



Irish Association for Russian, Central and East European Studies  
An Cumann Éireannach um Staidéar ar an Rúis agus ar Thíortha  
na hEorpa Láir agus Thoir

Call for Papers for Conference on  
**Conversions in Russia, Central and Eastern Europe since 1800:  
Religious, National, Ideological and Sexual**

University of Galway, 16-17 June 2026



Viktor Vasnetsov. Baptism of Prince Vladimir. Fragment of the painting of the Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev, between 1885 and 1893  
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As a region, Russia, Central and Eastern Europe has been characterised historically by great religious diversity, with Roman Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Christians, Jews and Muslims living in close proximity to one another. While most of these remained within the faith into which they were born, some converted to a different faith over the course of their lifetime. The motives behind and experience of conversion varied widely, however, from personal to political, voluntary to forced, gradual to sudden, temporary to permanent, discreet to visible, sincere to opportunistic, beneficial to life-threatening.

This region also experienced other kinds of conversions in the modern period, which operated on similar axes. In the context of competing nationalisms, a small cohort rejected their presumed national identity to embrace another, often expressing it by translating their name into the language of their new imagined community. The spread of socialism and especially Bolshevism attracted a much larger group of converts across the region, displacing older religious identities. Finally, the postwar sexual revolution, which enabled apparent shifts in sexual orientation and gender identities, made halting progress in the region both before and after the collapse of communism.

This conference seeks to explore these various processes of conversion in the region of Russia, Central and Eastern Europe from 1800 to the present. Papers are invited on any aspect of the conversion process and from any of the following disciplines, broadly understood: History, Political Science, Languages and Literatures, Cultural Studies.

Possible topics include:

- Forced conversions
- Conversion campaigns
- Social mobility and conversion
- Moments of conversion – marriage, adulthood, illness, deathbed
- Rituals and visible signs of conversion
- Conversion narratives
- Community and state responses to conversion
- Cult of converts: heroes, martyrs, renegades
- Literary and artistic depictions of conversion

Please send one **Word file** with the title of your paper, an abstract of 200-250 words and a biographical note of 100 words, giving your affiliation, career stage and any relevant publications, to [conversions2026@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:conversions2026@universityofgalway.ie) by **Friday, 20 February**. Applicants will be notified by 2 March if their paper has been accepted.

The conference fee of €60 (reduced to €15 for postgraduate students), which will be due by 1 May, includes membership of the IARCEES. Catering will be provided throughout the conference. Participants are responsible for their travel to and accommodation in Galway. There will be three scholarships for early career researchers who can demonstrate that they do not have access to institutional funding.

Organised by Dr Róisín Healy, this conference is held in conjunction with the Centre for the Study of Religion and the Centre for the Investigation of Transnational Encounters and supported by the School of History and Philosophy at the University of Galway.



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