

CfP: Divided in Partitions, United in Demands? Women's Movements in the Habsburg, Prussian and Russian Partition Areas in the 19th and 20th Centuries

From the mid-19th century onward, women's associations of all nationalities began forming in the Habsburg, Prussian and Russian Empires. Polish women's activism was particularly divided by the three partitions which also had their own imperial and national logics influencing the agency of women in the given territory. Political activism was affected by increasing female working power and expanding educational opportunities for women in the second half of the 19th century. Women following socialist and egalitarian ideas organized themselves just as bourgeois women did. Activism was influenced by factors such as class, religious affiliation and ethnicity. Some associations explicitly advocated for women's suffrage, while others were mainly involved in charitable causes. Many associations were committed to improving educational opportunities and working conditions for women and girls. Some associations also explicitly campaigned for improvement in the areas of maternity protection, sexual reform or moral issues. This activism was often connected to processes of industrialization and migration of women to newly-built factories and growing cities, but women organized themselves also in rural areas.

To date, research on Polish and other women's movements in the three partitioned areas has mainly focused on individual associations and activists. This research often remains within the context of national history, situated solely within the given imperial context. However, transnational, resp. transimperial perspectives focusing on the connections between Polish women's associations or between Polish and other women's movements (e.g. Austrian, German, Jewish, Ukrainian/Ruthenian) within and across the borders of the partitioned territories are rare.

Our aim is to address this research gap and invite scholars who focus on (cross-border) contacts and transimperial networks within the women's movement(s) of diverse origin or political affiliation to take part in our conference which will be held in Warsaw on **17–19 September 2026**. The planned conference intends to bring together researchers working on women's activism in one (or more) of the partitioned territories, and to specifically examine similarities, differences, networks and exchanges between the different women's movements between 1850 and 1918.

Topics to be covered may include:

- Migration (between the partitions but also within, e.g. from rural to urban areas)
- Transfer of knowledge/practices (through magazines, newspapers, translations)
- Personal relationships in different contexts (correspondence, friendships, rivalries)
- Cooperation (networks, transregional federations, common conferences)
- Connections / overlaps with other movements

Please send us a proposal for either an individual presentation of up to 1,000 words or a panel of up to three participants of up to 3,000 words, together with your CV, by **15 March 2026**.

The conference languages will be English and Polish.

Venue: German Historical Institute Warsaw / University of Warsaw

Date: 17–19. September 2026

Organizers: Paula Lange (University of Vienna) – paula.lange@univie.ac.at // Michael Zok (GHI Warsaw) – zok@dhi.waw.pl

The conference is a cooperation between the German Historical Institute in Warsaw, the Commission on the History of Germans in Poland, the University of Vienna and the University of Warsaw.

Accommodation for two nights in Warsaw will be provided. A limited number of travel grants are available upon request (second / economy class, within Europe: max. 300 EUR; from outside of Europe: max. 800 EUR); please indicate in your application if you wish to be considered for reimbursement.



Wydział Historii
Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego



universität
wien
Department of History



Kommission für die Geschichte
der Deutschen in Polen e. V.



universität
wien
Doctoral School of Historical
and Cultural Studies