



## Seventh Congress on Polish Studies

University of Potsdam, March 11-14, 2027

### Was kommt. Zukünfte entwerfen Co nadzieje. Projektowanie przyszłości What's Coming. Designing Futures

Call for Papers / Call for Panels

The Seventh Congress on Polish Studies, to be held in Potsdam in March 2027, offers academics from all disciplines whose work focuses on Poland a renewed opportunity to present their current research, to network, and to discuss the current state of Poland-related research. The overarching theme of the Potsdam Congress is the future as a challenge for the contemporary and historical present: “What’s Coming. Designing Futures.”

Being optimistic about the future is often difficult today, and not just in Poland: Neighboring Ukraine is afflicted by the terror of years of war, Russia's hybrid warfare threatens Europe's stability, and climate change is undermining social development forecasts and individual life plans. The concurrence of ecological, demographic, political, and social challenges reveals the vulnerability of social and institutional orders and calls into question certainties previously adhered to. Uncertainty and the intrusion of the catastrophic into the present are impeding political visions of the future, especially the prospect of a “better future.” At the same time, the promise of the technological revolution is as salutary as it is dystopian, making the future even more unpredictable in other ways—but no less so. Nevertheless, envisioning and designing different futures is one of the most important crisis management skills. Thinking in terms of alternatives—be this through utopian impulses such as wishful thinking and dreams or through analytical forecasting or strategic planning—inspires hope, generates (self-)confidence, and creates scope for action.

What is the state of Poland's thinking about the future? The temporal orientation of Polish culture continues to be markedly influenced by the past: The politics of history plays an extremely important role in everyday political life, retrotopian thinking is gaining ground in the right-wing conservative camp, and a sociopsychological diagnosis of Poland as a “traumaland” (Bilewicz)—albeit one that simultaneously seeks solutions—is garnering a great deal of attention. The ubiquity of the past can be construed as one phenomenon of sociologically diagnosed stagnation in the present (Gumbrecht, Nowotny, Bauman). Today, this “broad present” in Poland (and elsewhere) stands in precarious relation to the necessity, in times of crisis and increased ephemerality of ideas, to venture a long-term

perspective and to design possible futures, not least to respond to the younger generations' natural desire for their future.

What experiences from the past is future-oriented thinking in Poland today able to draw on? What role has the future played in Polish history—from its beginnings to the twentieth century? The Enlightenment reimagined the future, and the struggle for national self-assertion in the nineteenth century also revolved around shaping the future. Moreover, in both 1918 and 1944/45, attempts were made to transform utopian ideas into reality. The emergence of the *Solidarność* movement in 1980/81 famously opened up perspectives on the future, giving rise to great hopes and expectations. Can we still learn something from this Polish experience of widespread solidarity today when, faced with multiple crises and growing inequality, the utopia of solidarity is (once again) being evoked nostalgically in many places? What other laboratories does Polish culture offer, or has it offered, for the future—in political practice, societal coexistence, and imaginatively in literature, art, film, theater, and popular culture? What fears, dreams, and visions of the future did they and do they discuss? How have Polish philosophy, sociology, and economics contributed to thinking about the future? Does the rapidly growing Polish economy care about and worry for the future? What visions of the future are (or have been) possible in Polish politics? What does the future hold for Polish democracy and the rule of law? How was and is the future of Europe perceived in Poland? What practical ways of dealing with uncertainty, risk, and fears about the future have existed and still exist in Polish society?

We would welcome analyses and illustrative explorations of future-oriented processes and practices, prospective designs, and visions of the future in Poland's cultural, social, and political past and present. Issues from all disciplines should be discussed collectively and in transnational or comparative contexts. Last but not least, another focus is the self-conception of the humanities and social sciences in times of uncertainty and fear for the future.

Characterized in its mission statement as “young, modern, future-oriented,” the University of Potsdam is a robust hub of cultural studies research on Poland. The Seventh Congress on Polish Studies in Potsdam provides an opportunity to engage in dialog across disciplinary boundaries and German-speaking countries, to establish and maintain contacts, to develop projects, and to learn about the current state of Polish studies. It follows on from the first six congresses (Darmstadt 2009, Mainz 2011, Giessen 2014, Frankfurt/Oder 2017, Halle 2020, Dresden 2024), each of which was attended by around 300 academics. Exhibitions by publishers and institutions, as well as an accompanying program, complement the congress. The congress languages are German, Polish, or English.

