Call for Papers

For the 2nd International Solidarity Research Conference ISRC

Limits of Learning and Solidarity

05. - 06. November 2026, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

The idea of solidarity provides a foundation for the cohesion of the currently increasingly fragmented societies. This basis for social ties can be illustrated by reference to collective identities or the welfare state structures that characterise modern societies. Solidarity is theoretically defined as a distinct form of moral commitment among individuals, involving the provision of direct or indirect support based on a sense of normative obligation arising from political, social and cultural relations. From the perspective of the theory of social learning boundaries developed by Mergner (1999), such normative orientations are not acquired in a neutral social space but are shaped, constrained, and often limited by prevailing power relations and dominant moral frameworks within society. Therefore it is relevant to speak about the *social limits of learning solidarity* and not only *doing solidarity* while concerning the *solidarity boundaries*.

In contemporary empirical research, solidarity is conceptualised in a variety of ways, including family solidarity, solidarity economies, professional solidarity, intergenerational solidarity, cross-racial solidarity, trans-national solidarity, climate justice solidarity, or gender solidarity. While this list is not exhaustive, these concepts draw attention to key societal domains in which solidarity is produced and contested, notably 'family', 'work', 'nation' (in the form of welfare state or civil society), and 'nature'. Solidarity practices may therefore manifest informally within families, social groups, and social movements, directed both towards human beings and their ecological environment, while also becoming institutionalised and legally regulated by the state. However, these practices are learned within socially sanctioned frameworks that privilege certain forms of solidarity while marginalising others.

Crucially, neither states nor social groups or individuals can be said to demonstrate solidarity with everyone and everywhere under any circumstances. Empirical observations reveal instances in which states and civil society actors show reluctance, for example with regard to the equal status of diverse gender groups or the welcoming of migrants. This reluctance may result in restrictive policies, procedures of civil rejection targeting excluded social groups, or the criminalisation of activist movements and individuals who resist such restrictions and support those who are rejected. From a social learning boundary perspective, these exclusions illustrate how dominant norms define who is considered deserving of solidarity and who remains outside its moral boundaries.

In democratic welfare states, solidarity is formally recognised as a fundamental principle grounded in social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversity. Nevertheless, social learning processes often reproduce existing inequalities rather than challenge them. When solidarity is primarily learned as conformity to dominant institutional norms, critical and emancipatory forms of solidarity are constrained. It therefore becomes imperative to examine not only existing concepts and practices of solidarity, but also cases of its erosion or absence.

Periods of social upheaval, emerging challenges, or the weakening of established solidaristic arrangements make the need for solidarity particularly visible. At the same time, when the political or moral foundations of solidarity erode, institutional regulations may become more restrictive or vulnerable, potentially compromising their existence and functionality. Contemporary forms of solidarity are increasingly shaped by overlapping crises such as migration, economic precarity, and climate change, which redefine the conditions under which collective support is granted. Solidarity practices often emerge in informal, professional, or digitally mediated forms, while institutional responses remain selective and governed by moral logics of deservingness, productivity, and national belonging.

These dynamics expose growing boundaries between inclusion and exclusion across the societal domains of work, family, nation, and nature. In particular, the shifting responsibility from welfare states to families, communities, and frontline professionals raises ethical challenges for social work and highlights instances of absent or eroded solidarity. Such developments demonstrate how social learning processes normalise limited solidarities and obscure structural responsibility.

Consequently, international and interdisciplinary solidarity research should aim to explore and critically analyse the boundaries of solidarity across key societal domains, with a view to promoting societal change towards social justice and inclusion. Analysing the social learning boundaries that shape solidarity offers critical insights into contemporary inequalities, environmental injustice, and the contested future of collective responsibility in increasingly fragmented societies.

In this context, the following subjects will be explored during the conference from interdisciplinary and international perspectives:

- What processes of emergence and change can be observed in solidarity bonds in the social areas of 'work', 'family', 'nation' and 'nature' around the world?
- What boundaries of solidarity have developed in these social contexts?
- What are the consequences for the professions, especially for social work?
- What questions and priorities arise for interdisciplinary solidarity research?

The proposal for a paper should be assigned to one of the following categories:
1. Theoretical concepts of social learning and boundaries of solidarity.
2. Empirical solidarity research of social learning and boundaries of solidarity in the areas ow 'work', 'family', 'nation' and 'nature'.

Submission and format of the proposal

1. Proposals must be submitted online via the following website: www.solidarity-research.ch **not yet opened**
2. The proposal may not exceed 500 words, including the title of the presentation, a short biography and contact details (email, telephone and postal address).
3. Respondents are requested to specify to which of the categories their contribution belongs.
4. Conference language is English

Deadlines

Submission of the proposal   **May 31, 2026**

Feedback by   July 1, 2026

General information: www.solidarity-research.ch - the submitted proposals will be peer reviewed.

Organizers

Prof. Dr. Thomas Geisen, Maria Jastrzebska MA, Dr. Peter Mozolevskyi

School for Social Work, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland FHNW (Olten, Schweiz)

Local Conference Organizing Committee:

Dr. Viorela Ducu (Telegdi-Csetri) — Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Babeș-Bolyai University; Department of Social Work; Director/Coordinator, CASTLE – Centre for the Study of Transnational Families (Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences); **Dr. Sorana-Alexandra Constantinescu** — Department of Political Science, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babeș-Bolyai University; **Dr. Alina Ioana Branda** — Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University (Department of European Studies and Governance); **Dr. Thea A. Ionescu** — Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Babeș-Bolyai University; **Dr. Monica Aniela Zaharie** — Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Babeș-Bolyai University; **Dr. Adriana Teodorescu** — Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Babeș-Bolyai University; Department of Social Work; **Dr. Mihaela Hărăguș** — Centre for Population Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University; **Dr. Iulia-Elena Hossu** — Institute for the Study of National Minority Issues (ISPMN); CASTLE – Centre for the Study of Transnational Families (Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babeș-Bolyai University).