

EURASIAN JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LAW

EAJCL



Volume I • Issue I • June 2025 https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/eajcl

> Biography Submission Date: May 30, 2025 Acceptance Date: June 11, 2025

A Biography: Professor Esin ÖRÜCÜ (1940–2023)

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"Comparative Law is an enigmatic, paradoxical and elusive subject in that, just as one thinks one has mastered it, another puzzle appears on the horizon. The puzzles start with the name of the subject, continue with its definition, aims, objectives, methodology and its use in practice, and culminate in its value and significance for legal science."*

It is with deep sadness and profound respect that we commemorate the passing of Professor Esin Örücü, an internationally renowned scholar of comparative law, on 31 December 2023. A pioneering academic, an incisive comparatist, and an inspiring mentor, Professor Örücü leaves behind a legacy that will continue to shape comparative legal scholarship for generations to come.

Born in Istanbul in 1940, Esin Örücü was raised in a household shaped by discipline, education, and intellectual freedom. Her mother, a geography teacher and school principal, was a remarkable woman whose principled character, rigorous logic, and dedication to girls' education profoundly influenced Esin's development. Örücü often acknowledged her mother as her lifelong role model. She was educated at the English High School for Girls and the American College for Girls in Istanbul—institutions that cultivated her sense of self-discipline, intellectual curiosity, and cosmopolitan outlook.

Following her mother's advice to obtain a "golden bracelet" (a metaphor in Turkish culture referring to a woman's profession or university degree, regarded as a lifelong safeguard of independence and dignity, regardless of marital or financial circumstances) she entered the Istanbul University Faculty of Law, graduating as first in her class in 1965. While her initial intention was to pursue a diplomatic career, she soon found her true calling in academia. After joining the Istanbul University Faculty of Law as a lecturer in administrative law, she began doctoral studies at Istanbul University, with a research stay at the London School of Economics. She obtained her PhD and earned the title of *docent* (associate

^{*} Esin Örücü, The Enigma of Comparative Law: Variations on a Theme for the Twenty-first Century (Dordrecht: Springer, 2004).

professor) during her ten years at Istanbul University. Though admitted to the Istanbul Bar, she never practised but was honoured with a commemorative plaque after 25 years of membership.

In 1976, she moved to the United Kingdom and joined the University of Glasgow as a Lecturer in Jurisprudence and Comparative Law. She was promoted to Senior Lecturer and, in 1992, was appointed Professor of Comparative Law, becoming one of the first female law professors in the UK. She also served as Head of the Department of Jurisprudence following the merger of Legal History and Comparative Law departments. She retired formally in 2005 but continued to teach and supervise students until 2017, marking over 40 years of service to Glasgow.

Simultaneously, Professor Örücü held a part-time position as Professor of Comparative Law at Erasmus University Rotterdam from 1981 to 2005. She was the first woman appointed as a law professor at Erasmus University and remained their only female professor of law for many years. Her dual academic roles enabled significant scholarly exchange between the Netherlands and the UK.

She was also a visiting professor at SOAS, Utrecht University, Free University of Amsterdam, the European Academy of Legal Theory in Brussels, and various Turkish institutions, including Yeditepe and Okan Universities, where many of her former students had become deans.

Her research spanned comparative legal methodology, mixed legal systems, Turkish law (especially constitutional and family law), and the intersections of law with language, religion, and culture. She authored and edited numerous influential works, including *The Enigma of Comparative Law*, and remained a strong advocate for legal pluralism and interdisciplinary approaches. As she once stated, "Spotting the difference is one thing; to appreciate and understand it is another."

In 2022, the International Academy of Comparative Law (IACL) formally honoured her as one of the "Five Great Comparatists"

alongside Ewoud Hondius, Vernon Palmer, Jorge Sánchez Cordero, and Elisabeth Zoller. This was only the second cohort to receive this rare distinction since the award's inception in 2017. A *laudatio* in her honour was delivered in Paris by her long-time colleague, Professor Sue Farran.

She was also a titular member of the IACL, Vice-Chair of the Scottish Association of Comparative Law, founding Convener of the SPTL Special Subject Section of Comparative Law, and a member of the advisory board of *Juris Diversitas*. In 2009, she received an honorary doctorate from Uppsala University, where she delivered a celebrated address—despite arriving with a broken arm.

Professor Örücü remained intellectually active well into her later years. In the final months of her life, she was involved in a project for the establishment of the *Esin Foundation*, aimed at supporting women in higher education, arts, and culture. She was also a legacy donor to the Darüşşafaka Society in Turkey, demonstrating her lifelong commitment to educational opportunity and social responsibility.

Professor Örücü played a meaningful role in the early development of our journal. More than offering moral support, she provided insightful guidance and encouragement that helped shape our vision and direction. Her engagement at this foundational stage was invaluable, and we are honoured to have benefited from her wisdom and generosity.

Professor Örücü passed away peacefully at her home in Glasgow on 31 December 2023. A funeral was held at Maryhill Crematorium on 18 January 2024. Though she lived abroad for many decades, she remained deeply connected to her Turkish roots and visited often.

Her name "Esin" means "inspiration." Few lives have embodied that word more fully.

We honour her memory with admiration, gratitude, and a commitment to carry forward the rich scholarly traditions she so vibrantly shaped.

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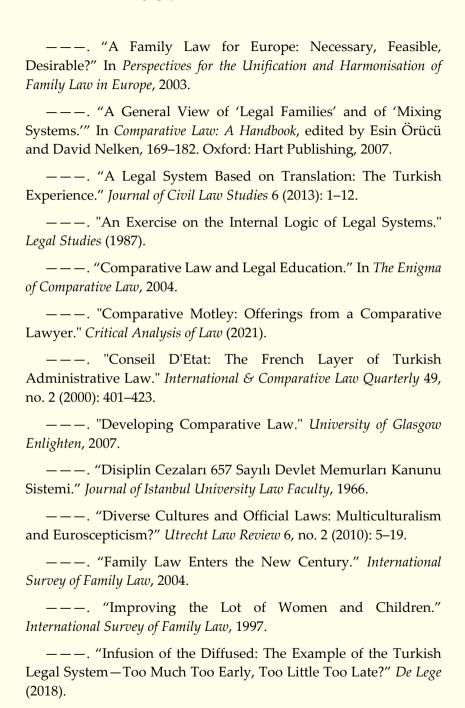
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