



# ANTISEMITIC OR BORDERING ON ANTISEMITIC? GREY AREAS IN ROMANIAN FAKE NEWS DISCOURSES IN THE WAKE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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**Abstract:** Jews as a collective have long served as scapegoats for epidemics and pandemics, such as the Bubonic Plague and, according to some scholars, the 1918–1920 influenza pandemic. This practice reemerged in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, when more and more fake news outlets in the US and Europe started publishing articles on a perceived linkage between Jewish communities and the novel coronavirus. What this article aims to achieve is to facilitate a dialogue between the observations on the phenomenon made by the Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania and the latest related EU reports, with a view to charting its beginnings in Romania in relation to other European countries and in an attempt to see whether Romania, like France and Germany, has witnessed the emergence of “grey area” discourses which are not fully covered by International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism.

**Keywords:** antisemitism, Covid-19, fake news, Romania.

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In June 2021, one Romanian media influencer, known for her anti-vaccination stance long before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, posted the following message on Facebook: “This evening’s question: The Jews gassed at Auschwitz had comorbidities, right?” The Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania (INSHR EW) shared a screenshot of her post on its Facebook page, captioning it as follows: “There is only a step from anti-vaccination against COVID to antisemitism.” By the time the screen capture was made,<sup>1</sup> the influencer’s post had amassed 19 reactions, whereas the Institute’s post has accrued, as of December 2, 2021, 68 reactions (eight users reacted with the “Haha” emoticon). At first sight, the engagement of the latter seems to have exceeded that of the former. In actuality, the opposite is true: it took two minutes for the influencer’s post to receive one-third of the reactions amassed by the Institute’s in

almost six months and after no less than eight highly popular media outlets had written about the incident.

Two of the media outlets which denied the existence of antisemitic connotations in the influencer’s original post are, in fact, symptomatic of the two extremes of the Romanian fake news<sup>2</sup> discourse on the COVID-19 pandemic in relation with the Jewish community. The former opens as follows: “It is useless to say that the message was not antisemitic, but rather new age anti-Nazi, in that it criticized the forceful vaccination campaign, which tramples the right to informed consent as if the Nuremberg Code is not an unbreakable frontier in the history of medicine.”<sup>3</sup> In the closing paragraph, the author of the article writes: “We hope that this post will not be interpreted as a new instance of ‘antisemitism’ ... For, if we use big words lightly when faced with petty topics, we run the risk, as stated on other occasions, of diluting the significance

of grave notions to the point of trivialization. This, in the long run, will do no service to the Jewish community in Romania, quite the contrary!”<sup>4</sup>

Conversely, the second article starts by mocking the Institute<sup>5</sup> and then rectifies the influencer’s controversial question: “Indeed, it would have been more technically correct to ask if the lice gassed at Auschwitz had comorbidities, since the gas used by the national-socialists, the famous Zyklon B, was not utilized to gas the prisoners, but rather to disinfect [their] clothes.”<sup>6</sup> Then, the author of the article claims that “any statement made in favour of anything that is natural—God, family, blood, country—can be reinterpreted as antisemitic, which has become a code name for the Romanian spirit. What is more, a 2021–2023 strategic plan for the fight against the Romanian spirit has been elaborated.”<sup>7</sup> The article ends with the following sentences: “We salute Olivia Steer’s involuntary admission to Romania’s antisemitic pantheon, which grows by the day ... The youth who follow in our footsteps are becoming fully immune to the anti-national, holocaustic ... propaganda, while refusing to take responsibility for the alleged actions of their forefathers.”<sup>8</sup> In the conclusion of the article, the author included a picture portraying the leader of the Romanian fascist Iron Guard, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (1899–1938), who seems to greet a non-visible audience with a hand gesture closely resembling the Nazi salute.

