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FOREWORD

The changing nature of world power shapes our world politically, economically, socially, and culturally. It impacts the development of not only separate nations and regions but also every single individual. Power is the ultimate means of decision-making, the ability to bring about a desired outcome despite resistance.

Among the key principles for creating an open-minded society and accepting each other are equality and freedom, as well as cultural capital defined as the set of skills, values and knowledge acquired in the process of socialization. Thus, education *per se* is power; it is the act and the process of empowerment that may lead to an individual or collective action for a positive change.

Despite a great deal of progress in the modern world, gender stereotypes persist and are even established by political, religious and familial laws. The association of qualities like dominance, intellect and autonomy with men, and subjugation, emotion and dependence with women is still widely present. The prevalence of these conventions affects the sense of one's identity, therefore education is a key factor in helping women identify their status and rights in society and form their identities, whereas staying ignorant, silent, isolated, and frustrated, as well as accepting exploitation, humiliation and violence will make them feel inferior. Many women around the world take action against this inferiority, patriarchal manifestation and subjugation. By striving to establish their individuality and bring awareness about their social role women express their belief that female identity should not be bound by conventions.

This volume of "Journal of Comparative Studies" includes seven articles that by applying comparative research methodology address the theme of social transformation and justice, including various aspects of gender equality, female identity, and civic education. The majority of the articles included in this volume were presented at the International Academic Conferences "Human: Language, Society, Culture" on November 21, 2022 and June 19, 2023.

In her paper "On Pedagogic Uses of Literary Machine Translation: A Case Study Based on the Language Pair English – Italian" Paola Brusasco compares the existing Italian translations with those done by neural machine translation that showed a remarkably fluent use of contemporary language and a reduction of culture-specific errors. The texts and output were analyzed from a pedagogic perspective to identify their strengths and weaknesses, assist in the revising process, avoid linguistic complexity and activate the students' situated cognition when producing or post-editing translations. Evita Badina's and Žans Badins's article "Translation Policy of Anglophone Literature in Soviet Latvia from the 1940s to the 1960s: A Comparative Perspective" focuses on the translation policies of Anglophone literature into Latvian during the first two decades of the Soviet occupation after World War II. The post-doctoral research implemented with the support of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) "Literary and Political Discourse of Translations in Totalitarianism: Anglophone Literature in Soviet Latvia" concludes that during the Soviet occupation of Latvia, the introduction and reception of Anglophone literature evolved, transitioning from purely ideological dominance to a more diverse selection of authors and genres. In her article "Female Identity in Diaspora Society: Nilanjana in Taslima Nasrin's 'French Lover' and Nazneen in Monica Ali's 'Brick Lane'" Rama Islam portrays the multifaceted challenges and opportunities faced by women within diaspora societies and the issues related to their social and self-identity. In her article "Ecofeminist Theology and Fundamentalisms within Arabic Contexts", conducted in the framework of the European Research Council (ERC) funded project on law and women's rights "GulfFeminisms: Feminisms and Mobilization of Law in Gulf Countries", Jihan Zakarriya analyzes domination, androcentrism and superiority over women and nature through masculinist interpretations, understandings, and linguistic expressions of religions. In their study "Overcoming Prejudice in Society through Gadamer Philosophical Hermeneutics", Merlina Koseni and Enkelejda Cenaj examine the possibility of reducing the level of prejudice and intolerance in Albania through the application of Hans-Georg Gadamer's theory on communicative understanding and fusion of horizons highlighting the role of dialogue, tolerance, solidarity, reciprocity, equality and freedom in creating an open-minded and tolerant society. Additionally, the focus of Enkelejda Cenaj's and Merlina Koseni's paper "Customary Rights in the Albanian Society and Issues Related to Gender (Kanun of Leke

Dukagjini and Kanun of Luma)“ is on the customary laws that had nurtured and strengthened gender role divisions in the Albanian society which contributed to the unequal position of women in family and society.

Finally, in their article “Education Divide: Civic Learning and Intended Political Participation among Youth in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania”, Beatriz Matafora, Kristīne Kampmane and Anastassia Anton present the findings that underscore the crucial role of civic education in shaping the political engagement of youth in the Baltic states. Their study investigates the differences in young people’s civic learning opportunities and participation in civic activities at school. The results of the “International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022” (ICCS 2022) were officially released at the end of November, which positions their research as potentially the first article offering a secondary analysis of this newly available dataset, presenting an opportunity for visibility and scholarly impact.

Editors