Overview 1959-2021 ECHR
Since it was established in 1959 the Court has delivered 24,511 judgments. Around 40% of these concerned 3 member States of the Council of Europe: Turkey (3,820), the Russian Federation (3,116) and Italy (2,466).

In 84% of the judgments it has delivered since 1959, the Court has found at least one violation of the Convention by the respondent State.
Judgments delivered by the Court

In recent years the Court has concentrated on examining complex cases, and has decided to join certain applications which raise similar legal questions so that it can consider them jointly.

Although in some years the number of judgments delivered each year by the Court has decreased, more applications have been examined by it.

Since it was set up, the Court has decided on the examination of around 957,300 applications through a judgment or decision, or by being struck out of the list.
Subject-matter of the Court’s violation judgments (1959-2021)

Nearly 40% of the violations found by the Court have concerned Article 6 of the Convention, whether on account of the fairness (16.55%) or the length (18.28%) of the proceedings.

The second most frequently found violation has concerned the right to liberty and security (Article 5).

Lastly, in more than 16% of cases, the Court has found a serious violation of the Convention, concerning the right to life or the prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment (Articles 2 and 3).

Subject-matter of the Court’s violation judgments (Comparative Graph 1959-2021 & 2021)

The violation most frequently found by the Court concerns Article 6 (right to a fair hearing), particularly with regard to the excessive length of the proceedings. In 2021 almost a quarter of all violations found by the Court related to this provision.

For a number of years, however, other violations of the Convention have been found increasingly frequently. In 2021 this was particularly the case with regard to the prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment (Article 3) as well as the right to liberty and security (Article 5).
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This table has been generated automatically using the conclusions in the metadata for each judgment in the HUDOC database.
1. Other judgments: just satisfaction, revision, preliminary objections and lack of jurisdiction.
2. Figures in this column may include conditional violations.
3. Cases where the Court found there would be a violation of Article 2 and/or 3 if the applicant is removed to a State where he/she is at risk.
4. Seventy-nine judgments are against more than one respondent State.

Legend:
- Arrows indicate increase or decrease in the number of judgments.
- Figures in this column are available only from 2013.
- 2 indicates that the judgment concerned both Article 2 (torture) and Article 3 (inhuman or degrading treatment).
- 1 indicates that the judgment concerned Article 3 alone.
- 3 indicates that the judgment concerned Article 2 alone.

Figures in this column are available only from 2013.
4. Seventy-nine judgments are against more than one respondent State.
History of the Court’s reforms

Since the Court was set up in 1959, the member States of the Council of Europe have adopted a number of protocols to the European Convention on Human Rights with the aim of improving and strengthening its supervisory mechanism.

In 1998 Protocol No. 11 thus replaced the original two-tier structure, comprising the Commission and the Court on Human Rights, sitting a few days per month, by a single full-time Court. This change put an end to the Commission’s filtering function, enabling applicants to bring their cases directly before the Court.

A second major reform to address the considerable increase in the number of applications and the Court’s backlog was brought about by the entry into force of Protocol No. 14 in 2010. This Protocol introduced new judicial formations for the simplest cases and established a new admissibility criterion (existence of a “significant disadvantage” for the applicant); it also extended the judges’ term of office to 9 years (not renewable).

Since 2010, several high-level conferences on the future of the Court have been convened to identify methods of guaranteeing the long-term effectiveness of the Convention system. These conferences have, in particular, led to the adoption of Protocols Nos. 15 and 16 to the Convention.

Protocol No. 15, adopted in 2013, inserted references to the principle of subsidiarity and the doctrine of the margin of appreciation into the Convention’s preamble; it also reduced from 6 to 4 months the time within which an application must be lodged with the Court after a final national decision. It entered into force on 1 August 2021.

Protocol No. 16 entered into force in 2018, allowing the highest courts and tribunals of a State Party to ask the Court to give advisory opinions on questions of principle relating to the interpretation or application of the Convention rights and freedoms.

Working methods

The Court has reformed its working methods in order to increase its efficiency.

The Court has developed the pilot-judgments procedure to cater for the massive influx of applications concerning similar issues, also known as “systemic or structural issues” – i.e. those that arise from the non-conformity of domestic law with the Convention as regards the exercise of a particular right.

The Court has also adopted a priority policy so as to take into consideration the importance and urgency of the issues raised when deciding the order in which cases are to be dealt with.

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