



Call for workshops/sessions SSA congress 2026 Fribourg

Swiss Sociological Association (SSA) 2026 Congress

September 2 to 4, 2026

University of Fribourg & University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland, Fribourg

Communities and Societies in Movement

The 2026 Congress of the Swiss Sociological Association will focus on processes and characteristics of communities and societies in movement. What are the world views, geo-political and economic orders that shape social relations today? Concept development based on theory and empirical studies in sociology is inherently dynamic and plural. How can these current social developments – being affected and perpetuated by societies and communities as well as individuals – be analysed relating to classical sociological perspectives, such as Tönnies' concept of communities and societies (Tönnies 1887), Weber's concepts of community formation (*Vergemeinschaftung*) and society formation (*Vergesellschaftung*) (Weber 1913), or approaches of the Chicago school (Park, Burgess and McKenzie 1925).

Tönnies defined communities as people coming together through an intrinsic organic value, which is maintained by rules and a sense of solidarity in social union grounded in place, identity or interest-based groups that can traverse physical boundaries but share a sense of belonging. Societies on the other hand are characterised by the rational objective to organise members in a complex, rational system of culture, institutions, norms and a shared identity, often living in a certain territory and belonging to culturally relatable group. However, we must also ask how current social developments challenge such classical concepts, and what theories, methodologies, and tools can be used to define, categorise and explain social relations today. Beyond the debates about the relevance of the original understanding of the concepts, the different forms of social relations remain crucial issues in modern societies. The definition and, above all, the justification of what constitutes a social group, an entity, a community or a society (and who can belong to them) is at the heart of conflicts over boundaries (material or symbolic), determines legal rights and (in)equal access to economic, social and political, as well as natural resources.

The interactions between the social forms can be characterised by social cohesion and solidarity and – perhaps as a result – provide people with (subjective) well-being or, on the contrary, generate conflicts. They may change their structures and characteristics over time, modifying the ways in which people identify with them.

Empirical studies show that to ‘belong’, people must feel free to express their own identity and be recognised as an integral part of the community in which they live. The role of political institutions alone is therefore not enough, society must also ‘grant’ this recognition, which requires a collective understanding and will.

Today several interlinked conditions, reconfigure and threaten the sense of belonging and affect identities, collective cohesion and state action. This includes the following issues:

- Identity politics, polarisation and new populist movements
- Economic inequality leading to economic precarity and class fragmentation
- Digitalisation and related divides
- International migration and internal displacement
- Climate crisis and environmental degradation
- Crisis of public trust in democratic institutions
- Eroding sense of belonging

Against this background, the Swiss Sociological Congress 2026 invites sociologists and members of related disciplines to contribute to these debates. We welcome proposals for semi-plenary sessions and workshops from theoretical, methodological, empirical and transdisciplinary perspectives. Other contributions relevant to the research networks of the Swiss Sociological Association are also welcome.

Sessions can be held in German, French, and English. Please submit your proposals until **15 November 2025 for workshop topics** and until **15 December 2025 for semi-plenary sessions** online. The submission link will be published 1 November 2025 on <https://events.unifr.ch/ssa-conference2026>

- **Semi-plenary sessions with maximum three speakers:** Please provide the semi-plenary title and a semi-plenary abstract of max. 6000 characters, 3-4 keywords, presentations titles and names of speakers and the semi-plenary organisers’ institutional affiliation. If the proposal is accepted, the organisers will be asked to submit the complete session program until 30 April 2026.
- **Workshop sessions:** max. 2000 characters including workshop title, abstract (as call for papers for workshop contributions), 3-4 keywords as well as workshop organisers’ affiliation and contact information. If the proposal is accepted, workshop organisers will be asked to submit the complete workshop program until 30 April 2026.
- We also encourage **innovative original formats** within the limits of logistical possibilities.

To avoid a fragmentation of the conference into too many small-group sessions, the organisers suggest to each research committee to submit a maximum of two to three workshop proposals.

In case of acceptance or rejection of proposals you will be contacted by the organising committee.

NB: The organising committee receives proposals for semi-plenary and workshop sessions. It is then up to the coordinators of each workshop to organise themselves to launch a specific call for papers and select the proposals received.

For further information see: <https://events.unifr.ch/ssa-conference2026>
or contact ssa-conference2026@unifr.ch