### **Application for individual presentations and sections**

All interested parties are cordially invited to submit proposals for individual presentations or entire sections. You may focus on the overarching theme “What's Coming. Designing Futures,” but you are also free to address other thematic areas of particular relevance to research. Proposals for entire sections generally stand a better chance of being included in the congress program.

Individual presentations: Individual presentations are limited to 25 minutes in duration. The organizers will combine the selected individual presentations into thematic, disciplinary, or open sections.

Section proposals: Sections will span between 90 and 120 minutes. There should be three to four speakers; it is recommended that each speaker include a commentary; in addition, representatives from more than one academic center must be included. International sections, for example, German-Polish sections, are particularly welcome. Artists (keyword: artistic research) and experts from business, politics, and civil society can be integrated into the sections. The organizers reserve the right to supplement or modify the selected sections in consultation with the proposers.

The **deadline** for submitting proposals for presentations and sections is **May 29, 2026**.

The selection will be decided by the end of July 2026.

[Application form for a section](#)

[Application form for an individual presentation](#)

### **Application for the forum format**

The “forum” format allows for focus on suitable topics for a period of 90 or 120 minutes. After a brief introduction by the organizers and their invited guests, participants will discuss the chosen topic in as multidisciplinary a context as possible. The congress organizers reserve the right to suggest thematic forums themselves.

The **deadline** for applications for the forums is **September 15, 2026**.

The selection of the forums will be decided by the end of October 2026.

[Application form for a forum session](#)

### **Application for the interval format**

Half-hour “interval” slots are available for project presentations, presentations by institutions, publications or publication series, short discussions, etc.

The **deadline** for applications for the interval slots is **September 15, 2026**.

The selection of contributions for the interval slots will be decided by the end of October 2026.

[Application form for an interval slot](#)

### **Application for concise project presentations**

In addition to the longer presentations, we provide opportunities to give concise project presentations in the plenum (2–3 minutes)—primarily for researchers at an early stage in their careers.

The **deadline** for applications for concise project presentations is **December 15, 2026**.

The selection of these concise presentations will be decided by the end of January 2027.

[Application form for a concise project presentation](#)

### **Application for poster presentations**

If you would like to present your project with a **poster**, you can register this by **January 31, 2027**.

[Poster registration form](#)

### **Exhibitors, stands**

Exhibitors (institutions, publishers, companies) can present themselves in a variety of ways at the Seventh Congress on Polish Studies. The cost of hiring furniture (tables, chairs, partition walls) is expected to be very low. If you are interested, please liaise with the organizers **by January 15, 2027**.

### **Invitation to participate without contributing input**

We invite anyone interested in participating without contributing input to register at [www.polenforschung.de/Anmeldung-Registration/](http://www.polenforschung.de/Anmeldung-Registration/). Registrations will be possible **starting in summer 2026**. Please note: All registrations are binding and will be valid once the congress fee has been transferred. For organizational reasons, it is not possible to refund congress fees.

### **Overnight stays, childcare, discounts**

The organizers will publish accommodation information on the website starting in autumn 2026. All registered participants will receive further information in good time. The organizers are working to secure third-party funding to reduce travel and congress costs for early-career researchers. Information about discounts and, if funding is secured, possible reimbursements will be posted on the congress website.

There are plans to make childcare available during the congress. More information will follow in autumn 2026.

### **Applications, registrations**

Submission of proposals for sections, individual presentations, and project presentations, as well as contact persons for all content-related queries: German Institute of Polish Affairs [polenforschung@dpi-da.de](mailto:polenforschung@dpi-da.de)

For organizational queries and to register poster presentations, stands, and exhibitions, please contact our organization office effective June 1, 2026 [polenforschung27@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:polenforschung27@uni-potsdam.de)

We look forward to an exciting and diverse congress!