INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CONFERENCE

Religion and Identity in South-East Europe in the Beginning of the 21st Century

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" · Rectorate · New Conference Hall

MONDAY · 16 NOVEMBER 2026 | MORNING PROGRAMME

Working language: English-Bulgarian · All times local (Sofia)

TIME	SPEAKER AND PRESENTATION
08:30–09:00	Registration of participants
09:00–09:30	Official opening and welcome addresses
	SESSION I · Church, Nation and Identities Moderator: Bogdan Patashev
09:30–10:00	**Pantelis Kalaitzidis** · Volos Academy for Theological Studies *Religious Nationalism, Identitarian Christianity, and the Sacralization of the Land: The "Triad" of a Distorted Orthodoxy*
10:00–10:20	**Atanas Slavov** · Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"/ National Assembly of Bulgaria *Between Public Presence and Public Responsibility: The Role of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Public Life after 2020*
10:20–10:40	**Eirini Kasapi** · National and Kapodistrian University of Athens *"Reactive Orthodoxy" and the Shaping of Religion in South-East Europe*
10:40-11:00	**Discussion**
11:00–11:20	**Coffee break**
	SESSION II · Extreme Religious Identities Moderator: Atanas Slavov · Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" / National Assembly of Bulgaria
11:20–11:40	**Klara Toneva** · Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" *In Search of Belonging: Religious Radicalization and Youth Identities in South-East Europe in the 21st Century* *(in Bulgarian)*
11:40–12:00	**Nikolay Yanev** · Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"/ UNWE *Orthodox Empire and Heathen Swords: The Neo-pagan Soldiers of Putin in the Case of "Rusich"*
12:00–12:20	**Spiros Bekatoros** · Athens College *When War Becomes "Metaphysical": Religious and National Identity in Patriarch Kirill's Theology of War*
12:20–12:30	**Discussion**
12:30–13:30	**LUNCH · Alma Mater University Restaurant · For all participants**

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TIME	SPEAKER AND PRESENTATION
	SESSION III · Church, State and Identity Moderator: Kostadin Nushev · Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
13:30–13:50	**Fr. Boban Mitevski** · Institute of Security, School of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje *The Chaplain Between Faith and the State: An Analysis of the Normative Conflict Between Religious Freedom and Secularism*
13:50–14:10	**Grozdan Stoevski** · Faculty of Theology "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia University *The Relationship of Church and State in War Time – a Case Study of the Service of the Ukrainian Chaplaincy*
14:10–14:20	**Elena Dyulgerova** · Faculty of Theology "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia University *Religion, Migration and Local Identity: Transformations of Parish Life in Southeastern Bulgaria at the Beginning of the 21st Century*
14:20–14:40	**Zdravko Kanev** · Faculty of Theology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" *Religion and Public Presence in Bulgaria: Opportunities and Challenges (in Bulgarian)*
14:40-14:50	**Discussion**
14:50–15:10	**Coffee break**
	SESSION IV · Religion and War Narratives Moderator: Nikolay Krastev· Journalist and regional analyst, BTV
15:10–15:30	**Kostadin Nushev** · Faculty of Theology "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia University *Orthodox Christian Traditions and Political Ideology: Revitalization and Instrumentalization of Religion in the Context of the Neo-Imperial "Russian World" Doctrine*
15:30–15:50	**Gennadiy Vorobyov** · Besarabski Front, Ukraine-Bulgaria *The Weaponization of Orthodox Identity: Russian Religious Narratives in Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Moldova after 2022*
15:50–16:10	**Georgi Angelov** · Sensika Technologies, Bulgaria *From Orthodox Brotherhood to Spiritual Warfare: The Mobilization of Religious Narratives in the Context of the War in Ukraine*
16:10–16:30	**Margarita Gencheva** · Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" *Russian Propaganda against the Church and the Teaching of New Testament*
16:30–16:50	**Vladimir Iontchev** · Off News Media Group , Sofia *Orthodoxy in Russian Propaganda (in Bulgarian)*
16:50–17:10	**Serhii Shumylo** · Vilnius University; Libertas Fidei *The Quasi-Religious Ideology of the "Russian World" as Belief in the "Triunity of the Russian People" and Its Spread*
17:10-17:30	**Session summary and final questions**
17:30–19:00	**DINNER · Alma Mater University Restaurant · For all participants**

