

**PRESENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON *SOCIAL INEQUALITIES
AND QUALITY OF LIFE*, ORGANIZED BY
THE QUALITY OF LIFE RESEARCH INSTITUTE
AND THE ROMANIAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION,
HELD ONLINE, ON NOVEMBER 15 – 19, 2021**

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The Covid-19 pandemic has brought new concerns around the world, and the Research Institute for Quality of Life, through its representatives, has provided the framework for the development of a constructive dialogue, by organizing in partnership with the Romanian Sociological Association, the International Conference on *Social Inequalities and Quality of Life*, online event, on November 15–19, 2021.

The event was a challenge not only for the organizers, due to the fact that it was entirely organized online, but also for keynote speaker (KNS), who had to ensure that the multitude of valuable contributions of participants will converge towards a single goal, namely the analysis of social inequalities and quality of life.

It was an international event, that attracted the participation of specialists from different fields, the flow of opinions being extremely generous in building ideas, theories, and even new paradigms. Participation was also open to doctoral and post-doctoral students from national or international schools, who are active vectors in identifying and analyzing social problems.

The sections of the conference demonstrate the constant concerns of the Research Institute for Quality of Life to identifying solutions for current societal problems, and the large turnout has shown us the growing interest of people in topics with global impact, not just national.

The multidisciplinary of the conference was revealed by the 102 submitted papers, of which 23 were authored from abroad, and seven were papers with author belonging to international or national representation institutions. The papers were organized into 13 sections and two round tables, as follows:

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Section title
Challenges for young people in a changing labor market
Socio-economic inequalities: between ideology and reality
The challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic: social and demographic risks
Challenges for social inclusion: family, gender, social services
Challenges of aging: health and the labor market
The challenges of international migration: theoretical underpinnings and realities of the 21 st century
Risks and inequalities in education
New inequalities and governance today
The government response to Covid-19 pandemic; vulnerable groups and health policies
Rural development in Romania: opportunities and challenges
Quality of life: Covid-19 impact and methodological aspects
Determinants and consequences of inequality in health across Europe
Criminality: reintegration and policies
<i>Challenges for child protection system (round table)</i>
<i>Opportunities and risks of the Romanian society (round table)</i>

The conference began with a speech by Academician Professor Ph.D. Cătălin Zamfir, director of the Research Institute for Quality of Life, on “*Romanian Sociology in the Post-Crisis Period*”, in which he described the way how social inequalities have deepened, amid successive crises.

Also on the first day of the conference, there were very valuable lectures by Prof. Filomena Maggino (Sapienza University of Rome), who came up with solutions for “*Welfare and sustainability in the post-Covid era*” and Prof. Renata Siemienska (University of Warsaw), whose contribution was entitled “*Political and economic expectations and the reality in Eastern Europe. Three decades of changing values and political attitudes and their context.*”

The next day of the conference began with a Round Table on “*Challenges for the child protection system*”, an event that brought together prestigious specialists in the field: Prof. Nuria Fuentes Pelaez (University of Barcelona), Manuela Sofia Stănculescu and Vlad Grigoraș (World Bank), prof. Sergiu Bălătescu and conf. Claudia Bacter (Univ. of Oradea), prof. Ștefan Cojocaru (Univ. “Alexandru I. Cuza”, Iași). The topic was a challenge for the participants who, although approached from the perspective of their own professional skills, had to identify common points to indicate the essence of children’s problems, and also propose practical ways and tools to solve them.

Also on the second day of the conference, parallel panels were organized, which allowed the participants to access them according to their own professional interest, as follows: “*Socio-economic inequalities: between ideology and reality*” –

Chair: L. Pop (Univ. of Bucharest), CSII D. Arpinte (RIQL); “*Challenges for young people in a changing labor market*” – Chair: CSI A. Preoteasa (RIQL); “*The challenges of the Covid 19 pandemic: social and demographic risks*” – Chair: CSI M. Voicu (RIQL), CSI S. M. Stănescu (QLRI), CSIII C. Berescu (RIQL).

The third day of the conference was dedicated entirely to the panels organized in parallel: “*Challenges for social inclusion: family, gender, social services*” – Chair: CSI Prof. E. Zamfir (RIQL), Ph.D. student Corina Dragan (RIQL) “*Challenges of aging: health and the labor market*” Chair: CSI I. Precupețu (RIQL); “*The challenges of international migration: theoretical underpinnings and realities of the 21st century*” – Chair: CSII M. Șerban (RIQL), CSII S. Ilie (RIQL); “*Risks and inequalities in education*” – Chair: CSII G. Neagu (RIQL). In the description of the moderate section, Gabriela Neagu made the following mentions “*the issue of education, especially inequality, inequality of opportunity in education, although it has been analyzed for decades, is still relevant. This is also demonstrated by the fact that the sections on this topic attract many works that approach the topic from extremely different, very interesting perspectives. Moreover, the issue is of interest not only to specialists in the sciences of education or sociology of education but also in fields more or less close to them. I noticed all these situations: specialists from different fields who discussed topics that started from access to education in rural areas to the digitalization of the education system*”.

