

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
**Human Rights and  
Democratic Culture in Practice:  
Applications and Challenges**

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## BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Saturday, 25 April 2026

16:30–18:30

Parallel Session 1 (in English)

Argyriadis Auditorium, Central University Building

### Legal Pressure as Discipline: SLAPPs and Risk Exposure in Greek Journalism

Dr. Athina Simatou, Adjunct lecturer, NKUA

While strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) are not a new phenomenon, their use as instruments of legal pressure against journalists has intensified across Europe over the past decade (CASE, 2024; European Parliament, 2023). In Greece, SLAPPs have increasingly targeted journalists reporting on corruption, political power, environmental issues, and other matters of public interest, within a media system already weakened by structural, economic, and institutional constraints following the financial and sociopolitical crisis. This paper explores how SLAPPs operate in practice as mechanisms of pressure and risk exposure against journalists and media outlets in Greece, focusing on the operational dynamics through which legal pressure is enacted and experienced. Drawing on an in-depth qualitative case study approach, the paper examines four emblematic recent SLAPP cases involving journalists and media organisations targeted for their reporting. The analysis is based on multi-source data triangulation, including court documents, contested journalistic publications, public statements by professional associations and civil society actors, and in-depth interviews with journalists and lawyers/legal experts. Focusing on the anatomy of SLAPP-related legal pressure, the paper analyses the legal framings mobilised (civil and criminal defamation, interim measures, and data protection/GDPR-related claims), the associated procedural dynamics, and the power asymmetries between claimants and defendants. Particular attention is paid to how these legal threats increase risk exposure in ways that structurally, organizationally, and personally disadvantage journalists and public-interest reporting within the Greek media environment. The paper situates these cases within a broader context of press freedom pressures, safety risks, and democratic deficits in Greece and addresses the following research questions: RQ1: How do SLAPP operate as mechanisms of pressure and risk exposure against journalists and media outlets in Greece? RQ2: Which legal framings and procedural practices are mobilised in Greek SLAPP cases, and how do power asymmetries shape their use and effects? RQ3: What are the professional, financial, psychological, and democratic implications of SLAPPs for journalists, media outlets, and press freedom in Greece? Rather than assessing policy implementation, the paper empirically documents how SLAPPs function as disciplining techniques within the Greek media environment and identifies recurring patterns of legal pressure, press freedom challenges, and chilling effects. By shifting the focus from policy frameworks to the operational dynamics of legal pressure, the paper contributes process-level empirical evidence that is often missing from existing SLAPP research and offers grounded insights into how legal threats are structured and experienced in practice.



## **Questioning the Rise of Digital Semi-Autocracy Against Human Rights and Democracy in the Neo-Digital Human Rights Era**

**Dr. Melih Uğraş Erol, Lecturer in Law, Izmir University of Economics**

The digital era fundamentally alters state-society interactions by fostering cooperation, civic involvement, and novel forms of political participation via sophisticated technological infrastructures. Data-driven and algorithmically guided governance systems can enhance transparency, responsiveness, and accountability among authorities. However, they can also expand executive powers for anti-democratic policies and targeted repression, undermining democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. This dichotomy exemplifies the tension between the constructive and destructive potential of digitalisation in terms of democracy and human rights, as well as the ongoing debate between states and civil society about the legitimacy and limits of state authority in the digital sphere. The dynamics of global human rights reveal new concerns arising from technological conflicts, indicating the emergence of a new discursive phase centred on digital semi-autocracy. During this phase, authorities use technology and digital tools to impose restrictions that impede accountability in governance, limiting civic liberty and enhancing non-legitimate excessive power and infrastructural dominance disguised as public safety in the digital realm. This paper examines how digital governance regulations can aim to improve democratic transparency and accountability; additionally, it recognises that digitisation may facilitate new forms of control and repression, posing threats to human rights and democracy using an interdisciplinary method. It includes a normative and empirical framework for understanding digital semi-authoritarianism versus digital rights protection by aligning human rights with digital capabilities in the contexts of the European Union (EU) and Turkey. The dual focus is analytically strategic because the EU operates as a supranational legal structure with strong commitments to digital rights; however, there are ongoing debates about uniform implementation and uneven application across member states. Türkiye, an EU candidate, exhibits a distinct trajectory. Despite its formal involvement with certain elements of the EU acquis, Türkiye's contentious legislation and applications regarding the digital domain make it a significant case study for analysing digital rights in the context of practical tensions in democracy. The main findings reveal that, while the EU aims to advance legal and institutional mechanisms supporting digital rights, Türkiye demonstrates increased digital centralisation and control, underscoring divergent trajectories in aligning technology and democracy. Overall, the study concludes that technological governance can both empower citizens and reinforce digital semi-authoritarian tendencies, depending on legal safeguards and enforcement practices.

## **Fundamental human rights challenges in contemporary asset confiscation frameworks**

**Meri Khachatryan, Lecturer, Yerevan State University**

In recent years, asset confiscation has emerged as a central instrument in state efforts to combat corruption, organized crime and illicit financial flows. Traditional conviction-based confiscation mechanisms have often proven insufficient in addressing sophisticated financial structures and evidentiary barriers inherent in complex criminal proceedings. As a result, states have introduced alternative confiscation frameworks that prioritize asset recovery as a state priority area. While these mechanisms pursue legitimate aims, they raise significant concerns regarding their compatibility with

fundamental human rights. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of contemporary asset confiscation frameworks on the protection of fundamental rights, with particular emphasis on the right to property and the right to a fair trial. The research seeks to identify the legal and procedural conditions under which interference with these rights may be regarded as lawful, proportionate and consistent with international human rights standards. The methodology of this research is based on doctrinal legal analysis, comparative examination of modern confiscation models and in-depth analysis of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The study draws on judicial practice from multiple jurisdictions in which non-conviction-based confiscation mechanisms have been introduced, including the United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Italy and Armenia. Within this comparative context, the paper analyzes unexplained wealth regimes and in rem confiscation models as prominent examples of non-conviction-based asset recovery. These models shift the focus from establishing individual criminal liability to assessing the lawful origin of property, frequently operating on presumptions of illicit origin and shifting the burden of proof to the alleged illicit asset owner. The research addresses legal questions arising from these mechanisms, including whether establishing a causal link between unlawful conduct and the acquisition of assets constitutes a mandatory requirement and whether shifting or reversing the burden of proof is compatible with fair trial guarantees. The findings indicate that mentioned models constitute a direct interference with property rights, which can only be justified where effective procedural safeguards and guarantees are provided. As a key finding, the study argues for the application of an evidentiary threshold, such as the “balance of probabilities,” to guide judicial assessment of whether assets are reasonably likely to derive from unlawful activity. The paper further proposes differentiated approaches to the evaluation of evidence and evidentiary gaps, aimed at achieving a fair balance between the public interest in asset recovery and the protection of individual rights.