In short, in reply to the incident, the former refrains from denying the Holocaust and labels the influencer’s stance as a form of anti-Nazism, whereas the latter does not steer away from questioning the WW2 mass murder of European Jews, while encouraging the proliferation of antisemitic sentiments disguised as instances of *românism* [Romanian spirit]. Yet notwithstanding their differences, the two articles have something in common: they both dismiss the existence of antisemitic undertones in the influencer’s statement, despite the Institute’s post.

This is because, according to a recent report by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), which investigates French and German Covid-19-related antisemitic content, comments such as the influencer’s question fall under “legal but harmful” “grey zones,”<sup>9</sup> which are not fully covered by the definition of antisemitism provided so far by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)<sup>10</sup> or the applicable national regulation, and thus are amenable to being classified as instances of “historical ignorance.”<sup>11</sup> In what follows, my objective is to facilitate a dialogue between the two monitoring reports on antisemitism released by INSHR EW since the debut of the pandemic<sup>12</sup> and the latest EU research, with special focus on other ‘grey areas’ of online content. But before delving deeper into the topic of this article, I will try to offer a brief historical overview of the scapegoating of Jews and how they came to be associated with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in the US, France, and Romania.

In a 2020 article, historian and professor of medicine Martin J. Blaser is quoted saying: “When there are big epidemics, people get scared ... They often look to blame some kind of intruder or stranger. It has happened especially with the

Jews.”<sup>13</sup> Journalist Gabriel Greschler then goes on to describe, for instance, how all across mid-fourteenth century Europe, “it was said that Jews were poisoning wells with the plague.”<sup>14</sup> With reference to how Jewish communities were treated during the 1918–1920 influenza pandemic, most researchers seem to share Greschler’s view according to which no majority population affected by it put the blame on the Jews. Recently, a growing number of researchers have argued the opposite. In May 2020, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York issued a report which suggests that “influenza deaths of 1918 are correlated with an increase in the share of votes won by right-wing extremists, such as the National Socialist Workers Party (the Nazi Party), in the crucial elections of 1932 and 1933.”<sup>15</sup> The theory, although criticized by some scholars,<sup>16</sup> has gained traction: a team of five researchers coordinated by professor Mike Schmeitzner are currently carrying out a project titled *The Radicalization of Stereotypes and Scapegoats in the Wake of the Spanish Flu in 1918*, under the aegis of the Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies in Dresden, which deals in part with this theory.<sup>17</sup> Conversely, on the territory of present-day Romania, the 1918–1920 period was largely auspicious for the Jewish community. Historian Ioan Scurtu notes how, in 1918, when the union of Transylvania with Romania was declared on December 1, “Jews in Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transylvania were considered Romanian citizens in the eyes of the law,”<sup>18</sup> with the royal decrees of 30 December 1918 and, more importantly, 28 May 1919 marking decisive steps towards the naturalization of Jews in former Wallachia and thus throughout the newly formed Romanian state. The 1923 Constitution, which enshrined their new status, led, however, to heavy criticism on the part of the far-right National-Christian Defence League and student riots in Jassy,<sup>19</sup> which, combined with the growing popularity of the fascist ideology, would contribute decisively to the emergence of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu’s Iron Guard and the later persecution and genocide of Romanian Jews.

Referring back to Greschler’s article, it should be noted that its release was not arbitrary. Two weeks before it was published, on March 4, 2020, a New York-based online news outlet had covered the story of the first person to have contracted the coronavirus in Westchester County’s city of New Rochelle. After the discovery of the local “patient zero,” a man identifying as Modern Orthodox, Yeshiva University’s Washington Heights campus and other Jewish schools temporarily closed their doors, and 1,000 members of his synagogue were quarantined. This event led, according to several representatives of local and regional watchdog organizations, to the occurrence of antisemitic backlash. Their subsequent meetings with state officials, the New York governor included, served to raise awareness of the phenomenon, with Westchester County Executive George Latimer declaring that “blaming the Jewish community for the local outbreak is the same as blaming Asian Americans for coronavirus.”<sup>20</sup> According to a Google search carried out on December 2, 2021, this is the first article still available online to cover the emergence of Covid-19-related antisemitic



attitudes in North America. This appears to indicate a span of circa two months and a half between the emergence of this phenomenon and the confirmation of the first US coronavirus case, which occurred on January 21, 2020.<sup>21</sup>

