

Polish Academy of Sciences

The Polish Academy of Science is state scientific institution conducting activities aimed at the development, promotion and dissemination of science. The Polish Academy of Sciences functions as a corporation of scientists and a network of scientific institutes.

<https://pan.pl>

Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities

Founded in 1846 under the name of Royal Saxon Society for the Sciences, the Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities, is rooted in the idea of the academy formed by Leibniz to unite “theoriam cum praxi”. More than 200 scientists of all disciplines meet regularly to exchange views, examine methods and results of specialist studies in interdisciplinary discussion and engage in long-term basic research.

<https://www.saw-leipzig.de>

House of European History

The House of European History is a history museum in Brussels, Belgium, focusing on the recent history of the continent of Europe and the European integration process. It is an initiative by the European Parliament, and opened on 6 May 2017.

<https://historia.europa.eu/en>

Illustrations

- 1 King Eric (1382–1459) and Queen Philippa (1394–1430), the ruling couple of the Kalmar Union. Choir stalls from Kirkjubæur Cathedral, Faroe Islands, National Museum of the Faroe Islands.
- 2 Coat of arms of the Union between the Kingdom of Poland, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Electorate of Saxony (1697–1706, 1709–1763); public domain.
- 3 Coat of arms of Queen Isabella I of Castile (1451–1504) and King Ferdinand II of Aragon (1452–1516); manuscript "Cancionero de Pedro Marcuello" (1502), Musée Condé in the Château de Chantilly.



The three-day international conference at the House of European History in Brussels aims to bring together researchers working on the history of European unions over the last thousand years. Inter-state unions and composite polities have been a significant phenomenon in European history. Often formed on the basis of a legal agreement or contract between the political units that form them, they represent an alternative to imperial power structures mainly based on military expansion and conquest. However, political unions also existed within empires. Unions and composite systems played a greater role in the medieval and early modern history of Europe as a whole than empires. The legacy of these unions, whether regarded positively or negatively, forms an important part of cultures of memory in many European countries; their history is playing an increasingly significant role in the intellectual discourse on the prefiguration and models for the contemporary European Union.

Organisers / Scientific Directors

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Registration / Further information



Please register by 1 September 2026.
The registration form can be found on the conference website:
www.saw-leipzig.de/political-unions

Venue

House of European History
Rue Belliard / Belliardstraat 135
1000 Brussels, Belgium



HOUSE OF
EUROPEAN
HISTORY

Please note: The House of European History opens at 1 pm on Monday and at 9 am on Tuesday and Wednesday. As you will need to go through a security check, please allow plenty of time to get inside.



This conference is co-financed by the Saxon State government out of the State budget approved by the Saxon State Parliament.



Berlin
Centre for Historical
Research



Sächsische Akademie
der Wissenschaften
zu Leipzig



Political Unions

in European History (10th–18th Centuries) and
Their Perception in the Cultures of Remembrance
(19th–21st Centuries)

International
conference
7 to 9 September 2026
Brussels



MONDAY, September 7, 2026

OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE	
1:00	<i>Registration</i>
1:30 p.m.	<i>Welcome</i> Constanze Itzel Director of the House of European History
	<i>Opening remarks</i> Hans-Joachim Knölker President of the Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities Mirostawa Ostrowska Vice-President of the Polish Academy of Sciences
	<i>Introduction to the conference</i> Wolfgang Huschner Vice-President of the axon Academy of Sciences and Humanities Igor Kąkolewski Director of the Center for Historical Research Berlin of the Polish Academy of Sciences
<i>Section 1</i> LONG-TERM EXISTING UNIONS Moderator: Louis Sicking (University of Leiden)	
2:00	Carsten Jahnke (University of Copenhagen) The rise, development, and fall of the so-called Kalmar Union (1375–1523). From shared interests to the struggle between the monarchy and the estates
2:30	Ignacio Czeguhn (Free University of Berlin), Aranda Antonio Sánchez (University of Granada) From the Trastamara to the Austrias (Habsburgs): The universal Hispanic Monarchy – matrimonial and political unions
3:00	<i>Discussion / 3:30 Coffee break</i>
Moderator: Kolja Lichy (University of Vienna)	
4:00	Sara Moreno Tejada (University of Elche) From the Habsburgs to the Bourbons: The legal unification of the Spanish monarchy
4:30	Petr Maťa (Austrian Academy of Sciences) The Habsburg monarchy. A laboratory of political Unions?
5:00	<i>Discussion</i>