## **Artificial Intelligence and Challenges to Human Rights: Revisiting the European Lawyer’s Toolkit**

**Eirini Vyzirgiannaki, LL.M. (c), NKUA**

Artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly permeates multiple societal domains, including justice and law enforcement, public administration, migration, social welfare, and education. Its deployment generates human rights challenges, including erosion of privacy, amplification of discrimination and inequality, risks to freedom of expression and democratic participation, the spread of misinformation, as well as diminished transparency, accountability, and access to effective remedies. These concerns are well documented in literature; yet comparatively less attention has been paid to the normative and institutional capacity of the existing European human rights framework to address them in a coherent and future-proof manner. Moving beyond the impact of AI on specific substantive rights, this paper adopts a systemic methodological perspective on European human rights law. It examines whether, and to what extent, the current European human rights legal toolkit (comprising substantive norms, doctrinal principles, interpretative methods, institutional mechanisms, and remedial pathways) can be operationalised, reconceptualised, or strategically repurposed to address AI-driven interferences with human rights. The analysis is situated primarily within the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) system, also considering its interaction with other national, European, and international frameworks, including AI-specific instruments such as the Framework Convention on Artificial

Intelligence and the EU AI Act. Methodologically, the paper combines theoretical doctrinal analysis with targeted jurisprudential research, drawing on existing case law and emerging disputes involving AI in human rights-sensitive contexts. It explores how established tools of European human rights law, such as positive obligations, evolutive interpretation, systemic integration, process-based review, and strategic litigation, can be employed to address AI-related human rights risks. From a socio-legal perspective, the analysis refutes AI exceptionalism and argues that actionable responses to emerging human rights challenges can, and should, be grounded in the strategic mobilisation of existing normative and institutional tools. Rather than ad hoc legislative interventions, a specialised regime, or an overhaul of current frameworks, AI-related challenges call for leveraging the strengths, and working within the limitations, of the existing toolkit. This approach is found to serve a dual objective: ensuring the meaningful protection of affected individuals, while reinforcing the stability, resilience, and legitimacy of the European human rights system. Correspondingly, the intended contribution of this paper is twofold: first, to offer insights of practical relevance to legal practitioners, policymakers, and civil society actors; and second, to contribute to a future-oriented understanding of European human rights protection that preserves doctrinal coherence, value consistency, and institutional legitimacy, while remaining responsive to technological change.

### **State surveillance: A subtle threat to modern Democracies**

**Iason-Homeros Christidis, Trainee lawyer**

Surveillance systems employed by States have become a crucial matter of human rights protection in the recent technological era. New capabilities have led to an augmentation of these measures, while being at the heart of national security, state surveillance remains an undisclosed practice, without causing often any tangible harm. This paper aims to examine the existent legal boundaries and to underscore any shortcomings which pose a threat to the right to respect for privacy, leading to a backsliding of democratic values. The first part navigates important texts of national and European legislation and the existent case-law, provided mainly by the CJEU and the ECHR, regarding both targeted measures and mass surveillance systems. Employing a case-study method, this paper illustrates the current level of protection afforded to individuals and assesses whether these State actions comply with the established “three-part test”. The second part focuses on the cross-border aspect of the issue, as the emergence of new technologies has facilitated the so-called “global” surveillance, which takes two forms; the first one being co-operative state practice, in particular examining the example of Frontex and the legal questions arising through its operation as a “hub” of surveillance and data sharing. The second one involves unauthorised cross-border surveillance; the analysis emphasises on legal doctrines limiting the unlawful use of surveillance systems, especially the principle of extraterritorial jurisdiction according to the ECHR, and aims to highlight any legal lacuna, globally threatening the right to privacy and distorting the balance of powers between States. This paper concludes on the untamed nature of State surveillance and the subtle threat that awaits modern Democracies, should they fail to update their level of protection in line with technological evolution.

### **System(at)ic violence and the rule of law: Public space as a field of constitutional tension**



### **Panagiota Vagiou, Undergraduate student, NKUA**

This paper approaches the issue of police violence as a regulatory and institutional phenomenon that directly affects both the effective and regulatory power and application of the rule of law and the conditions for meaningful participation in public life. This is achieved by challenging the prevailing perception of police violence as an exception, thereby highlighting its function as a structural mechanism of discipline, delimitation of political action, and regulation of (co)existence in the public space. An important premise for this analysis is the examination of the monopoly of legitimate violence and the tension that develops between the state's claim to public security and the constitutional principles of human dignity, proportionality, and equality. A key variable is the concept of systemic violence as a means of repression in relation to the systematic disproportionate use of force by law enforcement agencies, combined with inadequate accountability mechanisms. This line of reasoning leads one to conclude that violence is not limited to isolated violations of rights, but erodes the regulatory core of constitutional legitimacy. This inevitably raises the question of what is (not) an isolated incident. That said, it is also necessary to examine the issue in light of the concept of "symbolic violence," which operates beyond "formal" repression, producing fear, exclusion, and normalisation of surveillance. Public space is analysed as a constitutionally protected field for the exercise of fundamental rights and collective claims, whose experience and accessibility highly depend on social, political, and gender identities. The presentation concludes with the idea that when the monopoly of violence is disconnected from the guarantees of the rule of law, both the protection of constitutional rights and the institutional conditions for democratic (co)existence in public space are being undermined.

**16:30–18:30**

**Parallel Session 2 (in English)**

**Drakopoulos Auditorium, Central University Building**

### **Human Rights from Below: Gender, Law, and Local Resistance in Contemporary India**

**Mikael Baaz, Professor, University of Gothenburg, Sweden**

Some 200 million women are estimated to be "missing" worldwide because of sex-selective abortion, infanticide, and the systematic neglect of girls' health. India is the most severely affected. According to estimates by India's Ministry of Finance, roughly 50 million women and girls are missing from the population, while a further 20 million girls are classified as "unwanted." The result is a profoundly distorted sex ratio with far-reaching social, legal, and democratic consequences. Against this backdrop, we examine how international law is taken up by local non-state actors as a resource for democratic engagement in the struggle against gender-based collective destruction. The Genocide Convention (1948) defines four protected groups: national, ethnical, racial, and religious. These categories are commonly treated as a closed system that provides legal certainty and enables strong international condemnation. Yet the scale and persistence of lethal gender discrimination expose a fundamental tension between international law's formal categories and lived experiences of collective harm. This paper addresses that tension by advancing a multicultural reading of human rights in which

international law is understood not merely as a system of state obligations, but as a shared normative language that can be interpreted, contested, and activated within democratic culture. Drawing on legal scholarship, social constructivism, and gender theory, the paper approaches gender groups as socially and politically constituted rather than biologically fixed. This perspective allows for an analytical distinction between widespread and systematic gender-based persecution, typically addressed under crimes against humanity, and broader logics of collective destruction. Rather than resolving this tension through doctrinal reclassification, the paper focuses on how legal categories function in practice as sites of democratic meaning making that shape how harm is recognized, articulated, and resisted. The empirical core of the paper examines how local civil-society actors in India, including NGOs, advocacy networks, religious organizations, and media initiatives, mobilize international legal instruments through interviews and document analysis to challenge gender based violence and discrimination. Using a multi-sited ethnographic approach, international law is conceptualized as a repertoire for democratic practice. This includes strategic engagement with UN human rights mechanisms, rights-based advocacy, community legal education, and local norm-building initiatives that foster participation, accountability, and collective learning. The paper argues that democratic culture emerges when international law is appropriated from below and analyzed through qualitative interpretive legal analysis as a platform for civic agency and learning, enabling local actors to challenge power relations.

**Turkey as a safe third country for refugees:  
Challenges for the Rule of Law in Greece and the EU legal order**  
**Eleni Koutsouraki, Assistant Professor, Hellenic Mediterranean University**

This paper aims to examine Turkey's designation as a safe third country for refugees since the adoption of the EU-Turkey Joint Statement in 2016 until today, by reviewing the relevant case law of the Greek Council of State and of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and explore their implications for Greek and EU law and policy. The implementation of safe third country mechanisms, within the broader context of the externalization of asylum, entails serious consequences for human rights, the EU legal order and the Rule of Law in its member states. In view of the new EU Pact's on Migration and Asylum entry into force, which strengthens the cooperation with third countries, it is important to reflect on the level of compliance of the Greek law and policy with EU law and the judgments of the Supreme Administrative Court. Soon after the designation of Turkey as a safe third country following the EU-Turkey Joint Statement in 2016, the Council of State confirmed the first and second instance inadmissibility asylum decisions for two individual applicants and decided, by a slim majority, not to refer the issue of Turkey's presumed safety to the CJEU (Plenary of the Council of State, 2347/2017 and 2348/2018). In 2023, given the consequences of Turkey's inclusion in the national list of safe countries and the refusal of neighbouring country's authorities to readmit asylum applicants from Greece, the Supreme Court referred the case to the CJEU (Plenary of the Council of State, 177/2023). The latter found that it was Greece's obligation under EU law not to reject asylum applications as inadmissible and proceed to their examination on the merits since Turkey refused readmissions (C-134/23). Following CJEU's ruling, the Council of State annulled Turkey's inclusion in the national safe-country list because the relevant joint ministerial decision was incompatible with EU law provisions regarding the assessment of Turkey's safety and had not considered human rights

violations by the latter (Plenary of the Council of State, 1048/2025). Despite the annulment of the ministerial decision and the findings of the Supreme Court, a new ministerial decision was issued, and Turkey is still included in the national list of safe countries. These recent developments raise important questions about the Rule of Law in Greece and the country's position within the EU legal order. The paper will discuss their implications for the implementation of the EU Pact's relevant provisions and the future of the Greek asylum and migration policy.

