CENTENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE COMITE INTERNATIONAL DES SCIENCES HISTORIQUES

Professional Historians and the Public Debate on History Today

Programme Event

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

DATE	LOCATION
27 Aug 2026, 14:30 - 16:30	House 1 T-1001
THEME	CONFERENCE
B - Teaching History and Public History	International Committee of Historical Sciences

Overview

Narratives about the past have long shaped public discourse, particularly since the rise of nation-states. However, in recent years, historical memory has regained prominence in political and social debates. Across the ideological spectrum—from leftist governments in Mexico and Venezuela, which frame themselves as heirs to past popular struggles, to far-right movements that glorify an idealized national past—history has become a battleground for shaping collective identity.

Amid these polarized debates, professional historians face a critical challenge: while academic historiography continues to produce rigorous research, its impact on public discourse remains limited. This disconnect raises important questions. What risks does this pose for the discipline? If historical narratives are increasingly shaped by political agendas rather than evidence-based scholarship, will the public's understanding of history become distorted? And perhaps most importantly, what can historians do to bridge this gap?

This panel brings together junior and senior scholars to explore these pressing issues. How can historians engage more effectively in public debates without compromising academic integrity? What strategies can be used to make historical research more accessible while countering misinformation? By fostering dialogue between generations of historians, the discussion aims to identify ways to strengthen the discipline's role in shaping a more informed and critical public understanding of the past.

Participants

Convenor

- Alfredo Avila (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)

Panelists

- Alfredo Avila (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)
- Ana Sofía Rodríguez Everaert (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)
- Camila Perochena (Universidad Torcuato Di Tella)
- José María Portillo Valdés (Universidad del País Vasco)

Papers

A difficult past

Alfredo Avila (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)

Contradictions of the Memories

Ana Sofía Rodríguez Everaert (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)

Debates about the past in Argentina

Camila Perochena (Universidad Torcuato Di Tella)

Spanish discussions about the past

José María Portillo Valdés (Universidad del País Vasco)

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