

Foreword

The second part of the 7th International Interdisciplinary Scientific Conference “Society. Health. Welfare” Proceedings addresses challenging discussions on urban and rural social development dynamics and welfare internationally from an interdisciplinary perspective. During the editing process of the Proceedings, the novel Coronavirus disease known as COVID-19 was discovered. Due to the pandemic caused by COVID-19, which has had a global and multi-layered impact with far-reaching physical and mental health implications, the conference scientific committee decided to include COVID-19 related papers in the proceedings to contribute to responding to the challenges of the pandemic. The Proceedings presents 31 papers from various international authors, including Latvia, Ukraine, Slovakia, Croatia, Lithuania and the Russian Federation.

The first part of the Proceedings, Society, brings together ten papers focusing on values and justice. Most of the papers in this section focus on the legal side of the studied phenomenon. Titko and Polkhovska emphasise the complexity of reproductive rights, specifically, how the problem of surrogacy latency complicates the regulation of this issue in the legal setting, which in turn results in the use of surrogacy for trafficking in human beings or illegal organ transplantations. The authors discuss the legal provision of reproductive rights, as well as the problems and possible solutions in this area. Next, a paper on comparative legal research analyses whether the current labour legislation complies with Directive 2019/1152 for each of the 28 EU member states. Bozhko, Kulchii and Zadorozhnyy identify a discrepancy between the Directive and the labour legislation of EU member states and propose solutions to these discrepancies. Furthermore, Dinsberga describes tendencies of modernising the legal system for the discontinuation of compulsory divided property, which has been a continuous process. New laws and amendments of current laws and regulations are required to tackle issues between building owners and landowners. The following paper focuses on examining the link between applicable principles of insolvency processes and the preconditions for an outstanding business environment. Savickis and Dinsberga conclude that the basic principles of the insolvency process, such as the principle of quick turnover and the effectiveness of proceedings, correspond to a fast and effective insolvency process. Another law-related paper by Bocs determines the regulations and associated problems with the enforcement of EU law within the EU’s financial sector for unified unconventional monetary policies and proposes recommendations in relation to the protection of property value.

Some of the papers’ research is society-related. For example, Bikava, Kreituse and Skride study the voice of society in healthcare politics and find that NGOs led by experienced and skilled leaders are acting as active collaborators with government institutions in the healthcare field, and the voice of society can be a strong instrument that leads to necessary change. Meanwhile, Kutsepal, Zinchenko and Perebyynis have an interesting outlook on social existence in a megalopolis, arguing that on the one hand, residents of the megalopolis are subjected to the double pressure of both the crowd and residents’ ambitions and desires. On the other hand, the megalopolis offers numerous options for self-realisation, creating zones of physical and mental comfort as well as providing for residents’ careers, status and cultural development. Next, Laudere highlights the active and visible role and contribution of women in developing Buddhism in Latvia. Her study is based on fieldwork in several

Buddhist communities in Latvia from 2009 to 2016, with the aim of exploring the history and activities of Buddhist groups.

The last two papers of this section are related to COVID-19 research. Vilks and Kipāne study the criminological aspects of the COVID-19 period, specifically tendencies towards crime and the consequences of the pandemic, to identify new technological and communicative capabilities in limiting the spread of COVID-19 and preventing its negative effects. Next, Broka and Mihailova conduct their study in the municipalities to examine the flexibility of social services during the COVID-19 emergency. They find that a crisis benefit available as a last-income resort was an important universal social measure, especially for families with children during this time.

The second part, *Health*, includes public health and promotion based on fourteen papers, including voices of the services users/patients, professionals and students. In addition, technology-based papers and reviews are presented. Various papers emphasise the importance of the voices of service users or patients, acknowledging them as experts of their lives and experiences. Iakovleva and Shchelkova study the social factors of adherence to treatment in patients with coronary heart disease. The authors conclude that increasing the effectiveness of therapy remains one of the key objectives of the health care system, and the behaviour of patients in the therapy process is one of the leading factors in this context. Meanwhile, Lubiņa and Smite analyse state-funded rehabilitation services and their continuity in Latvia for patients with unilateral lower limb amputation based on statistical data and patients' perspectives. The findings indicate common barriers to receiving services, such as the lack of information and waiting lists for in-patient services, as well as personal factors. The authors propose possible short-term interventions to reduce the barriers to receiving existing rehabilitation services. Next, Littva and Králová analyse the attitudes of people, specifically patients and their relatives, in proximity to death and dying by using the Acceptation of Dying and Coping with Mortality Questionnaire. Based on the findings, the authors conclude that priority needs in life can be changed, but the final stage of life is dominated by spiritual needs. Acceptance and coping with death and mortality in relatives is marked equally by the strength of the relationships with the individual who is dying.