## **An Emotional Approach to International Human Rights Law**

**Fragkiskos Tsiros, Doctoral Researcher, European University Institute**

International human rights law is often based on an exclusively rational and legal analysis, overlooking the emotional dimensions of the lived experience of their violations. This omission is problematic, because human rights, as a social and cultural phenomenon, are embedded in society and not above it. The above phenomenon is reflected in the prevailing view within the legal world that legal reasoning and decision-making are neutral and rational processes. Indeed, the perception that there is a strong dichotomy between logic and emotion is deeply rooted in Western legal culture. However, there is now broad consensus from a philosophical, psychological, neurobiological, and sociological perspective that emotions are not simply irrational and uncontrollable, but also have a cognitive basis. In any case, emotions are an integral part of human life, and a world without emotions would be meaningless. For this reason, any conception of law in purely rational, dispassionate terms risks being inhuman. Scientific analysis in the field of law and emotions has highlighted the ways in which law influences emotions and emotions influence law. In this context, the main objective of this article is not simply to analyze how emotions influence human rights and human rights law, but to focus on the rarely examined question of whether and to what extent international human rights law as a legal and social institution produces specific emotions. In particular, the main argument of the article is that emotions are decisive for the overall shaping of international human rights law. From a positive perspective, the international human rights framework is based on empathy and motivates our imagination to understand the pain of other people and create bonds between different groups. From a negative perspective, the dialectical practice of "emotional otherness" is indicative of the forms of inclusion and exclusion within the human rights system. Methodologically, my analysis adopts a social constructivist approach—combined with critical discourse analysis—to analyze the concept of emotions. It should be clarified that this approach does not reject the biological and cognitive dimensions of emotions but focuses on their formation by culture and social structures. At the same time, my analysis highlights the concept of the social imaginary and conceives of institutions not merely as regulators of social order and our collective life, but as carriers of collective emotions and symbolisms.

## **From Neutrality to Inclusion: Queer Treaty Interpretation and SOGI Asylum Claims under International Law**

**Aristeidis Panagiotis Kypriotis, NKUA Law School Graduate, Trainee lawyer**

Despite the growing recognition of human rights irrespective of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) at international, regional, and domestic level, the international legal framework continues to inadequately address violations against SOGI minorities. In many contexts, structural discrimination, criminalisation, and social exclusion persist, compelling individuals to flee their countries of origin and seek international protection. Consequently, SOGI-related asylum claims have become an increasingly prominent feature of contemporary refugee law, raising fundamental questions regarding the interpretation of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. This paper examines whether and how SOGI-related asylum claims fall within the material scope of the Refugee Convention, focusing on the interpretation of Article 1A(2). It argues that, although the Convention was not drafted with SOGI minorities in mind, the refugee definition has evolved through interpretative practice to encompass individuals fleeing persecution on SOGI-related grounds. The theoretical framework draws on feminist treaty interpretation as a critical metamethod of treaty interpretation that exposes the gendered and heteronormative assumptions underlying claims of neutrality in international law. Within this frame of reference, the paper employs a queer treaty interpretation to challenge normative constructions of identity and to reassess core refugee law concepts in light of SOGI experiences. Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative doctrinal and theoretical analysis of international refugee law. The analysis applies an evolutionary interpretation under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties to selected jurisprudence of judicial and quasi-judicial human rights bodies concerning SOGI-related asylum claims. The method of analysis is interpretative and justificatory, evaluating how queer insights can be integrated into orthodox refugee law. The paper advances three central claims. First, notwithstanding the absence of a universally accepted definition of persecution, the serious discrimination faced by SOGI minorities constitutes persecution as a grave violation of fundamental human rights. Second, the nexus requirement is satisfied in SOGI-related asylum claims, as persecution may be linked not only to membership of a particular social group but also, in certain contexts, to religion, political opinion, or intersecting grounds. Third, SOGI minorities qualify as a “particular social group” within the meaning of Article 1A(2), as they share a common characteristic independent of the risk of persecution and are perceived as distinct by society. The paper concludes that a queer interpretative approach is essential for rendering SOGI-related harms legally intelligible under the Refugee Convention and for strengthening refugee protection in line with democratic human rights values.

### **Words can built up or tear down: How Europe speaks about minorities**

**Chrysi Vorloou, Undergraduate student, NKUA**

This study addresses the issue of hate speech in the European landscape as encountered in political speech and across the political spectrum as well as in the mainstream media. Notably, hate speech contradicts the prohibition of discrimination reflected in Protocol 12 of the ECHR. The main forms of hate speech that are dealt with are racism, sexism, discrimination against the LGBT+ community and most prominently, hate speech against immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. The aims of this



research are a) to track the levels and potential growth of hate speech in recent years b) to pinpoint the factors that motivate the use of hate speech by politicians and the media c) to detect the most affected groups and d) to find the practical implications of hate speech. In order to achieve the above, material is primarily drawn from the analysis of the Reports of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) with respect to each Member State of the Council of Europe, of the Human Rights Watch World Reports as well as from reports of NGOs representing or protecting the interests of the relevant minorities targeted, and finally though a deep dive into national and international news articles. This article is structured as follows: First, it clarifies the status of the use of hate speech in the political and media sphere, in light of the purposes of this research, across several Member States of the Council of Europe. Then, it attempts to compare and contrast the different situations in order to be led to the most important and frequently encountered elements. Finally, the conclusions are presented, among which fundamental are the following: A) The rise of hate speech around Europe in recent years is directly linked to the increasing support for right-wing political parties. B) The more politicians and the media express and normalise hate speech the more aggressive agendas are set and pursued unobstructedly as if serving legitimate purposes. C) The most common target for hate speech by far is the minority of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, frequently portrayed as criminals, as a threat to a State's national security or even to national identity. D) Hate speech is more frequently used during election periods, even by parties and personas occupying the centre of the political spectrum. Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of the respect for the right of protection from discrimination in Europe.

16:30–18:30

**Parallel Session 4 (in English)**

**School of Law (3 Sina Str.) - Hall 5**

### **Books as Vessels of Possible Futures: Shaping Democratic Imaginaries**

**Mona Lilja, Professor, University of Gothenburg**

Book burning has long symbolized the suppression of ideas, as Heinrich Heine warned: "Where they burn books, they will ultimately burn people." Today, the resurgence of book bans in the United States and elsewhere raises urgent questions: Why do books remain "dangerous" in contemporary times and for democracy? This paper explores the enduring perception of books as threats and examines their role as vessels of possible futures-material forms that can mobilize ideologies and shape democratic imaginaries. Books are not passive objects; they act as agents (actants) in envisioning alternative futures and sustaining democratic discourse. One person's hope may evoke another's fear, highlighting the emotional dynamics embedded in struggles over knowledge and ideology. Drawing on scholarship on hope, democracy, and the politics of knowledge, we argue that books offer spaces for constructive imagination-where narratives of hope challenge authoritarian impulses and foster pluralistic futures. Time, emotion, and the guardianship of ideological texts emerge as critical dimensions in understanding why books continue to matter-and why they remain contested.

