CENTENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE COMITE INTERNATIONAL DES SCIENCES HISTORIQUES

Historians as Public Experts: Historical Perspectives

Programme Event

International Committee of Historical Sciences | 26–30 August 2026 | Leipzig, Germany

DATE	LOCATION
27 Aug 2026, 08:30 - 10:30	House 1 T-1001
THEME	CONFERENCE
B - Teaching History and Public History	International Committee of Historical Sciences

Overview

The session will discuss the changing and varying roles of historians in the field of knowledge-based expertise, where representatives from different disciplines have contributed to defining and addressing social and political issues, and proposing solutions at both national and international level.

The aim is to analyse how the prominence of various forms of expertise (e.g. historical, sociological, and legal) has shifted over the past century in response to changing societal priorities and challenges. Particular attention will be given to the contributions of historians, the key periods when their insights have been most valued, and the diverse roles they have played in shaping public discourse and influencing political decision-making.

The session will also explore the critical role historians have played in addressing difficult issues in the nation’s past. It will consider how historians have contributed to processes whereby societies have confronted painful pasts through truth commissions, memorialization efforts, and education. In this context, the session aims to reflect on the concept of history as a "therapist" for nations and address the emotional/ psychological dimensions of engaging with the past.

Finally, the session will discuss the increasing mediatization of science over the last few decades, with a particular emphasis on history. It will examine how the media has become a powerful platform for disseminating scientific knowledge, shaping public perceptions, and influencing the cultural relevance of different fields of expertise. The session will also consider how historians have navigated the opportunities and challenges of engaging with various media.

Participants

Convenor

- Marjaana Niemi (Tampere University)

Commentator

- Pauli Kettunen (University of Helsinki)

Panelists

- Marja Jalava (Tampere University)
- Johan Samuelsson (Karlstad University)
- Steinar Aas (Nord University)

Papers

Historians Between Scholarship and Politics: Finnish Historiography Reassessing the Status of the Grand Duchy of Finland within the Russian Empire (1809–1917)

Marja Jalava (Tampere University)

Historians as Social Engineers in the Postwar Period: The Role of Swedish Historians in Governmental Commissions and Investigations

Johan Samuelsson (Karlstad University)

Norwegian War Narratives in the Age of Relativism

Steinar Aas (Nord University)

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