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**THE CONFERENCE *FOSTERING CROSS-DISCIPLINARY
REFLECTIONS TO BRIDGE SOCIETAL DIVIDES (REFLECT)*,
21ST AND 23RD OF OCTOBER 2024**

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Abstract

Between the 21st and 23rd of October 2024, the Department of Social Work, Journalism, Public Relations, and Sociology (Faculty of Social and Human Sciences) at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu hosted the XIXth edition of the international conference *Fostering Cross-disciplinary Reflections to Bridge Societal Divides* (REFLECT). The conference focused on recent events driving significant social change, such as armed conflicts in Europe, mass migration, and humanitarian crises affecting refugees. The event also addressed ongoing social crises exacerbated by the already fragile state of societies grappling with the pandemic's aftermath. The event attracted 60 researchers, Ph.D. candidates, and faculty members representing various national and international universities and research institutions.

Keywords: migration, social policies, conference, healthcare, political behaviour, disability.

The XIXth edition of the conference *Fostering Cross-disciplinary Reflections to Bridge Societal Divides* (REFLECT, 2024) was organized by the Department of Social Work, Journalism, Public Relations, and Sociology within the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu. The event took place between the 21st and 23rd of October 2024 and adopted a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from fields such as social work, sociology, politics, journalism, and communication.

The organizers began by emphasizing the necessity of addressing contemporary social issues through a multidisciplinary perspective. The conference aimed to

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understand the effects of recent global events such as mass migration and refugee crises, not only on refugees and host populations but also on local governance structures. These challenges were examined against the backdrop of societies still grappling with the pandemic's aftermath, which has amplified pre-existing inequalities related to class, gender, education, ethnicity, and disability. According to the organizers, addressing social problems through interdisciplinary collaboration provides diverse and enriched perspectives for problem-solving.

The presentations reflected the varied cultural discourses present in contemporary Romania and beyond. Topics included rural and traditional behaviors, the intersection of scientific facts and public opinion, workplace gender disparities, migration narratives, digital safety and social media dynamics, urbanization and city branding, political behaviors and youth trust in institutions, and vaccine hesitancy. The diversity of subjects facilitated meaningful discussions and debates, contributing to a broader understanding of societal challenges.

The three-day conference featured sessions on an array of themes, including *Communication and Media Research; AI: Promises, Challenges, and Threats; Children, Family, and Lifestyles; Migration Crisis; Diverse Topics: Digital and Beyond; Ageing, Life Courses, and Wellbeing; Vulnerable Groups and Social Justice; Environmental Sociology; Political Attitudes and Behavior; Feminist and Decolonial Perspectives; Education and Employment; and Health and Illness.*

The international nature of the conference was highlighted by keynote speakers, such as Professor Lavinia Stan from St. Francis Xavier University, Canada, who presented *Using Cross-Disciplinarity in Religion and Politics: A View*, and Professor Vera Taube from the Technical University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt, Germany, who discussed *How to Navigate a Fractured World – or at Least How to Try.*

Additionally, three specialized workshops were held: *Laborator de Dezvoltare Comunitară* [Local Community Development Lab], *Exploring Workforce Diversity*, and *Challenges in Social Work*. These interactive labs encouraged active participation and provided opportunities for hands-on learning.

The organizing committee officiated the opening event, emphasizing the importance of academic collaboration in addressing current societal issues. The conference brought together participants from prominent universities in Romania as well as international institutions, including representatives from Sweden and Poland. Together, they created a vibrant platform for discussing contemporary social phenomena from both European and global perspectives.

Further details about the conference are available on the official website: <https://conferences.ulbsibiu.ro/asjrps/call-for-papers/>.