## **Does the Old Testament promote Human Rights?**

**Vasiliki-Maria Vasileiou, PhD Candidate, NKUA**

The subject under consideration is whether and to what extent the text of the Old Testament can promote human rights, as they have been enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. As it is already known, the Old Testament displays a violent nature, which, in addition to its very early composition, gives the impression that it is unable to support Human Rights in their current form. However, this generalization seems to contradict the fact that the Old Testament text expresses passion for justice, and it has shaped the culture of the West for almost 2000 years, as Collins notes (2019). The above opinion can be confirmed by the biblical text itself, which includes provisions that ensure social justice. For example, by protecting the widows and the orphans (Ex. 22:22-24 and Deut. 24:19), the slaves (Ex. 21:1-11 and Deut. 15:12-18), and the foreigners (Lev. 19:33-34). Even labor rights, which today are not always respected or are under negotiation, the Old Testament has already proclaimed through the Decalogue, with its reference to the Sabbath, as a day of rest for everyone (Ex. 20:8 11 and Deut. 5:12-15). Furthermore, religious freedom is also included in Human Rights, as religion constitutes a basic human good (Philpott, 2024), even though its position, among the other Human Rights, has been disputed (Bielefeldt, Pinto & Petersen, 2022). In contrast to Philpott, Kollontai, and Lohmann (2023) have argued that religion seems to take either an opposing and indifferent or a protective stance towards the preservation of Human Rights. Nevertheless, the position of religious freedom among the most fundamental rights and goods had already been noted very early on, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, by Georg Jellinek (1851–1911) and Francesco Ruffini (1863 1934) (Bhuiyan & Zoethout, 2023). Regarding “religious freedom”, the Old Testament keeps an absolute stance towards the worship of a single god, despite the numerous deviations from the “proper faith”. Although the text prohibits the worship of other deities, it does not cease to acknowledge their existence, without considering them as real. In our opinion, this tolerance could be seen as an early sign of the concept of religious freedom. In closing, the purpose of this article is to highlight that this “misunderstood” and historically distant text ultimately promotes Human Rights by dealing with issues that are always topical and require constant alertness to safeguard them (i.e., justice and equality).

## **Human Rights, Democracy, and Critical Theological Literacy: The Case of Religious Education in Greece**

**Spyridoula Athanasopoulou-Kypriou, Lecturer, University of Crete**

The proposed paper examines the public legitimacy of Religious Education (RE) in the Greek public school system following the Greek Council of State (StE) decision 1749/2019, which affirmed the confessional and catechetical character of the subject by reference to the “rights” of believers of the “prevailing religion.” While this decision has been interpreted as a retreat from pluralistic and intercultural models of religious education (Fokas, 2024), the paper argues that it simultaneously generates a new paradox: even confessional RE, when offered as a compulsory and publicly funded subject, remains fully bound by the principles of liberal democracy and international human rights law. The analysis situates Greek Religious Education within the broader framework of liberal democratic governance, in which religion is not excluded from the public sphere but is subject to constitutional

constraints derived from equality, non-discrimination, and the protection of human rights (Makrides, 2020). Drawing on the critical literature on religion–state relations in Greece and contemporary theological approaches to Religious Education, the paper contends that the legitimacy of confessional RE cannot rest solely on constitutional references to religious tradition but must be grounded in its substantive compatibility with human rights norms and democratic values (Koukounaras Liagkis, 2022). Attention is paid to the internal tension produced by StE 1749/2019. While the decision frames the confessional orientation of RE as a right of Orthodox students, the paper argues that this right cannot justify pedagogical practices that stigmatize or marginalize vulnerable identities, including sexual minorities. This raises a critical normative question: can a public school subject expose students to doctrinal positions that undermine human dignity without violating the very constitutional order that authorizes its existence? The proposed answer is negative. In response to this challenge, the paper introduces the concept of “critical theological literacy” as a pedagogical and theological framework capable of reconciling confessional religious education with democratic norms. Critical theological literacy enables students to engage Orthodox theology reflectively, historically, and ethically, rather than through uncritical indoctrination. In this context, the theological document *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church* (Hart & Chryssavgis, 2020) is examined as an example of contemporary Orthodox theology that articulates a strong commitment to human dignity, equality, and democratic coexistence (Makrides, 2023) and can thus be an indispensable resource for RE in a Christian Orthodox milieu (Pepes, 2025).

## **A Comparative Analysis of Educational Systems and Human Rights Compliance in Canada and Greece**

**Nikolaos Liodakis, Wilfrid Laurier University, Architectures of Exclusion and Inclusion:**

This study examines the “architectural mismatch” between educational rights and realities through a comparative analysis of Canada and Greece. Despite distinct contexts—Canada’s decentralized, resource-rich federalism (Specht et al, 2022) versus Greece’s centralized, austerity-impacted system—both countries exhibit “conditional inclusion” rather than systemic transformation. The analysis reveals that Canada faces a “resource paradox,” where high spending and distinct provincial policies often sustain segregated tracks alongside inclusion. Conversely, Greece exhibits a “legislative leapfrogging” case, where ambitious laws run into structural rigidity and “inclusion on the cheap,” mainly due to economic constraints (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2012). Despite these differences, both systems remain stuck in accommodation paradigms characterized by the inflexibilities of standardized practices and assessments. The paper concludes that achieving true inclusion requires “architectural justice,” demanding the dismantling of dominant industrial educational structures, and the construction of educational ecosystems designed for human variability (Dolmage, 2017).



## **Gender Differences in Online Practices: Case Studies from Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan**

**Lara Naber, Research Consultant - UNICEF**

Women living in conservative societies often face social and cultural constraints that limit their interactions with strangers, both offline and online. Such constraints are particularly relevant for small business owners, for whom interactions with unfamiliar individuals are essential for attracting customers and sustaining economic activity. Against this background, this study asks: How do Facebook business practices differ between men and women in conservative country contexts? To address this question, the study focuses on public buying-and-selling Facebook groups in Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan and adopts a mixed-methods research design. Quantitatively, it analyzes 1,350 manually collected observations from 90 public Facebook groups over a one-month period (January 2023). Groups were selected based on explicit criteria: each group had at least 1,000 members, at least 30 posts within the previous 30 days, mixed-gender membership with no gender restrictions stated in the group description, and a general interest orientation with no restrictions on the types of products or services advertised. In parallel, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with Facebook group members and administrators to contextualize and interpret the quantitative findings. The analysis examines five hypotheses related to gender differences in posting behavior, business self-presentation, and interaction patterns in online marketplaces. The results show no significant difference between men and women in the overall frequency of business-related posts within public groups. However, notable gendered patterns emerge in the type of products advertised and in self-presentation practices. Women are more likely to advertise female-specific products and primarily target other women, whereas men advertise both male-specific and gender-neutral products. Furthermore, while gender identity is found to positively affect post engagement overall, women are more likely than men to conceal aspects of their gender identity online. These practices include avoiding profile pictures that show their face and refraining from using full names as usernames. Findings from the qualitative interviews with group administrators and members support and reinforce the quantitative analysis, offering insight into the motivations behind these behaviors and the social norms shaping online participation. Taken together, the results suggest that women adopt privacy-preserving strategies when engaging in online business activities in conservative contexts. While these strategies may help mitigate social risks, they may also come at the cost of reduced visibility and interaction within online marketplaces.

