

Call for Papers:

Nationalities and National Diversity in Revolutionary Ukraine, 1917–21

Venue: University of Vienna (on site)

Dates: 3–5 September 2026

Submission Deadline: 31 May 2026

Conference Theme

The revolutionary upheaval from 1917 to 1921 is among the most influential periods in modern Ukrainian history. The dissolution of the Romanov and Habsburg empires unleashed layered social, political, economic, and cultural transformations and reconfigured ethnic hierarchies in the Ukrainian lands. Ukrainian state-building efforts were accompanied by new ideas and understandings of sovereignty and nationality rights from differing sides. Meanwhile, the period of civil war and revolution that followed imperial collapse was marked by interethnic violence and pogroms. Therefore, tracing the variety of agency and experiences of those *not* identifying as or *not* being recognized as Ukrainian is central, not marginal, to understanding the revolutionary processes in the Ukrainian lands.

Ukraine was a linguistically, culturally and religiously diverse space. Non-Ukrainians, among them Poles, Jews, Russians, Germans, Greeks, Belarusians, and Moldovans/Romanians, made up about a quarter of the population. In 1918, the implementation of the law on “national-personal autonomy” marked a brief yet significant attempt to reconcile Ukraine’s state-building with the cultural and political rights of its nationalities. Including non-Ukrainian groups and individuals and their interactions with the emerging and rivalling authorities is crucial to understanding the legal and political history of this period. Exploring non-Ukrainians’ activities and interactions in civil society provides a fuller picture of the revolution’s social, economic and cultural history. This conference therefore aims to reconceptualize revolutionary Ukraine by examining the experiences, interactions and the political, cultural, and socio-economic influences of non-Ukrainians from a transnational and grassroots perspective.

Thematic Axes

We welcome diverse approaches to the topic. Potential thematic axes include but are not limited to:

- **Internal Group Dynamics:** We are particularly interested in papers that deconstruct these groups as homogeneous blocks and explore internal conflicts over social and economic hierarchies, gender relations, regional and urban-rural divides, and the challenges of national mobilization. Was national belonging “situational”? Under which circumstances and how did individuals flexibly adapt their identity in response to official categorization and national hierarchies?
- **Civil Society, Cultural and Socio-economic Dynamics:** In which civil organisations and institutions did non-Ukrainians organize themselves? Were they able/willing to draw on pre-revolutionary organizational structures or were they built from scratch? Which goals did non-Ukrainians set themselves to achieve greater cultural, social and economic emancipation? How did they utilize new social norms in civic society to achieve these goals? Which role did urban and rural environments play in self-organization? How were established cultural or religious norms and traditions challenged?

- **Transitional Statehood, Regime Changes and Legal Frameworks:** How did non-Ukrainian populations navigate the rapid governmental and regime changes (Ukrainian national governments, White Army, Anarchists and various Soviet governments)? What were the intellectual origins of these diverse regimes' approach to national diversity? Which concrete legal and constitutional projects did the constant political and military upheavals bring about for non-Ukrainians and what did it mean for them on a local level? How did various groups and individuals respond to processes of minoritization and other top-down state policies?
- **Transnational Relationships and Networks:** How did non-Ukrainians in Ukraine interact with supposed kin states (e.g., Poland, Germany, Greece) or co-nationals and co-religionists in the former empires? How did these external links influence local survival strategies, political goals and migration patterns? How did non-Ukrainians react to and interact with occupation troops sent by their kins?
- **Interactions between Nationalities:** This includes joint support of and resistance to nationalization/minoritization policies, as well as cross-ethnic initiatives focused on local self-government, relief work, the cultural sphere, socio-economic reform or gender equality. Where and how did different communities find common ground? How did inter-ethnic and religious networks structure solidarity, support and relief? How did local neighbourhoods or villages mobilize, cooperate and/or antagonize? Which inter-ethnic conflicts and competitions arose in the revolutionary context?
- **Experience of Violence and Survival Strategies:** We are interested in papers that investigate the intersection of nationality, class and sex as well as urban-rural dynamics of violence, antagonization and stigmatization. How did different national, social and gendered groups and actors employ diverse coping mechanisms and self-defense strategies during the chaos of the revolution?

The conference's keynote lecture will be delivered by **Serhy Yekelchyk** (University of Victoria, BC).

Submission Guidelines

We invite scholars at all career stages. Applications by PhD students are particularly encouraged. Contributions from the fields of history, social sciences, and cultural studies are welcome. A publication of selected papers in a special issue is planned as a result of the conference.

Proposals should include:

- An **abstract** of no more than **350 words** outlining the research question, the primary source base, and the paper's contribution to the conference theme.
- **Short CV**

Please send your proposal by **31 May 2026** to nurukraine.iog@univie.ac.at in a single PDF.

Practical Information

- **Language:** The conference language will be English.
- **Notification:** Applicants will be notified of the committee's decision by June 12th 2026.
- **Travel & Accommodation:** Accommodation will be fully covered by the organizers. Reimbursement of travel costs will be available upon request.

Organizer: Austrian-Polish Opus-Weave (FWF-NCN) project *Non-Ukrainians in Revolutionary Ukraine, 1917-1921* (NURU), Polish Academy of Sciences and University of Vienna

For more information on the project visit our website: <https://nuru.univie.ac.at/>