Roughly two weeks after Greschler's article, another news website would report on the emergence of antisemitic fake news, this time in France, attributing the arrival of the coronavirus to the previous health minister, Jewish-French politician Agnes Buzyn, via viral caricatures and videos massively shared on various social media.<sup>22</sup> A month later, the INSHR EW issued its 2019–April 2020 monitoring report on antisemitism, stating that “[i]n recent months, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, articles have appeared which claim that Jews or the state of Israel are responsible for the sanitary crisis” and that “Jews are capitalizing on [it],” accentuating “a discourse which brings together economic antisemitism and the ‘scapegoat’ myth.”<sup>23</sup> The first Romanian fake news article with an antisemitic message identified by the Institute appears to have been published on the very same day in which the first coronavirus case was confirmed in Romania.<sup>24</sup>

The year 2021 would witness the proliferation of online news articles and reports on Covid-19-related antisemitism. One notable contribution is the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency's *Antisemitism: Overview of Antisemitic Incidents Recorded in the European Union 2010–2019*, which notes that

“[p]eriods of confinement during lockdowns may have led to fewer incidents of antisemitism in public spaces. However, the fact that antisemitic conspiracies festered online during confinement highlights that the number of recorded incidents does not tell the whole story. FRA's surveys consistently show that incidents of antisemitism are heavily under-reported. They also indicate that online hatred – including antisemitism – has firmly taken root in European societies.”<sup>25</sup>

This conclusion does not faithfully mirror the situation in Romania: according to the data furnished by the General Prosecutor's Office and the police in Romania, the year 2020 saw the second-highest number of antisemitic incidents since the beginning of the previous decade.<sup>26</sup> The conclusion, combined with the data provided in the section devoted to antisemitism in Romania, does, however, corroborate well with the findings of a 2021 inquiry carried out by RFI Romania, which found that “[a]lmost 98% of the complaints invoking Government Ordinance 31/2020 are classified during the investigation phase.”<sup>27</sup> The latest INSHR EW report, which covers the period spanning May 2020–April 2021, records a similar upward trend in terms of “incidents featuring antisemitic elements and symbolism,”<sup>28</sup> especially “during key stages in the process of managing the sanitary predicament.”<sup>29</sup>

This year has also seen, the same report notes, a diversification of tropes following the vaccine rollout, which include the following: “Jews finance the companies which produce the [anti-Covid-19] serum to gain control and economic profits; Jews encourage vaccination, yet the serum administered to them and the serum provided to non-Jews are different, with the latter having harmful effects; Jews support discrimination and segregation of those who refuse to take

the vaccine.”<sup>30</sup> The immunization campaign, together with the protests against the Covid-19 restrictions, has led to “multiple episodes in which symbols, comparisons, and analogies were used and whose effect was to degrade the memory of Holocaust victims.”<sup>31</sup> The most popular theme, found in 65–70% of the messages collected by the Institute, remains, however, that which “conveys the idea that ‘Jews are ruling the world or Romania.’”<sup>32</sup> Apart from the usual individual targets such as George Soros, new ones have also been identified and “invoked precisely because they symbolize Jewry.”<sup>33</sup>