## **How HRM Promotes Social Cohesion for Minority Employees through CSR and Purpose across Cultures**

**Muhammad Ishtiaq Ishaq, Associate Professor, De Vinci Higher Education & Ali Raza, Associate Professor, Excelia Business School France**

Fair and dignified work is a core human right, yet minority employees continue to experience exclusion when human resource management practices do not adequately address cultural and institutional differences. While HRM research recognizes the importance of equality and inclusion, it remains unclear how HRM shapes individual level social cohesion among minority employees across national contexts. In this study, social cohesion is defined as employees' subjective experience of belonging, interpersonal trust, and cooperative engagement at work. We took three dimensions based on the



definition by Schiefer and Noll (2017). These dimensions include – task orientation, social relations and employee well-being. Drawing on human rights theory, social cohesion theory, and cross-cultural management research, we examine how HRM practices influence minority employees’ work experiences in two contrasting institutional settings. One setting reflects stronger individualistic norms and market-oriented employment relations. The other reflects more collectivist values and stronger institutional support through labor protections and welfare systems. These contexts were selected to capture differences not only in culture, but also in legal and labor-market arrangements that shape employment relationships. We further investigate corporate social responsibility and sense of purpose as key psychological mechanisms. These mechanisms explain how HRM practices shape employees’ ethical evaluations of the organization and their social relations at work. The study adopts three complementary empirical designs, including one survey-based study and two experimental studies. Together, these designs allow us to test perceived associations, establish causal effects, and assess consistency across methods. Minority status is defined contextually in each country, based on social, cultural, or ethnic underrepresentation within the workplace. Methods: Using multigroup analysis and MANOVA, the results show that HRM practices positively influence social cohesion among minority employees in both contexts. HRM also enhances social cohesion indirectly through CSR perceptions and a sense of purpose. These mechanisms help employees interpret their role as meaningful and socially valued. Cross-country comparisons reveal systematic variation. The Italian sample shows stronger effects of HRM, reflecting the combined influence of institutional protections, labor-market structures, and cultural norms, rather than culture alone. Results: The results show that HRM has a positive influence on social cohesion among minority employees. HRM also enhances social cohesion through CSR and a sense of purpose, which shape how employees interpret their role and how they relate to others in the workplace. The comparison across countries shows meaningful variation. The Italian sample displays a stronger impact of HRM and shows that HRM supports both task orientation and well-being. Theoretical Implications: This study offers several theoretical implications for HRM and diversity research. First, it refines existing HRM frameworks by conceptualizing social cohesion as an individual-level outcome, distinct from organizational identification, inclusion, or psychological safety. This clarification allows theory to better capture how minority employees experience everyday workplace relations. Second, the findings extend human rights theory in HRM by showing that rights-based practices operate through relational and ethical mechanisms, rather than formal compliance alone. Third, the study advances cross-national HRM theory by demonstrating that employee responses to HRM are shaped by institutional and labor-market contexts, not culture alone. The stronger effects observed in the Italian context highlight the importance of welfare systems and employment protections in shaping HRM effectiveness. Finally, by identifying corporate social responsibility and sense of purpose as mediating mechanisms, the study extends HRM and CSR theory by explaining how ethical meaning and role significance translate management practices into social cohesion among minority employees. Managerial Implications: This study offers clear practical implications for organizations managing diverse workforces. HR managers should design HRM practices that actively support minority employees’ sense of belonging, trust, and cooperation, rather than relying only on formal diversity policies. Context-sensitive HRM is essential. Practices should be aligned with national labor laws, welfare systems, and institutional expectations. Organizations should also integrate corporate social responsibility into everyday HR decisions, as CSR helps minority employees interpret HRM as fair and ethically grounded. Managers can strengthen



social cohesion by linking roles to a clear sense of purpose and social value. Finally, multinational organizations should avoid one-size fits-all HRM systems and adapt practices to local institutional conditions to support employee well-being and dignity.

## Sunday, 26 April 2026

10:00–12:00

Parallel Session 9 (in English)  
School of Law (3 Sina Str.) – Hall 6

### **The ethics of technology and artificial intelligence through the philosophy of cinema: technological prophecies and social imprint in films**

**Dimitra Dimou, Laboratory Teaching Staff, NKUA**

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies into increasing aspects of human life is gradually creating a network of relationships between AI and human rights, which, being recently established but rapidly evolving, requires multifaceted observation and study. This paper examines this web of relationships through a philosophical approach that attempts to bridge the use of AI technology with the essence and spirit of Kantian ethics: the role of AI in human dignity and autonomy is explored, based on the formulation of the categorical imperative that concerns treating individuals as ends in themselves and not simply as means to an end. The originality of the research consists in the methodology followed: the case study of the prophetic cinematic paradigms *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982) and *I, Robot* (Proyas, 2004) equips scientific discourse with arguments that essentially arise from the reflection of social fears, hopes and philosophical questions concerning the role of technology in human life, through cinematic narrative and representation. The cinematic examples that will be used will demonstrate the status of reception and assimilation of AI technology by the human society, as prophetically recorded by art. In this context, research questions will be raised regarding the role of AI, towards either upgrading or undermining primary human values. While cinematic discourse envisioned the need to create an ethical landscape for AI inspired by the lessons of storytelling, the modern scientific community demands the construction of an ethics' guide that aligns technological developments with the fundamental principles of human rights, ensuring that the future of technology respects and enhances human dignity and acquired rights. It is precisely to this scientific discussion that the present study will contribute, highlighting the potential of the philosophy of cinema to recognize and treat objects of social/political content.



## **AI and the good life: Resisting instrumental blindness in a neoliberal age**

**François Levrau, Professor, University of Antwerp:**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) does not arise in a neutral vacuum; it operates within a neoliberal framework that elevates efficiency, competition, and profit, alongside a cultural paradigm emphasizing rights, autonomy, and identity. This paper examines the ethical, social, and cultural implications of AI within its contemporary ideological context. While AI promises efficiency, accessibility, and even sustainability, its influence reaches far beyond technical domains. The paper argues that it further reshapes the symbolic and normative fabric of human life, affecting how individuals relate to others, to themselves, and to the world. This calls for scrutiny not only of technical and existential risks but also of how AI impacts the dimensions of the “good life” such as: social relations, institutions, bodily experience, ecological responsibility, meaning-making, and work. The central argument is that technological progress cannot be assessed solely in terms of capability or convenience. Instead, it requires a critical orientation toward values and purposes. The question therefore is not what AI can do, but why and for which ends we choose to deploy it. To prevent AI from becoming a “technological usurper” that undermines human flourishing, its development and application must be embedded in a framework of solidarity, sustainability, and moral imagination. This means resisting “instrumental blindness”—the assumption that every technical possibility is inherently desirable—and cultivating the personal and collective virtues and institutional safeguards that enable technology to serve, rather than supplant, the human condition. In this light, MICHAEL SANDEL’s critique of market logic offers a powerful lens for diagnosing the risks of AI. Three normative concerns capture the problem: (1) “the crowding-out effect”, whereby AI displaces intrinsic motivation and authentic engagement with instrumental convenience; (2) “the corruption of meaning”, as technological mediation alters the moral significance of e.g. relationships, creativity, and cultural goods; and (3) “fairness”, given AI’s potential to exacerbate social inequalities and deepen structural exclusion.

## **Is a Human Rights-Based Instructional Design Possible? Regulating Democratic Learning Environments in the Age of Artificial Intelligence**

**Meltem Kurtoğlu Erden, Assistant Professor, Uşak University**

Educational technologies, particularly through the integration of autonomous Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems, have evolved beyond mere pedagogical tools into active agents that govern learning environments. While these systems offer significant potential—such as personalized learning pathways, adaptive content delivery, and automated assessment mechanisms—they also promise a level of efficiency and scalability previously unattainable. However, this technological leap creates a critical paradox for democratic education. Traditional instructional design models (e.g., ADDIE, Dick & Carey) remain largely tethered to behaviorist and cognitive performance outcomes, prioritizing efficiency and cost-benefit metrics over ethical considerations. Within this technical paradigm, the promise of “personalized learning” often masks profound risks, including data privacy violations, algorithmic biases, and the systematic erosion of learner agency. This study

challenges the prevailing technocratic view, questioning whether instructional design can be reimagined as a political and ethical act grounded in human rights. By shifting the focus from purely technical processes to a framework of democratic governance, the research explores how to design learning environments that preserve intellectual autonomy and social equity in the age of autonomous AI. This research adopts critical literature review and conceptual analysis as its primary qualitative research methods. Within this framework, UNESCO's "Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence" (2021) and the Council of Europe's declarations on "AI and Human Rights" are analyzed comparatively with existing Instructional Design (ID) theories. The analytical process follows a three-stage trajectory: (1) identifying ethical gaps in current models, (2) determining democratic risks in assessment processes involving autonomous agents, and (3) integrating "Human Rights by Design" principles into the stages of instructional development. The study proposes that a Human Rights-Based Instructional Design (HRBID) model should be built upon four main pillars: Algorithmic Justice and Transparency: During the analysis phase of design, it must be questioned how the algorithms to be utilized reproduce socio-cultural biases (Noble, 2018); assessment processes must be made "contestable" and "explainable." Digital Autonomy and Agency: Grounded in Biesta's (2015) concept of "subjectification," strategies must be developed to protect the student's cognitive independence against the "nudging" effects of AI systems that risk reducing the learner to a passive data source. Data Sovereignty and Privacy: Ensuring that privacy is a design input to prevent learning analytics from transforming into a Panopticon (Foucault) that keeps the student under constant surveillance. Hybrid Governance: Constructing "Human-in-the-loop" decision-making processes not merely as a technical approval mechanism, but as a form of pedagogical advocacy for rights. In conclusion, the study asserts that a human rights-based instructional design is not only possible but a necessity for the continuity of democratic education in the age of AI. This approach rejects viewing technology as a "neutral" tool to achieve an end; instead, it defines design as a site of struggle where democratic values are defended.