Those who opened the conference on the fourth day were two KNS, Prof. Konstantinos Sergakis (University of Glasgow), who gave a speech entitled “*Empowering employees and setting the ground for a new sense of citizenship*” and Prof. Lilian Negură (University of Ottawa), with the lecture entitled “*The process of othering through representational naturalization. The example of refugees and the Covid-19 pandemic*”.

The conference continued with panels organized in parallel: “*New inequalities and governance today*” – Chair: R. Hoinaru (University of London); “*The government response to Covid-19 pandemic; vulnerable groups and health policies*” – Chair: CSIII I. Anghel (RIQL); “*Rural development in Romania: opportunities and challenges*” – Chair: CSII I. Stănescu (RIQL); “*Quality of life: Covid-19 impact and methodological aspects*” – Chair: CSII S. Fitzek (RIQL). In the description of the moderate section, Răzvan Hoinaru specified that “*the panel aimed to increase the level of awareness in society for a certain type of social license that the companies of the 21st century want to promote. The current risk is not necessarily to increase existing inequalities, but to diversify them. A better symbiosis between companies and global communities where economic activity takes place has a saying: Happy future!*”.

CSII S. Fitzek also stated that “*methodological issues were discussed regarding the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories during the Covid-19 crisis. They presented researchers from Sibiu, Hunedoara, Oradea and Bucharest,*

and the subjects marked different qualitative and quantitative techniques for studying the evolution of communication during the crisis in relation to the strategic communication measures in the last two years. Through their presentations, the participants talked about the spread of fear of the pandemic in the Eastern European space, of conspiracy theories among students from different universities in Transylvania. Other contributions referred to trends in consumer behavior during Covid 19, vulnerabilities and subjective indicators of the quality of life of Romanians living in Germany, socio-economic inequalities in the exchange of support between generations in a pandemic context, and the transformation of society. Marios Joannou Elia (European Academy of Sciences and Arts) spoke about the Impact of Music on Social Values and Iuliana Precupețu (Research Institute for Quality of Life, Romanian Academy) spoke about the conceptual model of quality of life, a critical analysis”.

The last day of the conference began with the parallel organization of two panels with provocative topics, namely “*Determinants and consequences of inequality in health across Europe*” – Chair: M. Manea (RIQL), PhD. Momoko Nishikido (CED, Barcelona) and “*Criminality: reintegration and policies*” – Chair: Prof. M. Tomiță (West University of Timișoara), CSII C. Tomescu (RIQL). In the description of the coordinated section, Cristina Tomescu specified that the presentations in the section “emphasized the role of education in order to prevent recidivism and social reintegration (presentations Education in prisons – an essential factor in preventing recidivism and Prison education, as a solution to the failures of other institutions) , as well as the role of social inequalities as a factor favoring human trafficking, but also of discrimination on the labor market of released detainees, a factor favoring recidivism. The panel dedicated to the criminal behaviour was a great opportunity for an exchange of experience between academia and prison professionals”. Mădălina Manea also came with details about the section she moderated together with Momoko Nishikido (CED Barcelona), “*the section brought together presentations of doctoral students in demography from Italy, Spain, Denmark and the Czech Republic. In general, the presentations looked at inequalities in health indicators in European countries, with a focus on Mediterranean Europe, with material highlighting the specific consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions*”.

The sessions of the conference ended with a new Round Table on “*Opportunities and risks of the Romanian society*”, an event that involved the special participation of Acad. Prof. Cătălin Zamfir (Research Institute for Quality of Life – Romanian Academy), Acad. Prof. Ilie Bădescu (Institute of Sociology – Romanian Academy), Prof. Vladimir Pasti (University of Political Studies and Public Administration), and CSII Iulian Stănescu (Institute for Research on Quality of Life – Romanian Academy). The participants in the Round Table came with the initiative to create a **Reflection Group**, which would support, through its competence, the formulation of a **Program of social, economic and cultural development of the country**, of the crystallization of the **Post-Crisis Country Project**.

The organizers drew some conclusions: 89 communications were actually delivered; the audience exceeded the number of communications, through the 21 participants from Romania and four from abroad; approximately 25% of the participants watched the works of several sections, being practically present daily, as 50–55% of the participants were interested in at least two sections. Most communications from the country, but from outside the organizing institution, came from Bucharest (SNSPA, University of Bucharest, Center for Financial and Monetary Research – Victor Slăvescu) and Sibiu, followed by Cluj-Napoca and Oradea, respectively Timișoara, Craiova, Iași and Făgăraș. Along with KNS, the international value of the conference was given by the participants from Spain, Italy, Bulgaria, Serbia, Denmark, Belarus, but also from Israel, the Czech Republic, Norway, Belgium or the Netherlands.

It is obvious that people are eager to participate in such events, where they find the right framework to have open, uncensored opinions, and where scientific arguments are the only accepted *weapons*.

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