Compared to the findings of ISD's 2021 study, which is titled *The Rise of Antisemitism Online During the Pandemic: A Study of French and German Content*, INSHR EW's conclusions exhibit some differences. First, the former “presents a data-driven snapshot of the proliferation of Covid-19 related online antisemitic content in French and German on Twitter, Facebook and Telegram,”<sup>34</sup> whereas the latter “monitored websites/ blogs [and] Facebook accounts/ pages/ groups which disseminate hate and intolerant messages on a regular basis.”<sup>35</sup> In quantitative terms, ISD found a “seven-fold increase in antisemitic posting on the French language accounts” and “a thirteen-fold increase” within the German ones after comparing the first two months of 2020 (pre-pandemic) and 2021 (during the pandemic).<sup>36</sup> In contrast, the INSHR EW states, in its latest report, that “the number of articles identified and analyzed [between May 2020 and April 2021] is significantly higher than that reported in the 2020 study [which covered the period spanning 2019–April 2020], which indicates an escalation of hate speech instances in those publications which continued to use this theme [the Jewish connection with Covid-19] (> 60%).”<sup>37</sup>

In terms of tropes, the themes identified in the latest INSHR EW report resurface in ISD's study.<sup>38</sup> In addition to these theories, which fall under the working definition of antisemitism offered by IHRA,<sup>39</sup> the latter also notes several “‘grey areas’ [of] legal but harmful antisemitic content.”<sup>40</sup> According to ISD, such ambiguous narratives include references to “malicious secret organizations” which are traditionally believed to be ran by Jewish elites;<sup>41</sup> the trivialization of the Holocaust through comparisons of victims of the WW2 genocide with non-vaccinated people, which some may attribute to “historical ignorance” rather than “conscious malice against Jewish people”;<sup>42</sup> the classification of Jews as “real”—exempt from criticism, worthy of solidarity—and “fake,” which bypasses the IHRA working definition, and the French and German legislation by avoiding to “at least nominally ... target Jews as a collective”;<sup>43</sup> and “attempt[s] to find the word Nazi in various terms for Jewish groups such as “NAtional Zionist” or “AshkeNAZI,” which invites to similar speculations as in the case of associations between Holocaust victims and non-vaccinated people.<sup>44</sup>

Romanian fake news websites also abound in “gray zone” content,<sup>45</sup> both translated and original, and there are multiple cases in which such articles co-exist on the same online domain with others which fall under IHRA's definition of antisemitism. For instance, one report, posted by a

Romanian-language Moldovan fake news website,<sup>46</sup> claims that “only a superstate, global organization, with a well-organized centralized management could simultaneously orchestrate the same Covid-19 measures across hundreds of states worldwide.” This “anti-Christian Global Occult,” which, the author claims, plans to “subjugate, enslave, impoverish, [and] exploit people,” has, according to the same author, “a membership list which is unknown to billions of people on the planet.” Here, we are dealing with a novel strategy of deflecting criticism: although said article does not mention any of the Romanian words for “Jew” and “Jewish” or names of Jewish individuals or non-Jewish persons linked with members of the Jewish community, the author of the report invites to further research into the make-up of this “International Mafia” by alluding to the fact that “Romanians have plenty of books written by Romanian patriots about this Global Occult – if only they read them.”<sup>47</sup> Although not always antisemitic, fake news regarding the existence of a “NWO” or a “malicious secret organization” such as the “Global Occult,” display “considerable overlap with anti-Jewish stereotypes, such as elites in control of financial institutions, and they establish a natural narrative environment prone to antisemitism.”<sup>48</sup>

The “Global Occult” resurfaces in one another report, which appears to be a translation of a Facebook post. This article is noteworthy in that it uses phrases commonly associated with the Holocaust and eugenics without mentioning them *per se* to describe the “Global Occult’s” plan to install 5G antennas and activate their negative effects via the anti-Covid-19 vaccination roll-out. “Vaccine, the final solution,” the article claims, “will neither immunize nor protect you against ‘viruses’ ... but ‘society’ will be disposed of ‘slackers’ and the ‘socially inadequate,’” such as people with “chronic illnesses” and “the elderly.”<sup>49</sup> Such articles, like others identified by the ISD study, qualify as “grey area” content, in that they appear to “play down the suffering of Holocaust victims by trivially likening them to themselves,” yet “it is difficult to establish whether such comparisons are driven by conscious malice against Jewish people or historical ignorance.”<sup>50</sup>