### **GenAI training for in-service teachers: A systematic literature review**

**Chrysoula Papadopoulou, PhD Candidate, Open University of Cyprus &  
Christina Vasileiou, Associate Professor, Open University of Cyprus**

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has recently gained immense attention in education, due to the capabilities of GenAI tools to support personalized learning, content creation, assessment preparation, and tailored suggestions. Despite their potential to revolutionize teaching, integrating GenAI tools into teachers' daily practices remains challenging in this rapidly evolving digital landscape, highlighting the need for robust professional development to bridge competency gaps. This systematic review has explored research on professional development and training programs for in-service primary school teachers in GenAI, between 2015 and 2025. More specifically, we outline the types of programs (e.g., master's courses, seminars, workshops), their duration, methodologies, and key topics covered, and further map research identifying critical gaps for programs that empower in-service primary school teachers' GenAI skills. Methodology:



Following PRISMA guidelines, we conducted a comprehensive search across three high-quality databases; Scopus, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect. Search strings combined “generative artificial intelligence”

### **Quietly political: critical reflection in authoritarian education setting**

**Anel Kulakhmetova, Professor, inVision U**

This paper examines how critical reflection and political awareness develop among undergraduate students within a regulated higher education system in Kazakhstan. Despite formal country’s commitments to academic freedom and student-centered learning, higher education remains constrained by state-mandated standards, risk-averse institutional cultures, and pedagogical practices that privilege memorization over inquiry. The central question addressed is how critical thinking can be cultivated under such educational conditions. Situated at the intersection of critical pedagogy and political education, the author aims to demonstrate how indirect, reflective, and creative pedagogical practices enable students to engage with politically resonant questions of power, surveillance, justice, and authority. The paper is based on classroom-based qualitative data collected between 2023 and 2024 in an English-medium undergraduate Introduction to Politics or Philosophy course. Data sources include anonymized student reflective essays, visual students projects (zines and posters), classroom discussions, and course materials. The participants were first- and second-year university students. The findings show that while students rarely articulate explicit political critique, they engage in “quietly political” reflection through metaphor, allegory, and personal interpretation. Classical political and philosophical texts function as conceptual tools that allow students to discuss systems of control and authority without directly naming contemporary political actors. These practices create micro-spaces of intellectual safety in which students develop voice, confidence, and interpretive agency. The paper discusses approaches to education within authoritarian system by highlighting subtle forms of critical engagement. It suggests that creative and dialogical pedagogy can foster intellectual resilience and democratic sensibilities even in tightly regulated academic environments.

### **Beyond bouncing back: Democratic transilience, human rights, and the renewal of democratic culture**

**Michael Schulz, Professor, University of Gothenburg**

Beyond Bouncing Back: Democratic Transilience, Human Rights, Liberal democracies are increasingly strained not only by overt authoritarian challenges but by slower, cumulative processes of erosion: declining trust, growing polarisation, weakened public deliberation, and contested commitments to human rights and the rule of law. In this context, democratic resilience, often understood as the capacity to absorb shocks and return to a prior equilibrium, risks becoming analytically and normatively insufficient. If existing democratic arrangements are already exclusionary, fragile, or unjust, what does it mean for democracy to “bounce back”? This

paper revisits democratic resilience through the concept of democratic transilience: the capacity of democratic systems not only to endure and adapt under pressure, but to intentionally transform institutions, civic practices, and public norms toward more robust, inclusive, and rights-based configurations. Drawing on resilience research in social–ecological systems, polycrisis scholarship, and a consilient approach to democratic theory, the paper develops an analytical framework that links democratic culture, participation, and institutional legitimacy. The argument situates democratic transilience at the intersection of identity, participation, and social justice. It emphasises how democratic cultures are shaped through public meaning-making, participatory infrastructures, and knowledge integration across institutions, civil society, education, and media. Rather than treating crisis as an exception, the paper shows how contemporary polycrisis conditions, climate disruption, socio-economic inequality, information disorder, and geopolitical instability—demand forms of democratic learning and renewal that go beyond stability-preserving responses. By shifting the focus from endurance to renewal, the paper contributes to debates on how human rights and democratic values can be enacted in practice. It offers a framework for analysing when democratic systems convert disruption into deeper inclusion, trust, and legitimacy, and when they instead stabilise democratic fatigue and exclusion.

14:00–15:00

Poster Session

School of Law (3 Sina Str.) – Economidou Hall

### **Empowering primary teachers and social scientists in Greece through capacity building to become agents of Peace, Values and Equality. An approach based on Gender Responsive Pedagogy**

**Maria Spentzou, PhD Candidate, Democritus University of Thrace & Sevasti Chatzifotiou ,  
Professor, Democritus University of Thrace**

The research focuses on the empowerment of Primary Education teachers and social scientists in Greece through capacity building to promote peace, life values and gender equality, utilizing gender-responsive pedagogy. The recognition of the need for systematic training and support of education and social care professionals to design and implement educational interventions that promote a culture of peace, democratic values and gender equality in the school environment is highlighted. The purpose of the research is to investigate the attitudes, knowledge and experiences of educational and social scientists in relation to Values and gender equality through training and capacity building. The stages of the research include: I) Selection of questionnaires, II) Identification of participants, III) Focus groups and interviews to capture the initial situation, IV) Training on a) gender pedagogy and b) living values, V) Implementation of educational intervention, VI) Evaluation of training and intervention and redesign, VII) Creation of a guide-toolkit (with materials, activities, glossary), VIII) Creation of a community of practice for the exchange of good practices, support, networking with Civil Society. Methodology: The study



adopts a mixed methodological approach and evolves in successive stages, which include the investigation of needs through focus groups and interviews, the investigation of teachers' attitudes, the training of participants, as well as the co-design, implementation and evaluation of educational interventions in school classrooms. Emphasis is placed on the reflection and redesign of training and interventions, and the holistic approach is promoted with the involvement of school community. The survey is conducted from October 2025 to June 2028. Target groups are: 4 Public Primary Schools with primary school students (3 in Attica, 1 in Komotini) 260 teachers and social scientists (pre and in service). Results and conclusions: The results show: 1. Need for systematic training, 2. Changes in attitudes and perceptions (after training). 3. Changes in pedagogical practices with appropriate support and resources, 4. Value of co-design and community of practice, 5. Gender Responsive Pedagogy and values education work complementarily by promoting inclusion and creating a holistic quality pedagogical framework. It is proposed to expand the program to special education, non-formal education, adult education and communities of educational and social scientists in an international environment. Originality and contribution of research: The research offers a capacity building model based on interdisciplinary co-design, links theory and practice, supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4, 5, 16), promotes women's empowerment and promotes values and gender equality in society by creating a guide – toolkit of good practices accessible to all.

