



# Across Borders, Beyond Classrooms: Self-organised Students and the Informal Making of Historical Knowledge

Programme Event

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

DATE 28 Aug 2026, 11:00 - 13:30	LOCATION SR9 A1004
THEME B - Teaching History and Public History	CONFERENCE International Committee of Historical Sciences

## Overview

This panel explores the role of student organisations in developing history education and historical knowledge. From the nineteenth century to today, students of history and the humanities have organised themselves on the local, national and even international level. They did so to represent their interests within their academic institutions, to campaign for social change, but also to create alternative, informal spaces for intellectual engagements outside the official curriculum. This panel aims to focus on this lesser-studied aspect of the role of informal education and cultural and scientific exchange in history student clubs and student organisations.

International exchange of students has increasingly become institutionalised in the past decades, through programmes like Erasmus or university-led partnerships. Student-led initiatives and informal student exchanges, often independent from formal frameworks, have complemented or challenged academic hierarchies. Student-led organisations like ISHA, for example, aimed to expand their understanding of history as a discipline and the role of historians through a combination of informal learning and international peer-to-peer exchanges. This panel examines how self-organised student exchanges, study trips, seminars and cultural tours facilitated direct encounters between student communities across different cities and countries, historical traditions and ideological influence spheres.

By foregrounding the educational and cultural aspects of these student collectives operating within an international framework, the panel also reflects on what it means to study history across borders today. What can we learn from the self-organised models of student mobility and informal learning from the past, and how will contemporary challenges such as geopolitics, lack of institutional support, unequal access to travel and education, globalisation and polarisation, impact the viability of such initiatives? The panel welcomes historical case studies of student organisations and history clubs engaged in informal education and international exchange, as well as future-oriented contributions that critically address the possibilities and limitations of global student exchanges today.

## Participants

### Convenor

- Charlotte Rottiers (ETH Zürich/KU Leuven)
- Sven Mörsdorf (EUI)

### Panelists

- Miroslav Vašík (Charles University Prague)
- Klára ?iháková (University of Edinburgh)
- Elina Ziehm (Central European University)
- El?za D?ldere (University of Latvia)
- Julia Boechat Machado (Central European University)

## Papers

**Nation, Education, and Beer: Student Associations as a Part of Student Culture in the Czech Lands from the 19th century to the Present**

Miroslav Vašík (Charles University Prague)

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**Die Gedanken sind frei? African Students in the 1960s GDR between Self-Organization and State Control**

Elina Ziehm (Central European University)

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**Remembering the Forbidden Past in the Baltics: Hidden Spaces of Learning and Resistance for History Students Beyond the Iron Curtain**

Elīza Džidere (University of Latvia)

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**From Global Village to Gated World: Future challenges and possibilities for the International Students of History Association**

Julia Boechat Machado (Central European University)

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**Between Diplomacy and Agency: Exchange Agreements, Mobility, and the British-Czechoslovak Youth and Students' Encounters in the 1970s**

Klára Šiháková (University of Edinburgh)

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