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TIME	SPEAKER AND PRESENTATION
09:00–09:30	Registration of participants
	SESSION V · Orthodoxy, conciliarity and belonging Moderator: Svetoslav Ribolov· Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
09:30–10:00	**Ilias Evangelou** · Aristotle University of Thessaloniki *Greek–Bulgarian Relations from the Age of Empires through the Era of Nationalisms to the Prospect of European Integration (in Bulgarian)*
10:10–10:20	**Grand Ecclesiarch Dr. Aetios (Nikiforos)** · Ecumenical Patriarchate; St Andrew's Theological College, Sydney; Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Law School *Conciliarity Before the Nations: The Pedalion (1800), Synodality, and the Uses of the Canons in South-East Europe Today*
10:20–10:40	**Archimandrite Charalampy (Nichev)** · Ecumenical Patriarchate, Archbishopric of Constantinople *Ten Years Since the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete: Its Contribution and Significance for Church Unity (in Bulgarian)*
10:40-10:50	**Discussion**
10:50–11:10	**Coffee break**
	SESSION VI · Orthodoxy, Politics and Education Strategies Moderator: Andrian Alexandrov· Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
11:10–11:30	**Marjan Gjurovski** · Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje *Religion and Identity in the Western Balkans: Factors for Stability and European Integration or Sources of Tension and Geopolitical Conflicts (in Bulgarian)*
11:30–11:50	**Rumyana Marinova-Christidi** · Faculty of History, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" *The Jews in Communist Bulgaria – Religious and Identity Challenges*
11:50–12:10	**Polina Spirova** · Faculty of Theology, · Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" *Religious Education as a Factor in Shaping the Cultural and Value Identities of Students in Bulgaria at the Beginning of the 21st Century (in Bulgarian)*
12:10–12:30	**Discussion**
12:30–13:30	**LUNCH · Alma Mater Restaurant · For all participants**

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TUESDAY · 17 NOVEMBER 2026 | AFTERNOON PROGRAMME

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TIME	SPEAKER AND PRESENTATION
	SESSION VII · Religion and Public Life Moderator: Polina Spirova · Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
14.00-14.20	**Radu Andrei-Emanuel** · Faculty of Theology, Bucharest *The Role of the Christian Family in Education and the Preservation of Christian Identity in Contemporary Society*
14:20–14:40	**Rumyana Georgieva-Lecheva** · Researcher and journalist, Sofia *A Contemporary Perspective on the Mission of the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods (in Bulgarian)*
14:40–15:00	**Nikolay Krastev** · Journalist and regional analyst, BTV *The "Serbian World": A Risk for the Western Balkans (in Bulgarian)*
15:00–15:20	**Tsvetomira Antonova** · New Bulgarian University, Sofia *Between Orthodoxy, Liberation and Geopolitics: Russia and the Construction of Bulgarian National Identity in Twenty-First-Century History Textbooks*
15:20–15:40	**Dragan Šljivić** · University of Applied Sciences, Kehl *The Orthodox Church and Democracy in Serbia 2007–2012 Revisited*
15:40-16:00	**Discussion**
16:00–16:20	**Coffee break**
	RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTATIONS Moderator: Elena Dyulgerova · Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
16:20–16:30	**Svetoslav Ribolov** · Faculty of Theology, · Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" *Presentation of the IMAGO research Project*
16:30–16:40	**Andrian Alexandrov** · Faculty of Theology, · Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" *Presentation of the RE-SPHERE research Project*
16:40–17:00	Final discussion: Religion and Identity in South-East Europe – Challenges and Prospects
17:00–19:00	**DINNER · Alma Mater Restaurant · For all participants**

The event is sponsored by

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