

Call for papers

International conference



Empathy and Human Understanding: From Narrative Worlds to Social Interaction

Organized by the Institute of German and Romance Studies
at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Prešov

Prešov, November 5–6, 2026

We are pleased to invite submissions for an international interdisciplinary conference dedicated to the study of empathy, perspective-taking, and human understanding across literary, linguistic, educational, as well as psychological, philosophical and social contexts.

At a time when societies face increasing cultural diversity, social fragmentation, and rapid technological transformation, the ability to understand the experiences, intentions, emotions, and perspectives of others has become more important than ever. Empathy is increasingly recognized not only as an individual psychological trait but as a fundamental condition of meaningful communication, social cohesion, education and intercultural dialogue.

Among the theoretical frameworks that have contributed to the study of empathy, Theory of Mind occupies a particularly important position. Originally developed within cognitive philosophy and psychology, Theory of Mind investigates the human capacity to attribute beliefs, intentions, emotions, and mental states to others. Over the past decades, it has become an influential concept in fields ranging from developmental psychology and cognitive science to literary studies, linguistics, translation studies, and education.

The conference is grounded primarily in literary studies, linguistics, didactics, and translation studies, where literary and narrative texts constitute a privileged space for the exploration of human consciousness and social understanding. Literature invites readers to experience perspectives different from their own, confront alternative points of view, and negotiate complex representations of mental states. In this sense, literary texts can be understood not only as aesthetic artefacts but also as environments in which empathy, interpretation, and perspective-taking are continuously exercised and developed.

At the same time, the capacity to understand others extends far beyond the realm of literature. Human interaction in all its forms – educational, professional, intercultural, social, and increasingly digital – depends on the ability to interpret the intentions, beliefs, and emotions of others. Questions of empathy, social cognition, and perspective-taking therefore resonate across a wide range of disciplines concerned with communication, cooperation, learning, decision-making, and social relationships.

Contributions may address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- Theory of Mind in literary analysis: narrative techniques, representation of consciousness, and reader engagement
- Cognitive approaches to literature, narrative theory, and storytelling
- Children's literature, reading competence, and age-specific processing of mental states
- Linguistic and pragmatic markers of mental states in discourse
- Empathy in spoken interaction, conversation, and discourse analysis
- Phonetic and prosodic dimensions of empathy: voice quality, intonation, emotional speech, and speech perception
- Empathy in audiobooks, oral narration, storytelling performance, and voice acting

- Audiobook reception, listening comprehension, and narrative engagement
- Translation of cognitive and emotional meaning across languages and cultures
- Intercultural perspectives on narrative, language, and cognition
- Didactic applications: literature and language teaching for the development of empathy
- Psychological and empirical approaches to reading, listening, interpretation, and social cognition
- Empathy, communication, and collaboration in professional and organizational settings
- Applications in management, leadership, negotiation, and organizational communication
- Artificial intelligence, human-computer interaction, and the simulation of empathy
- Digital narratives, media, and emerging forms of human interaction
- Interdisciplinary methodologies bridging the humanities, social sciences, cognitive sciences, and communication studies



The conference is organized within the framework of the project **VEGA 1/0242/24 *Literature as a means for developing empathy in readers.***

Abstract submission deadline: September 30, 2026 (Please complete the registration form at the following link: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/mwWGvDrVCj>)

Information on the acceptance of proposals will be sent by **October 5, 2026**

Conference languages: **French, English, Slovak**

Presentations should not exceed 20 minutes.

The conference will be held in a hybrid format, with a dedicated online section allowing participants who are unable to attend in person to present their contributions remotely.

Conference fee: €70 (PhD students: €50), payable by October 31, 2026.

The written version is to be submitted by December 31, 2026.

It must not exceed 27,000 characters (including spaces)

Scientific committee:

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