Another example of an article with “grey area” content is one which claims that “Divoc,” i.e., “Covid” spelled backwards, is a variant of the word “dybbuk,” which, in Jewish mythology, is a malicious possessing spirit.<sup>51</sup> The article, written by a

Romanian author, former politician, and Ph.D. student, was originally published in English on May 30, 2020.<sup>52</sup> Almost a year and a half later, the theory appears to have gained significant traction, so much so that *Newsweek* published a fact-checking report on it, with no less than four scholars refuting the synonymy between “Divoc” and “dybbuk.”<sup>53</sup> Such comparisons, although not covered by the IHRA working definition, may serve as a fertile ground for antisemitic instrumentalizations.

## Conclusion

In the *Handbook for the practical use of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism*, Romania features on no less than three occasions as a good practice example. First, it commends INSHR EW for organizing training programs on topics such as antisemitism and the Holocaust for a broad array of professionals, from the gendarmerie to civil servants and teachers.<sup>54</sup> Then, it praises the National Parliament and the Interministerial Commission for adopting Law No. 157/2018, which sanctions the public promotion and dissemination of antisemitic ideas and products,<sup>55</sup> and for encouraging the adoption of a Code of Conduct on Antisemitism for universities respectively.<sup>56</sup> However, of the countries submitted for analysis in the present article, Romania appears to be the first one to have blamed the Jewish community for the Covid-19 pandemic via fake news. This is an alarming finding, all the more so as many fake news reports are translated from languages and states which, like Romania, are yet to find solutions to combat and sanction online instances of antisemitism. The present article has also shown that there is an alignment between Romanian “grey area” discourses and similar content identified across German and French social media channels, which appears to indicate that this phenomenon, signaled by the ISD study, is not an isolated one and ought to be afforded more attention.

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## Notes:

1. ISHR EW (@Institutul National pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din Romania Elie Wiesel), “De la antivaccinare împotriva COVID la antisemitism e doar un pas,” Facebook, June 15, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/InstitutulElieWiesel/photos/a.708398199227842/4039519419449020/?type=3>. The number of reactions received by the Institute’s post was recorded on December 2, 2021, 8:00 p.m. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
2. My understanding of “fake news” rests on the latest definition put forward by Simina-Maria Terian, according to which “Fake news is a (sub) genre of journalistic/informative discourse that conveys false information presented as true, with the purpose of eliciting a certain type of action in a certain community.” Simina-Maria Terian, “What Is Fake News: A New Definition,” *Transilvania*, no. 11-12 (2021). Her latest definition addresses the issues described in Anca-Simina Martin and Simina-Maria Terian, “Știrile false: limite și perspective ale analizei lingvistice,” *Transilvania*, no. 10 (2020): 72-77.
3. Vlad Părău, “‘Știți bancul cu baba?’ - Replica Oliviei Steer către Institutul Elie Wiesel după ștampilarea ei cu acuza de antisemitism pentru



