisation reforms;
- Ensure that children participate in decisions and policies.¹²

j. Migration: the impact of COVID-19

- The pandemic affected **entry conditions** and the **issuance of residence permits** by EU Member States and Norway, which introduced restrictions on in-person migration services. Similarly,

¹² See <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1246&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9936>

in non-EU OECD countries electronic tools and online systems were commonly used;

- In the first 10 months of 2020, 390,000 asylum applications (including 349,000 first time applications) were lodged in the EU, 33% less than in the same period of 2019. Member States reduced their backlogs of pending asylum cases. At the end of October 2020, the number of pending cases was 786,000, 15% less than at the end of 2019. This still means that on the EU level, the backlog represents more than a year's worth of new applications – with significant variations between Member States. The recognition rate, or the percentage of asylum applications that resulted in a positive decision at first instance (before any appeals), including decisions granting humanitarian status, stood at 43%.
- A 10% decrease in the number of irregular border crossings to the EU (114,300 in the period January-November 2020) was observed compared to the same period in 2019, the lowest level in the last 6 years. While there was a significant decrease in irregular arrivals in countries of first entry along the Eastern Mediterranean (-74%, 19,300), the decrease was predominantly due to low arrivals from Turkey to Greece, where the situation is likely to change depending on different factors including political and economic developments in Turkey;
- Despite overall reductions, irregular arrivals via the Central Mediterranean (to Italy and Malta) increased (+154%) compared to the same period in 2019. There were over 34,100 such arrivals in 2020, compared to almost 11,500 in 2019, with the majority of people arriving in Lampedusa. With the exception of the month of March, arrivals consistently exceeded 2019 levels;
- Arrivals in Spain, and in particular the Canary Islands, significantly increased (+46%, 35,800) in 2020 compared to 2019. In Spain, the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on irregular arrivals was temporary: since August 2020, the number of arrivals to Spain was consistently greater than in 2019;
- In both cases, many new arrivals originate from countries suffering from the economic downturn rather than conflict. A decline in global remittances is also likely to contribute to this trend. Un-

til the pandemic is contained and economic recovery is underway, poor prospects of employment and healthcare in countries of origin will remain an incentive for people to come to the EU;

- Some EU Member States reported a substantial decrease in the number of new international students during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Physical presence on campuses was mostly discouraged, and international students were often allowed to return home and continue their studies remotely.¹³

k. Racism, xenophobia and related intolerance

- In 2021, hate crimes and hate speech of a racist nature persisted in the EU. Migrants and ethnic minorities, including Roma, Jews, Muslims and Asians, continued to be blamed for the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) coronavirus disease;
- Racism continued to challenge the entire European Union in 2021. Official and unofficial reports of hate crime and hate speech incidents persisted. In addition, during the pandemic, international and national human rights bodies have expressed concern about the increasing incidence of hate speech online, often by media or political figures, and directed against migrants and migrants. of ethnic minorities;
- Despite some positive developments addressing the lack of data at national level, there is a general lack of data on experiences of racism and discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin in the EU. The lack of reliable and comprehensive data does not allow the effective development, implementation and monitoring of action plans against racism and prevents the EU and Member States from effectively monitoring the equality situation.¹⁴

l. Respect for the rule of law

An overview of the pandemic period reveals that several rights under the European Convention on Human Rights have been affected, with European governments having trouble finding an adequate response to the situations.

¹³ See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_232

¹⁴ See <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/fundamental-rights-report-2022-fra-opinions>

Among these, the most relevant and which can be the subject of consistent analyses, we mention the following:

- Right to life,
- Protection against inhuman and degrading treatment,
- Respect for family and private life,
- The right to freedom,
- Freedom movement,
- The right to a fair trial,
- Freedom of speech,
- Freedom of assembly and of association,
- Right to free elections,
- Training rights,
- Protection of property.

3. Conclusions

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has had, among other things, serious consequences for the exercise of social rights by citizens.¹⁵ The most important of these concerned:

- The excess of mortality,
- Increased risk of poverty and social exclusion,
- Influence of the EU labour market,
- Lack of access to digital infrastructure,
- Reducing access to medical services,
- Social isolation,
- Work-life imbalance,
- Discrimination and inequality,
- Negative influence of wellbeing of children (the rights of the child),
- Migration (the pandemic affected **entry conditions** and the **issuance of residence permits** by EU Member States),

¹⁵ Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Spiritual Lessons observed through the Coronavirus Crisis", în *Dialogo. Issue of Modern Man*, vol.6, nr.2/2020, pp. 71-82.

Racism, xenophobia and related intolerance,
 Decrease of the respect for the rule of law.

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