

## Letter from the SICA Chair

We are glad to present a diverse collection of research papers, policy briefs, and practitioner viewpoints on various subjects, including organized crime and corruption, as well as education policy during the COVID-19 pandemic and energy policies in Russia and Hungary. The studies shed light on various global social, political, and economic problems. The first research explores the relationship between organized crime and corruption and emphasizes the need for a coordinated policy approach. The paper underlines the significance of considering both problems when establishing policies and remedies using examples from nations like Mexico, Colombia, and Italy. The second research article compares education policies in Indonesia and the United States, emphasizing their effects.

The next research idea analyzes the energy policies of Russia and Hungary, highlighting the impact of their respective supplies of natural resources on their policies and the geopolitical tensions that have arisen as a result. The issue also has two policy briefs, the first one addresses the underrepresentation of diverse individuals in high-ranking positions within the Dutch bureaucracy is a cause for worry, as it needs to reflect the diversity of society.

The second brief explores the prospect of defense policy between the US and Russia, using a comparative sociological lens to analyze the contextual variables, policy approaches, and potential outcomes. The final study offers a practitioner's view on Romania's response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis,

exploring the role of NGOs, public institutions, and private organizations in providing support and resources to over a million refugees.

Overall, these papers provide valuable insights into the complexities of policymaking and the importance of considering contextual factors in addressing policy issues. As such, they offer valuable lessons for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners interested in understanding and addressing policy challenges worldwide. We hope these studies spark your interest and encourage you to delve deeper into these topics.

As the SICA Chair from 2021-2023, seeing the *Occasional Paper Series* develop over the years has been an amazing delight. Watching the series grow and develop into a reputable forum for knowledge and idea exchange from its modest beginnings to the present has been fascinating. I would like to thank our outgoing editor, Dr. Cristina Stanica, for her exemplary work managing the series. Under her editorship, OPS has published two special issues on Food Insecurity and Latin America and two regular issues, with the Latin American issue translated into Spanish for the first time. While we will miss Cristina, we wish her good luck as she takes on additional administrative responsibilities at her institution.

We are excited to announce a new editorial team is taking over OPS shortly. Dr. Ljubinka Andonoska and Dr. Pooja Paswan will serve as co-editors. They are joined by Gabriel S. Rojas Salazar, Samanta Varela, and Namrta Sharma as associate editors. We are confident that the new team will continue to move the series forward and eventually transition to an open-access and open-source journal. We encourage colleagues and students to submit

their research to OPS, which follows a double-blind peer review system. Moving forward, we will continue to focus on providing a platform for sharing research and knowledge that is accessible to a wide range of audiences.

-- *Meghna Sabharwal*  
*Professor, University of Texas at Dallas*  
*Outgoing SICA Chair (2021-2023)*