

The 36th ASEN Conference

Who Belongs to the Nation?

UBB, Cluj • 13-15 April 2027

Call for Papers



Welcome

‘Who belongs to the nation?’ seems a simple question, but it touches on the practical and the philosophical, the novel and the evergreen, the historical and the contemporary. Answering the question – and working out who gets to answer the question – may be rather harder than asking it, but opens the core questions of nationalism.

We invite you will join us to address the question at the thirty-sixth ASEN Conference. For 2027, we travel to the heart of Transylvania and the second city of Romania, Cluj, where we are fortunate to be hosted by Babeş-Bolyai University.

Cluj is a fitting place to ask this question, with its Romanian, Hungarian, German, Jewish, and Roma histories – some of happy coexistence, some of destruction. Indeed, the city itself is Cluj, and Cluj-Napoca, and Kolozsvár and Klausenburg.

As ever, our hope is that the call for papers is focussed enough for our different discussions to cohere while being broad enough for anyone interested in the study of nationalism and ethnicity to attend.

At the time of writing, we are still confirming prices but we expect a conference pass to be around €100. We will have a limited number of fee waivers available; more information is on our website.

Submissions

Abstracts of up to 250 words for individual papers should be submitted at asen.ac.uk/conference/submit by 2359UTC on 15th November 2026.

We welcome proposals for themed panels of up to three papers, which should be submitted using the dedicated form at asen.ac.uk/conference/submit by 2359UTC on 15th November 2026.

If you have any other proposals you think would work for the conference – past years have had very successful short film showings, and we are very much open to new ideas – please email us at conference@asen.ac.uk.

Timeline

The timeline for the lead-up to the conference and the conference itself follows below. While we very much intend to keep to these dates, they are not absolutely fixed and we will publicise any changes.

Call for papers closes	...	...	...	...	15 th November 2026
Decision emails sent	...	...	...	...	14 th December
Registration opens	...	...	...	...	14 th December
Registration closes	...	...	...	...	3 rd March 2027
Final programme published	...	...	...	...	5 th March
Informal get-together in Cluj	...	...	...	...	12 th April
Conference day one and Gellner Lecture	...	...	...	...	13 th April
Conference day two and conference dinner	...	...	...	...	14 th April
Conference day three	...	...	...	...	15 th April

Keep in Touch

If you have any queries, please email conference@asen.ac.uk.

We will post any updates to our social media at facebook.com/asenevents, asenevents.bsky.social, and linkedin.com/company/asenevents, as well as on the conference updates page at asen.ac.uk/conference/updates.

The hashtag for the conference is #asen2027.

Call for Papers

Every nationalism has had to answer this question of who belongs; no answer has settled the question for good. Nations differentiate between members and outsiders by descent, language, faith, residence, law or choice. Those differentiations are contested, redrawn and enforced constantly: in parliaments and courts, in classrooms and on the streets, and at borders.

The question also runs the other way: to whom does the nation belong? Claims to own the nation, to speak for it, define its culture and decide who may share in it, are central to contemporary populism, setting the people against the elite, and the people against outsiders.

Belonging is decided at several scales at once. States define citizenship. Regions, cities and neighbourhoods produce their own attachments and exclusions. Diasporas and transnational networks stretch belonging across borders. Belonging can be imposed, denied, and taken away.

Belonging is felt as much as it is defined. It can be routine and barely noticed, carried in the flags, habits and language of daily life. It can also be heated and mobilised in moments of crisis, celebration and resentment. We are interested in how these registers relate to one another, and in how belonging is passed on, or refused, between generations.

Drawing on both contemporary developments and long-standing theoretical debates, including civic and ethnic, ascriptive and voluntary, and rooted and cosmopolitan, we invite contributions that examine who defines belonging, on what grounds, and with what consequences.

The conference welcomes work grounded in a variety of political, cultural and historical contexts, from antiquity to the present day. We are interested in both normative and empirical accounts, and welcome papers from across disciplines and theoretical perspectives, including (but not limited to) political science, political theory, sociology, history, anthropology, geography, philosophy, cultural studies, law, education, international relations, critical race studies, and media and communication studies.

The topic is a starting point, not a gatekeeper. Abstracts are assessed on the strength of their argument, method and clarity. We ask authors to show how their work relates to the theme, but we also welcome strong papers on nationalism and ethnicity that sit outside it. We particularly encourage doctoral students and early-career researchers to submit.

Themes

Possible themes include:

Drawing the boundaries

Who decides? Theorising membership and the boundaries of the nation
Principles of belonging: descent and choice, civic and ethnic
Citizenship and the law: birthright, naturalisation and dual nationality
Language as a principle of belonging
Religion and belonging
Gendered, racialised and classed belonging

Owning the nation

Who speaks for 'the people'? Populism and claims to own the nation
State and nation: nations without states, and belonging without believing
Minorities, homelands and nationalising states
Memory, heritage and ownership of the past

Imposing and refusing belonging

Expulsion, denaturalisation and statelessness
Empire, decolonisation and irredentism: redrawing belonging
The burdens of belonging: sacrifice, service and war
Migration, asylum and the politics of admission

Living and passing on belonging

Banal, hot and symbolic: belonging in routine, ritual and crisis
Generations and education: inheriting, transmitting and rejecting belonging
Nationalism, belonging, marriage, family, and intimacy

Places and scales

Homeland and territory: competing claims, borders and multi-ethnic regions
Nationalism and the city
Diaspora, transnationalism and multiple belongings
Rooted cosmopolitanism