



Editorial Foreword

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The 13th volume of *The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies* reflects some of the research presented at the 12th International conference on Baltic and Nordic studies titled "Rethinking multiculturalism, multilingualism, and cultural diplomacy in Scandinavia and The Baltic Sea Region," which will be held on May 27-28, 2021, under the auspices of the Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies. RethinkMulti-Kulti2021 was called to reflect on multiculturalism, multilingualism, and cultural diplomacy in Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea Region 10 years after German Chancellor Angela Merkel predicted the end of German multicultural society. Many politicians with Conservative leanings praised the confirmation that the half-century-cherished multi-kulti "utterly failed," and far-right gurus interpreted it as an omen. Furthermore, Merkel's track record as a committed democratic-minded politician, EU leader, and proponent of migrant integration has garnered near-universal support for this argument. Furthermore, in academia, Merkel's assertion has never been adequately questioned, but rather taken for granted. Meanwhile, policies governing multiculturalism and multilingualism in the EU and EEA have been stuck in a rut, particularly in what Fareed Zakaria properly refers to as illiberal democracies.

The purpose of the conference was not to resurrect the political objective behind multi-kulti, but rather to critically reassess the role of multiculturalism, multilinguism, and cultural diplomacy from the viewpoint of Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea Region. We see Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea Region as interrelated and partially overlapping by a plethora of historical, cultural, and social channels, hence papers dealing with multiculturalism, multilinguism, and cultural diplomacy as reflected in

these regions and wider Europe were planned. Papers on connections, liaisons, affiliations, divergences, animosity, legal or de facto statuses of cultures and languages in Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea Region were also presented during the conference. How multilingualism, multiculturalism, and cultural diplomacy prospered or muddled through transitions from liberal nations to far-right or far-left governments and back were also addressed.

The volume's first issue focuses on lingualism, bilingualism, and multilingualism as a path to diversity and how individuals reflected on it. Kari Alenius looks at the telling case of the Sámi minority in northern Finland and the disputes over whether or not to grant it wide autonomy, which was ultimately determined in favor of opponents of the proposal. Johanna Domokos examines the case studies of two contemporary multilingual writers, Sabira Sthlberg from Finland and Tzveta Sofronieva from Bulgaria, to demonstrate how they aspire to address cross-culturally to readers of all languages, backgrounds, and locations, concluding that "the reader is empowered to take part in not only piecing together but creating a better 'new' world." Sabira Sthlberg is the author and coauthor of two articles that address multiculturalism in a very solid and original manner. The first follows the partly mythical and partly tourist-tracking journey of international traveller and well-known Swedish-language author Göran Schildt, who sailed on his yacht *Daphne* in the Black Sea and the Danube Delta in the summer of 1963 as one of the first cracks in the curtain separating the two opposing ideological blocs. The latter, co-signed with Dorijan Hajdu, focuses on the relationships between family members, as expressed particularly in Swedish and Serbian language, allowing for a highly comprehensive knowledge of diversity from inside. Finally, Adél Furu's most recent article in our journal examines educational trends in the context of Russian and Estonian second language training in Finland, observing the shift from language loss to language maintenance.

We hope that all of these pieces will spark new thought on the subject and help our readers better comprehend multiculturalism and multilinguism as they were perceived and implemented in Europe, particularly in our and the previous century.