



“The Lasting Presence of the Past: How Trauma Lives on Across Generations?”

16th Genealogies of Memory

23–25 September 2026, Iași, Romania

How does trauma live on after those who experienced it directly are gone? What happens when memories are passed from one generation to the next through family stories, silences, archives, art or digital media? And how do societies reconstruct a past that can no longer be remembered first-hand? These questions will be at the centre of the 16th Genealogies of Memory Conference, organised by the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS), taking place on 23–25 September 2026 in Iași, Romania.

Under the title “**The Lasting Presence of the Past: How Trauma Lives on Across Generations?**”, the three-day international conference will bring together scholars and researchers from across Europe and beyond to explore the ways traumatic experiences continue to shape families, communities and societies long after the events themselves have passed.

A highlight of the opening day will be the keynote lecture “**Remembering Possibility: Rethinking Holocaust Memory in a Time of Genocide**”, delivered jointly by **Marianne Hirsch of Columbia University** and **Leo Spitzer of Dartmouth College**. Hirsch is one of the most influential scholars of memory studies and the author of the concept of **postmemory**, which has become fundamental to understanding how descendants relate to traumatic experiences they did not live through themselves.

When the past belongs to more than one generation

Wars, genocides, forced displacement, political repression and colonial violence do not end with the generation that experiences them directly. Their traces may persist in family narratives and silences, inherited emotions, cultural practices, archives, public commemorations and political discourse. The conference will examine precisely these processes of intergenerational and transgenerational transmission of memory and trauma.

Central and Eastern Europe, profoundly shaped by the upheavals of the twentieth century, will provide an important point of reference, but the discussions in Iași will reach well beyond the region. By bringing together different geographical and historical experiences, the conference will place European cases within wider debates about postmemory, dialogic and multidirectional memory, inherited trauma and the politics of remembrance.

Over three days, participants will ask what happens when transmission is interrupted; how gaps, absences and silences themselves become forms of memory; and how subsequent generations reconstruct experiences to which they have no direct access.

From family silence to digital memory

The programme comprises **nine thematic panels**, addressing subjects ranging from artistic representations of trauma and family histories to archives, sites of violence, competing memories and the circulation of traumatic pasts online.

The first day will look, among other subjects, at **artistic and reconstructive practices of trauma**, Stalinist deportations, anti-communist resistance, the legacy of Ceaușescu’s pronatalist policies, post-war Kosovo and the intergenerational memory of Romania’s communist past.

The second day will turn towards **archives and sites of violence**, as well as the increasingly important role of digital media. Participants will discuss how film, art, archival practices and online communication can make traumatic histories visible, but also how digital environments can distort them, reinforce polarisation and create echo chambers.

The final day will focus on **hegemonic histories, counter-narratives and the many forms of silence surrounding trauma**, drawing on examples including the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, Stalinist deportations, the Stutthof concentration camp and twentieth-century Spain.

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Throughout the conference, case studies will range geographically from **Romania, Moldova, Poland and Latvia to Germany, Spain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Türkiye and other contexts**, offering an opportunity to compare different ways in which societies remember, suppress and reinterpret difficult pasts.

Who has the right to tell a traumatic story?

An important thread running through the conference will be the question of representation. What does it mean for second and third generations to reconstruct events they did not witness? When does reconstruction restore an erased history, and when might it simplify or distort it? Who becomes an “agent of memory” — the family, the archive, the museum, the artist, the state, or increasingly the digital platform?

These questions will also inform the concluding **roundtable discussion, “The Lasting Presence of Violence: Remembering, Narrating and Transmitting Trauma”**, with Dana Dolghin, Johana Kotišová and Dawid Grabowski of the University of Amsterdam.

The academic programme will conclude with a lecture and guided tour led by Mihai Bulai of Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, examining how historical memory and trauma are mediated through tourism in the city itself.

The 2026 edition is convened by Dr Simona Mitroiu of Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași.

Participation is free of charge, but registration is obligatory.

Programme and registration: www.enrs.eu/edition/genealogies-of-memory-2026

Genealogies of Memory

Launched by the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, Genealogies of Memory creates a platform for international academic exchange on individual and collective memory, with particular emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe and its place within the wider field of memory studies.

By combining theoretical perspectives with empirical case studies, this year’s conference seeks to open a dialogue not only about how past traumas survive in the present, but also about how inherited memories are continually reconstructed, contested and given new meanings by subsequent generations.

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