- o postare anti-vaccinare obligatorie. Grave erori de logică: Steer a condamnat ambele experimente de tip nazist,” Active News, June 17, 2021, <https://www.activenews.ro/opinii/%E2%80%99ESti-bancul-cu-baba-Replica-Oliviei-Steer-catre-Institutul-Elie-Wiesel-dupa-stampilarea-ei-cu-acuza-de-antisemitism-pentru-o-postare-anti-vaccinare-obligatorie.-Grave-erori-de-logica-Steer-a-condamnat-ambele-experimente-de-tip-nazist-167487>.
4. Părău Vlad, “Știți bancul.”
  5. “Akin to a horoscope-maker, who interprets the stars vaguely in an effort to convince others that [they] know what [they’re] talking about, the Elie Wiesel National Institute (lol) for the Study of the Holocaust...” The abbreviation “lol” stands for “laughing out loud.” Sterie Ciumetti, “Institutul Elie Wiesel o acuza pe Olivia Steer de antisemitism,” *Incorect Politic*, June 16, 2021, <https://www.incorectpolitic.com/institutul-elie-wiesel-o-acuza-pe-olivia-steer-de-antisemitism/>.
  6. Ciumetti, “Institutul Elie Wiesel.”
  7. Ciumetti, “Institutul Elie Wiesel.” The embedded link for the phrase “strategic plan for the fight against the Romanian spirit” leads to a different article on the same article which discusses the Romanian Ministry of External Affairs’ *National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight Against Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization, and Hate Speech*. Sterie Ciumetti, “Analiza Strategiei Adoptată de Guvern Pentru Combaterea ‘antisemitismului, xenofobiei și discursului instigator la ură 2021-2023,’” *Incorect Politic*, May 22, 2021, <https://www.incorectpolitic.com/analiza-strategiei-adoptata-de-guvern-pentru-combaterea-antisemitismului-xenofobiei-si-discursului-instigator-la-ura-2021-2023/>.
  8. Ciumetti, “Institutul Elie Wiesel.”
  9. Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), *The Rise of Antisemitism Online During the Pandemic: A Study of French and German Content* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021), 16.
  10. “About the IHRA Non-legally Binding Working Definition of Antisemitism,” International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), accessed December 6, 2021, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>.
  11. ISD, *The Rise of Antisemitism*, 18.
  12. Institutul Național pentru Studierea Holocaustului din România “Elie Wiesel” (INSHR EW), *Raport de monitorizare a antisemitismului 2019–aprilie 2020* (Bucharest: INSHR EW, 2021), <http://www.inshr-ew.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/INSHR-EW-Raport-monitorizare-antisemitism.pdf>;
  13. Institutul Național pentru Studierea Holocaustului din România “Elie Wiesel” (INSHR EW), *Raport de monitorizare mai 2020–aprilie 2021* (Bucharest: INSHR EW, 2021), <https://www.inshr-ew.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Raport-monitorizare-2021.pdf>.
  14. Gabriel Greschler, “How Jews Have Fared During Pandemics Throughout History,” *The Jewish News of Northern California*, March 19, 2020, <https://www.jweekly.com/2020/03/19/how-jews-have-fared-during-times-of-pandemic/>.
  15. Greschler, “How Jews Have Fared During Pandemics.”
  16. Allison Kaplan Sommer, “Did the Spanish Flu Pandemic Really Lead to the Rise of Nazism?”, *Haaretz*, May 6, 2020, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-did-the-spanish-flu-pandemic-really-lead-to-the-rise-of-nazism-1.8825631>.
  17. According to Thomas Weber, professor of history and author of various studies on the rise of Nazism in Germany, “the death and devastation of the First World War, its economic aftermath and the failure of the Weimar Republic were responsible for the political transformation that allowed for the rise of Hitler and Nazi ideology.” Sommer, “Did the Spanish Flu Pandemic.”
  18. The project description says, among others: “Contrary to older findings, it can be assumed that the Jewish population was also defamed as a supposed ‘carrier of the epidemic’ and made the scapegoat for the [influenza] pandemic’s effects at that time.” “The Radicalization of Stereotypes and Scapegoats in the Wake of the Spanish Flu in 1918,” Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies, accessed December 6, 2021, <https://hait.tu-dresden.de/ext/forschung/forschungsprojekt-4143/?lang=en>.
  19. Ioan Scurtu, “Statutul politico-juridic al evreilor din Romania (1858–2004),” *Prof. Univ. Dr. Ioan Scurtu* (blog), December 22, 2011, <http://www.ioanscurtu.ro/statutul-politico-juridic-al-evreilor-din-romania-1858-2004/>.
  20. Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier, 1919–1941: Mistica ultranaționalismului* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993), 62–64.
  21. Nancy Cutler, “‘This Is a Time We Should Be Seeing Solidarity’: Fear of Stigma Grows as Coronavirus Spreads,” *Lohud*, March 4, 2020, <https://eu.lohud.com/story/news/local/new-york/2020/03/04/coronavirus-new-york-jewish-stigma/4951183002/>.
  22. AJMC Staff, “A Timeline of COVID-19 Developments in 2020,” *AJMC*, last modified January 1, 2021, <https://www.ajmc.com/view/a-timeline-of-covid19-developments-in-2020>.
  23. Cnaan Liphshiz, “An Unwanted Symptom of the Coronavirus Crisis in France: Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theories,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, April 2, 2020, <https://www.jta.org/2020/04/02/global/an-unwanted-symptom-of-the-coronavirus-crisis-in-france-antisemitic-conspiracy-theories>.
  24. INSHR EW, *Raport 2019–aprilie 2020*, 20.
  25. INSHR EW, *Raport 2019–aprilie 2020*, 21. Alina Neagu, “Primul caz de infecție cu coronavirus, confirmat oficial în România: Un bărbat din Gorj ce a intrat în contact cu italianul care a vizitat recent țara noastră,” *Hot News*, February 26, 2020, <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-sanatate-23687251-primul-caz-infectie-coronavirus-confirmat-oficial-romania.htm>.
  26. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Antisemitism: Overview of Antisemitic Incidents Recorded in the European Union 2010–2019* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021), 8.
  27. FRA, *Antisemitism*, 71.
  28. Raport Elie Wiesel 2, p. 14. Its full name is “Government Emergency Ordinance No. 31 of March 13, 2002, on the prohibition of fascist,

