

The 5th Edition of ESPERA International Conference 2018, Bucharest

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This year, on the 24th and 25th of May, The Romanian Academy hosted the 5th edition of the ESPERA international conference. Since its first launch, in 2013, the conference has grown every year and has gathered a significant number of partners, a fact that reflects its interdisciplinary ambition and its regional importance. The 2018 edition took place under the title “The Romanian Economy. A Century of Transformation (1918–2018)”. It was included in the Romanian Academy’s anniversary events celebrating the “100th anniversary of the Great Union of Romania”.

The conference was organized by the same three main institutions that have established and managed it since its inception: the "Costin C. Kirițescu" National Institute for Economic Research, in partnership with the National Bank of Romania and the Center for Economic Information and Documentation. It has also had a number of institutional partners from Romania and abroad: the Association of Economics Faculties in Romania, the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, the Bucharest Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the National Institute for Internal Control of Romania and the Gestion y Planificación Research Group (GESPLAN), Spain. There were also regional partners: the Institute of Agricultural Economics, Belgrade, Serbia; the Institute of Economic Sciences, also from Belgrade, the Faculty of Social and Cultural Service and Tourism from Stavropol, State Agrarian University, Russia, and the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, “St. Kliment Ohridski” University from Sofia, Bulgaria.

The plenary session and the thirteen parallel sections and workshops were centered on priority research directions in the field of economic and social sciences of the “Romanian Academy Research Strategy 2014–2020”, respectively: Romania’s sustainable economic and social development; natural resources patrimony; knowledge, innovation, smart development and human capital; economy dynamics and structural changes for a competitive growth; European integration and globalization; development and improvement of economic and social forecasting tools; food safety and security; assessment of economic, social and political experiences and thoughts; contributions to the New Encyclopedia of Romania; quality of life and social policies evaluations; demographic facts and figures.

All of the above are a consistent follow up of the previous editions and they enrich the record of contributions of the last years’ events. After the plenaries, the sessions were the place where a breakdown of the many goals of the conference was performed. The Research Institute for Quality of Life hosted the quality of life session, one of the most interdisciplinary. Topics ranged from public health issues to mainstream or alternative sociological approaches. It is worth mentioning the contributions of a group of researchers that addressed a variety of problems related to oral hygiene, Daniel Arpinte’s analysis of the social assistance sector, and other speculative contributions, like my own, on the future of housing in Romania. All of them were followed with the same sagacious eye

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by the panel leaders, prof. Ion Mărginean and prof. Sorin Cace, who guided the discussion accordingly up to the critical points of the contributions, be it a methodological or a theoretical question. The panel held by RIQL was probably the largest. The pitfall of being a rather extended session was balanced by the vivid attention and the consistent feedback that one could get for his research findings. The variety of research themes included the evolution of rural libraries (Sorinel Bucur) and atypical employment for graduates (Bianca Buligescu) then jumped from household income inequality (Simona Ilie) to NEETS in rural areas (Sebastian Fitzek, Gabriela Neagu, Claudia

Petrescu). In the end, a convergence of topics was achieved due to a common meticulous attention to the various aspects of social life, typically ignored by the current literature. What was really interesting about the session was the way in which some apparently “minor” subject matters reverberate and illustrate the major problems and the main changes in public policies.

The conference is one of the last of its kind that is free of charge, and it attracts a large number of researchers. The most interesting contributions are selected and published in a volume at Peter Lang International Academic Publishing Group.