## **Human Rights in Greek Secondary Education: A School Textbook Analysis**

**Lazaros Siantsis, Postgraduate student, NKUA**

Human Rights Education (HRE) is widely considered a fundamental pillar both of democratic culture and social cohesion. European and international frameworks, particularly those developed by the Council of Europe, place emphasis on the role of education in cultivating respect for human dignity, equality and democratic participation. In this context, Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) seeks to move beyond the plain transmission of normative knowledge toward the development of democratic competences, which enable learners to critically and responsibly engage in contemporary pluralistic societies. In Greece, secondary education is characterized by a highly centralized, content-heavy and examination-oriented system. Although human rights are formally embedded in national curricula and cross-curricular thematic areas, their pedagogical implementation often remains fragmented and declaratory. This paper examines how human rights are represented and operationalized in Greek secondary education through an analysis of official school textbooks, focusing on the extent to which they contribute to the cultivation of democratic culture. To this end, the paper adopts a qualitative document analysis methodology, examining selected textbooks from Civic Education, History, and Religious Education that are officially approved and used in Greek lower and upper secondary schools. The analysis utilizes the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), which serves as an analytical lens for mapping textbook content onto democratic competences, including respect for human dignity and human rights, openness to cultural difference, empathy, critical thinking, civic-mindedness and ethical



judgment. The findings indicate that human rights are predominantly framed in legalistic and normative terms, particularly in Civic Education, with limited emphasis on experiential learning, ethical reflection or student agency. History textbooks offer implicit opportunities for engagement with injustice and moral dilemmas, yet often lack explicit connections to contemporary human rights principles. While Religious Education textbooks promote values such as dignity, solidarity and respect for others, they frequently situate these concepts within moral or theological narratives rather than within a universal human rights framework. The paper argues that while Greek secondary education demonstrates formal alignment with European human rights commitments, significant gaps remain between policy intentions and pedagogical practice. It concludes by proposing policy-pedagogical directions for strengthening HRE through the integration of RFCDC competences, participatory learning approaches and reflective engagement with textbook content. By grounding theoretical analysis in concrete curricular material, the paper attempts to contribute to the ongoing international debates on the practical challenges of fostering democratic culture through education.

### **History Education and Democratic Culture. Schools as “palimpsests” remembrance sites for inclusion through an oral history and mobile learning educational program**

**Maria Vlachaki, Lecturer, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki**

The advent of refugees and immigrants constitutes a controversial issue in modern societies, as it still raises in many cases prejudices towards newcomers. Additionally, the refugee or immigrant past of host countries often remains unknown, because it is not recognized as an important period of the national history. Accordingly, aiming to a homogenizing approach, the didactic time and the sources which are devoted to the history of different communities are usually restricted in history curricula and school texts. Schools can be important remembrance sites fostering the negotiation of hidden and contested aspects of the past which are included in their archives. They can be enriched with new interpretations according to the post - memory and the mnemonic needs of the present and be transformed into “palimpsests” connecting different members of the community and promoting dialogue. This contribution is based on empirical research which was conducted in Thessaloniki, a town with a diachronic and hidden multicultural identity, during the year 2024-2025 with the active participation of 11-12 year-old students of six primary schools. Students during a historical inquiry about the local history searched in the school archives and discovered that children of different communities, especially Jewish and Refugees after the Greco -Turkish War (1919-1922) attended their schools in the past. They realized that children of both different communities faced difficulties and, in many cases, stopped attending school because of the wars, forced displacement, starvation, discrimination. Starting from the school archive, the students discovered the local and general history by approaching conflicting issues such as prejudices that children faced, the lack of food and care, the insecurity and isolation due to orphanage and having a different origin and cultural identity. Furthermore, students connected the digital collections of historical sources they created at their schools with the aid of mobile learning. They opened the narrative of local history with new testimonies, because they collected new narratives about the

forced movements because of wars in the past and the present. The analysis of students' narratives during the memory walks highlighted their effort to negotiate local history by incorporating different sources and interpretations about the causes of the displacement and refugees' movements and the difficult conditions in particular children of displaced communities experienced in the past. In addition, they included material and oral testimonies that related to the contemporary refugee movements in their area highlighting continuities and changes. Their schools serve to this role as "palimpsests" remembrance sites, because refugee students from different backgrounds attend nowadays. This reflective connection between displacement, refugee movements and discrimination in the past and in the present promoted the development of a genetic historical consciousness emphasizing the importance of acceptance, inclusion and multiperspectivity.

### **Cultivating democratic skills through Assessment as Learning. The case of Practicum in postgraduate studies of teachers**

**Kalliopi Feresidi, Module Coordinator & Assigned Tutor & Zacharias Chastas, Educator**

Teacher empowerment encompasses professional development, a profound understanding of pedagogical roles, and the cultivation of communication and leadership skills. It aims to bolster educators' capacity to meet the contemporary demands of the educational system and, more specifically, the needs of the student population. To this end, key objectives include continuous professional growth, leadership development, the management of change and challenges, collaboration, and personal advancement. These pillars are inextricably linked to the multiliteracies essential for the modern teacher who seeks "phronesis" in the exercise of their role. In this context, Assessment Literacy refers to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by teachers to effectively design, implement, and interpret all evaluative processes within education; these include the assessment of student performance, pedagogical work, school units, and instructional materials etc. By mastering the "how", "what", "why", and "to what end" of evaluation, teachers develop an assessment culture that provides vital feedback for the educational output. The present study presents a teaching and learning proposal implemented during the academic years 2023-24 and 2024-25 within a Master's Program at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), targeting educators of all levels. It describes the framework, methodology, and instructional practices employed to develop Assessment Literacy and provides corresponding guidelines. Through qualitative content analysis of students' perceptions regarding this instructional approach, the results highlight the emergence of reflection and the development of assessment competence, facilitated by the use of portfolios and rubrics for thesis evaluation. A primary conclusion of this research is that Assessment Literacy can and must be fostered through teacher education, as it significantly contributes to professional development and the enhancement of the educational practice provided.



15:00–17:00

**Parallel Session 13 (in English)**

**School of Law (3 Sina Str.) – Hall 6**

### **Enhancing democratic citizenship and Intercultural awareness in transnational digital mediated contexts: insights from an ethnographic study**

**Evangelia Kalogirou, PhD Candidate, University of Thessaly & Aikaterini Michalopoulou, Professor, University of Thessaly**

The concept of citizenship in preschool and primary school children is closely linked to the perception that they are capable of being active members of society and of defining their actions and decisions. In addition, children are able to understand the reactions to, and consequences of, their actions (Baker & Le Courtois, 2022). Osler & Starkey (2006) parallel the acquisition of citizenship rights by women and other vulnerable groups, with the corresponding recognition for children, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). According to contemporary sociological perspective, young children are capable and active citizens in the present (Philips, 2011; Pechtelidis, 2020) and the orientation of education should not focus on preparing them as citizens of tomorrow but on organizing the appropriate learning environment that will encourage active citizenship in the present, within each school class (Osler & Starkey, 2006). Drawing from the aforementioned theoretical framework, we aimed to explore in depth the educational context of the European initiative eTwinning, as implemented in the Greek early childhood educational context through the lens of democratic citizenship enhancement. In this article we present findings from the ethnographic study conducted throughout 2024-25 school year taking place in two public state kindergartens (six classes). We focus on intercultural and multilingual dimensions as they inductively emerged from the analysis following Grounded Theory approach. It is found that eTwinning activities' characteristics extend from the use of the second foreign language, English, based on an institutional framework, as a "lingua franca" language for the communication and cooperation with transnational partners, to contact with the national languages of other countries and their intercultural mediation as elements that carry cultural meanings. In this way, an educational context of continuous linguistic interaction and exchange is formed, with elements of democratic and equal participation among all participants. Nonetheless, it is highlighted that teachers refer to the contact with intercultural elements as a dimension that enhances acceptance of diversity and broadens the horizons, especially of children who have limited opportunities to travel or contact other places and cultures; however, this contact focuses on them without deeper engagement or critically processing the cultural issues that arise (Magos, 2022). This suggests that further systematic integration of intercultural awareness elements in the under study context, requires a teacher preparation program at the policy level, that could inform and prepare them to fully promote such a cultural stance on young children.