- legionary, racist or xenophobic organizations, symbols and actions as well as the promotion of the worship of persons guilty of crimes of genocide against humanity and of war crimes.”
28. INSHR EW, *Raport mai 2020–aprilie 2021*, 3.
  29. INSHR EW, *Raport mai 2020–aprilie 2021*, 22.
  30. INSHR EW, *Raport mai 2020–aprilie 2021*, 27.
  31. INSHR EW, *Raport mai 2020–aprilie 2021*, 19.
  32. INSHR EW, *Raport mai 2020–aprilie 2021*, 35.
  33. INSHR EW, *Raport mai 2020–aprilie 2021*, 30.
  34. ISD, *The Rise of Antisemitism*, 8.
  35. INSHR EW, *Raport mai 2020–aprilie 2021*, 22.
  36. ISD, *The Rise of Antisemitism*, 8.
  37. INSHR EW, *Raport mai 2020–aprilie 2021*, 24.
  38. ISD, *The Rise of Antisemitism*, 16–21.
  39. “About the IHRA Non-legally Binding Working Definition.”
  40. ISD, *The Rise of Antisemitism*, 9.
  41. ISD, *The Rise of Antisemitism*, 17.
  42. ISD, *The Rise of Antisemitism*, 18.
  43. ISD, *The Rise of Antisemitism*, 21.
  44. ISD, *The Rise of Antisemitism*, 21.
  45. The articles hereinafter analyzed were selected from FAKEROM project’s corpus of Romanian-language fake news articles based on word searches for terms such as “evreu” [Jew] and “ebraic” [Hebrew] and their inflectionary forms, “Noua Ordine Mondială” [New World Order], “Oculita Mondială” [Global Occult], and words associated with the lexicon of the Holocaust like “exterminare” [extermination], “soluție finală” [final solution], etc. For a brief overview of the strategies used to compile the corpus, see Costin Busioc, Stefan Ruseti, and Mihai Dascalu, “A Literature Review of NLP Approaches to Fake News Detection and Their Applicability to Romanian-Language News Analysis,” *Transilvania*, no. 10 (2020): 65–71.
  46. Fact-checking website *Stop Fals* has found, as of December 6, 2021, ten other fake news reports on flux.md.
  47. Flux On-line, “Valul 2 Covid – încă un atac asupra umanității de la Oculita Mondială,” Flux: Știri și analize, July 27, 2020, <https://flux.md/stiri/valul-2-covid-inca-un-atac-asupra-umanitatii-de-la-oculita-mondiala#>.
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