Kovalčikova, Banavčīnova and Levicka study the usefulness of community support resources from the perspective of parents of children with disabilities. Their findings reveal informal support (close relative and family) to be the most valuable resource for the parents of children with disabilities, and formal support (programmes and organisations) as the least useful source of support for these parents. Gudžinskiene and Čergelytė – Podgrušienė examine environments for the development of disease management competencies of children with diabetes mellitus by highlighting what helps a child with diabetes to acquire such competencies and the challenges faced while acquiring them. One important finding is that medical institutions use comprehensible terms and language with children to understand it clearly. Next, Behmane, Batraga, Greve and Rudzītis evaluate foreign patients' experience and satisfaction with health care services in Latvia. Their findings reveal that Latvia is not a well-known destination for health care services and the study highlights the shortcomings of marketing and communication factors at the macro level. Moreover, Briede and Sudraba explore voices from adults aged 18 – 49 related to anxiety association with suicidal ideation or behavior. The findings suggest that the higher the anxiety state, the higher the possibility that a person has more frequent suicidal ideation. Furthermore, a connection was found between the thoughts of an individual and the environment, which can promote or alternatively suppress the realisation of such thoughts.

Another paper analyses nurses' motivational factors for infection control in hospitals' intensive care units. Platāce, Puzirevska, Kreile and Millere state that although both material and non-material motivating factors were identified, motivation is enhanced more by

non-material or internal factors rather than by material factors, including the positive attitude of supervisors and colleagues, challenging work, a variety in work tasks, etc. The next paper explores medical students' thinking. Utināns, Ancāne, Villeruša and Vētra examine the theme of prevalence and interrelations between different types of scientific and unscientific thinking (such as magical thinking, paranormal beliefs and pseudoscientific beliefs) in the medical students of Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU) by comparing these results with American students. The study results show an average level of magical and paranormal beliefs, as well as pseudoscientific beliefs, among RSU students. The mean scores are higher when compared with the American students' beliefs in the paranormal.

A paper by Lange, Plorina, Lihacova, Derjabo and Spigulis describes a multispectral, non-invasive and portable skin lesion imaging device created in cooperation with engineers, physicists, specialists in the bio-photonics field and dermatologists. This device can be used as a screening tool at a general practitioner's office, as well as providing extra assistance to a dermatologist. Ljubi, Belani and Romac also examine the possibilities of technology in healthcare, evaluating the concept of using IT to facilitate the various needs of an elderly person who is suffering from a chronic condition and receiving both formal and informal care. An integrated e-care model is developed, employing a patient-centric approach to care delivery.

Nesterovica introduces a literature review on lower extremity overuse injuries based on scientific articles from 2013 to 2018 using a sample of different sport athletes and soldiers. The author's findings indicate that lower extremity overuse injury is an injury due to high physical load because of an incomplete repair process and with gradual onset. A paper by Kokarēviča and Ludženiece presents the cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of smoking in Latvia and the limitations and assumptions for the CBA calculation, and discusses the results of the analysis. The analysis of state costs and benefits reveals a substantial excess of state benefits resulting from tobacco smoking.

The third and closing part presents eight papers on *Welfare*, i.e. human well-being, which can be divided into four themes: services users/community members, practitioners, therapy methods for service users and methods for collecting data. Bánovčinová focuses on the needs of a family with a disabled child in the context of social capital in the community. The findings indicate the importance of economic, social and human capital in facilitating the functioning of the family. For better functioning, the authors identify the need to build family relationships with the wider environment. Gudžinskiene and Kurapkaitiene explore volunteering "helping" experiences of young adults – the change of control relation into trust relationship during a long – term and full – time volunteering. The findings reveal that the hidden abilities of volunteers, new opportunities and self-disclosure are made possible when a close relationship of trust is created.

Zakova and Stryckova study social workers' perception of marginalised clients who are frequently condemned for their lifestyle, specifically integrated care for homeless people. The authors find that social workers require basic concepts, objectives and discussions of the services in the legislation in order to provide effective services. Furthermore, integrated care is required directly in the community where their clients are located. Social work is a stressful profession, which led Raudeliūnaitė and Volff to examine the causes of stress experienced by social workers. Their study reveals both external (e.g. heavy workload, lack of cooperation, service users' negative behaviour) and internal causes (e.g. high professional requirements, perfectionism, fear of failure) which create stress for social workers at work.

Therapy-related studies are examined by both Lotko and Duhovska and Millere. Lotko's paper presents a study on animal-assisted therapy in various settings, discussing integrating therapy animals in professional activity. The findings suggest that, prior to integrating a therapy animal into professional work with a specific client or patient, restrictive factors

should be evaluated, e.g. cultural differences, the specific understanding of the animal species, any negative experiences in interaction with animals and allergies, etc. Meanwhile, Duhovska and Millere write about music therapy designed by music therapists with the aim of enhancing emotion regulation skills and improving psychological well-being for cancer patients. The authors find that music therapy in a group setting can be helpful in achieving both these aims.

Moreover, Pranka introduces the walk-and-talk methodology for studying places and people based on a one-day pilot project. Mobile interviewing as a method proves to be a useful research tool for studying the relationship between the individual and the community. In the final paper of this section, Zemaitaityte, Pauriene and Petrauskiene explore the peculiarities of biographical research in the context of informal teacher education. The study of biographies, seeing the informants' narratives as an expression of individual identity, enables the unique path of one's life from the past to be grasped, encompassing the present and the implied future.

These Proceedings provide opportunities to further consider how to cope and respond to the new challenges of changing societies. Hopefully, these papers will contribute to devising innovative approaches and solutions to empowering communities and the well-being of their members.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karmen Toros". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.