## **Cultural participation, creative freedom, and democratic development: insights from Bulgaria in a European perspective**

**Zornitsa Draganova, Chief Assistant, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,  
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology**

Across Europe, cultural participation is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of democratic life, social cohesion, and rights-based development. Yet the forms, meanings, and institutional conditions of participation vary significantly across national and local contexts. The presentation explores how cultural participation in Bulgaria is shaped by mixed institutional legacies, policy instability and uneven access to culture; but also by citizens' activeness to develop innovative practices and models, to build networks, contribute to cultural ecosystems and adapt according to the situational and geographic context. The analysis builds on Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of the cultural field as a space of struggle over legitimacy and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1993), combined with Henri Lefebvre's notion of space as socially produced through power relations, practices, and representations (Lefebvre, 1991). These perspectives are complemented by Nancy Fraser's concept of participatory parity, which frames cultural participation as a prerequisite for democratic inclusion rather than a merely expressive activity (Fraser, 2008). Together, these theoretical lenses position cultural participation as both a creative practice and a democratic condition. The central argument advanced is that creative expression functions both as a democratic practice and as a diagnostic indicator of democratic development. Particular emphasis is placed on collaboration between different levels of actors in the sphere – municipalities, cultural administrations, NGOs, transnational networks, collectives and individual creators – as a crucial enabling condition for sustaining independent cultural ecosystems without neutralizing their critical and experimental capacity. Drawing on several case studies from prolonged fieldwork conducted over multiple years in Bulgarian regional cities and independent cultural spaces, the presentation demonstrates how cultural actors negotiate legitimacy, mobilize heritage and contemporary artistic practices, and construct participatory formats that extend democratic engagement beyond formal political arenas. European frameworks and initiatives such as Europa Nostra, New European Bauhaus the European Culture Deal, and the Compass for Culture articulate a shared European ambition to strengthen cultural rights, participation, and creative freedom, but at the same time their translation into local practice reveals tensions between policy discourse and the lived realities of independent cultural actors. The paper concludes by arguing that sustained support for creative freedom and institutional cooperation is not a peripheral cultural concern, but a structural prerequisite for democratic development in contemporary Europe and the specific Bulgarian context.

### **The pupils read together in their own bubbles - Case study in Finnish primary school classroom**

**Susanna Pöntinen, University of Eastern Finland, Päivi Björn, University of Eastern Finland, Sinikka Rätty-Záborszky, University of Eastern Finland & Hilikka Rätty, University of Eastern Finland**



In teaching literature to all pupils, one of the teachers' aims is to ensure access to find reading material that appeals to them and to support their flow in reading. However, what kinds of books various pupils enjoy reading is not well known. Therefore, teachers need information about children's reading preferences which can help them to offer and expand the range of reading material. In our action research, reading refers to individual reading and collective reading in cooperation between school, class, library, and home hand in hand. The school project behind our case study is supported by the Finnish National Agency for Education. The main objective of the project is to stimulate and maintain pupils aged nine to twelve years' enjoyment of reading and motivation. The aims of close collaboration between researchers, other stakeholders, and class teachers have been to systematically create a reading-friendly atmosphere in which many types of reading and linguistic backgrounds are valued. The research data collected between 2023 and 2025 in the classroom consisted of the pupils' (N=20) essays and interviews related to their own choices of reading. The results of a qualitative data driven content analysis showed the pupils' favorite books: animal, humor, and detective books, comics, picture books, fairy tales, fantasy books, joke books, and nonfiction books. The pupils' preferred books were generally well-known, diverse hybrids that combined the techniques of graphic novels, storybooks, comic books, and linear text, but books consisting solely of text were also mentioned. Some pupils' favorites included selections ranging from older classics to magical novels. The pupils described reading experiences and favorite books as having an impact on their state of mind, evoking positive emotions, and learning. When asked separately, the pupils said that reading increased their sense of belonging. As a conclusion, the results emphasize that reading is something that pupils do together in their own bubble. Surprisingly, and partly contrary to the current discourse on literacy, the results show that pupils read a wide variety of genres. Reading seems to improve well-being. The results obtained can be explained by the data collection methods used, in which the data were produced during lessons as assignments given by the class teacher. On the other hand, researchers' classroom observations support the idea that various readers enjoy reading itself as well as collective reading assignments and activities.

### **'Children let's talk about democracy'. Primary school students perceptions' and school experiences concerning democracy**

**Nikolaos Perakis, M.Ed., English Language Teacher &  
Antigoni-Alba Papakonstantinou, Associate Professor, NKUA**

In the contemporary socio-political landscape, education is increasingly recognized as a fundamental means of fostering democracy and nurturing democratic citizens. As societies undergo rapid transformation due to globalization, technological advancement, and shifting socio-economic conditions, the role of schools as spaces where democratic values are learned, experienced, and practiced becomes ever more critical. In this context, education for democracy and democratic education emerge not only as pedagogical imperatives, but also as essential processes for cultivating participatory and responsible citizenship from an early age. Contrary to its importance, there is not enough research on its implementation and effect on young students.

For that reason, the present research was implemented in order to explore the ways in which primary school students perceive and experience democracy within their school environment and how educational practices contribute—both explicitly and implicitly—to their understanding of democratic principles. Sixteen semi-structured interviews were realized with students of eleven and twelve years old attending sixth grade of primary school. Collected data were analyzed through thematic content analysis. The findings reveal that students generally perceive their school environment as democratic, even though many are not consciously aware of the mechanisms that sustain this democracy in their daily school life. Classroom practices such as collaborative decision-making, respect for diversity, and open dialogue were often identified as democratic experiences, though not always recognized as such by the students themselves. Moreover, participants demonstrated a strong belief in the importance of democracy, associating it with fairness, freedom, and collective well-being. Interestingly, their knowledge and understanding of democracy were shaped primarily by history lessons and everyday social interactions rather than by the formal subject of Social and Political Education, which appears to play a less influential role in cultivating democratic awareness.



## **Competences for Democratic Culture and challenges in teaching - findings of a field research in Greece with prospective drama teachers**

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This paper examines the practical realization of competences for democratic culture (CDC) and elements of human rights education (HRE) in everyday drama teaching. Grounded in the assumption that HRE, CDC, and drama pedagogy are interconnected, as partly found in previous research (Choleva et al., 2021), a mixed-methods research design was employed, in order to assess awareness, competence, and professional conduct related to CDC among prospective drama teachers in Greece. The research involved 52 students from the School of Drama, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, who undertook teaching placements in local primary schools during the 2024–2025 academic year. Participants engaged with the Council of Europe’s Framework of Competence for Democratic Culture (CoE, 2018) as a framework for self-observation, reflection, and planning effective drama lessons. Data were collected via anonymised questionnaires, classroom observations, individual reflective journals, and end-of-semester course papers (including devised drama lesson plans). Previously published findings of the quantitative (statistical) analysis indicated limited knowledge of HRE principles and CDC guidelines among participants, though they regarded the CDC framework as a valuable tool with great potential for monitoring, evaluating, and planning drama workshops (Choleva, 2026b). Also, the qualitative (thematic) analysis revealed conscious attempts for self-reflection and classroom observation through a CDC lens, with attempts to integrate CDC into lesson planning and interventions, scaled to the observed CDC levels (Choleva, 2026a). However, a cross-method synthesis showed the limitations in participants’ understanding, implementing and reflecting through the CDC model, within the restrictions of the research, merely attributed to the research design, but most importantly related to systemic pathologies within the Greek educational system. The paper thus discusses these factors, namely (a) limited understanding of HRE and CDC among university and primary-school students, as a systemic lack of comprehensive approach; (b) insufficient instructional time to engage substantively with the CDC model during the course, as well as within the primary school placements (teaching interventions); and (c) a fragmented approach to HRE/CDC throughout the compulsory, higher and tertiary education, which remains reliant on individual teacher initiative and commitment. These findings echo the Council of Europe’s call for a comprehensive, holistic, and interdisciplinary institutional approach to sustainable human rights education and competences for democratic culture.

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