TUESDAY, September 8, 2026

	Moderator: Antonella Ghignoli (University of Rome “La Sapienza”)
9:30 a.m.	Wolfgang Huschner (Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities) Between Acceptance, Tolerance, and Separation. Unions between the German Kingdom and the Italian Kingdom (10th–12th centuries)
10:00	Josep Serrano Daura (International University of Barcelona) The dynastic union of the so-called Crown of Aragon (12th–18th centuries) <i>Lecture in Spanish</i>
10:30	<i>Discussion / 11:00 Coffee break</i>
Moderator: Maciej Janowski (Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences)	
11:30	Alvin Jackson (University of Edinburgh) Comparing the Anglo-Scottish union (1707), the British-Irish union (1801) and their legacies’
12:00	Arnd Reitemeier (Georg-August University of Göttingen / Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Lower Saxony) The personal union between the Electorate of Hanover and Great Britain 1714–1837: expectations and preparations – experiment and institutional consolidation – low-profit but sustainable
12:30	<i>Discussion / 1:00 p.m. Lunch break</i>
<i>Section 2</i> LONG- AND MEDIUM-TERM EXISTING UNIONS Moderator: Karin Friedrich (University of Aberdeen)	
2:30 p.m.	Miloš Řezník (Chemnitz University of Technology) The Polish-Saxon Union 1697–1763 and its unexpected consequences
3:00	Mindaugas Šapoka (Lithuanian Institute of History in Vilnius) Union tested, Union endured: Poland–Lithuania and Saxony in the Great Northern War
3:30	<i>Discussion / 4:00 Coffee break</i>

TUESDAY, September 8, 2026



4:30 p.m.

PUBLIC KEYNOTE

Robert Frost (University of Aberdeen)
When is a union not a union?
Thoughts on composite political systems in late medieval and early modern Europe

DISCUSSION

Moderator: **Miloš Řezník** (Chemnitz University of Technology)

WEDNESDAY, September 9, 2026

	Moderator: Carsten Jahnke (University of Copenhagen)
9:30 a.m.	Marie Bønløkke (Ryfmuseet in Sand) The North Sea Empire of Cnut the Great: Short-Term Reality with Long-Term Effects?
10:00	Stephan Flemmig (Friedrich Schiller University of Jena / Saxon Academy of Sciences): The Bohemian-Hungarian Personal Union (1490–1526) in the context of Jagiellonian policy in Eastern Central Europe
10:30	<i>Discussion / 11:00 Coffee break</i>
<i>Section 3</i> SHORT- TERM EXISTING UNIONS Moderator: Ignacio Czeguhn (Free University of Berlin)	
11:30	Félix Martínez Llorente (University of Valladolid) Two experiences of matrimonial political union in the kingdoms of León/Castile and Aragon (1109 / 1474): legal and political foundations
12:00	José Antonio Pérez Juan (University of Elche) Napoleon’s Dynastic Project in Spain: Legitimacy, Reform, and Political Fracture (1808–1813) <i>Lecture in Spanish</i>
12:30	<i>Discussion / 1:00 p.m. Lunch break</i>
<i>Section 4</i> RETROSPECTIVES ON POLITICAL UNIONS Moderator: Robert Frost (University of Aberdeen)	
2:30 p.m.	Ian Peter Grohse (Arctic University of Norway) Between Nordic unity and national-historical identity. The Kalmar Union in Scandinavian historiography
3:00	Maciej Górný (Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences) The Polish-Lithuanian unions in the politics of memory. The long shadow of the Commonwealth: Union and Federation as political concepts
3:30	Igor Kąkolewski (Center for Historical Research Berlin, Polish Academy of Sciences): Political unions and the legacy of premodern multi-culturalism in Central-Eastern Europe in the 20th and early 21st centuries
4:00	<i>Discussion / 4:30 Coffe break</i>
5:00	<i>Closing Panel discussion</i> Political Unions: A Curse or a Blessing in European History? I. Czeguhn, R. Frost, C. Jahnke, M. Janowski