FIFTH WORLD CONFERENCE
FOR RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION

Religion, Ethics, and Spirituality in a Digital Age

OHRID, NORTH MACEDONIA | 13–17 JUNE 2027

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Centre for Intercultural Studies and Research is pleased to announce the Fifth World Conference for Religious Dialogue and Cooperation, to be held in Ohrid, North Macedonia, from 13 to 17 June 2027. The conference provides an international forum for scholarly exchange among researchers, religious communities and practitioners.

The overarching theme, **Religion, Ethics, and Spirituality in a Digital Age**, explores how artificial intelligence, digital technologies and new forms of communication are reshaping religious beliefs and practices, ethical reflection, spiritual experience and interreligious dialogue.

We welcome original research papers and proposals for interactive workshops and scholarly working sessions. The academic programme will include:

- **Individual papers:** Original research presentations organised into thematic working sessions.
- **Thematic working sessions:** Research presentations followed by questions and interdisciplinary discussion.
- **Interactive workshops:** Participatory sessions combining scholarly exchange, methods and practical demonstrations.

Scholars at all career stages, including doctoral and early-career researchers, are encouraged to participate.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE · 5 APRIL 2027 · wcrdc@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

ORGANIZERS

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Faculty of Philosophy
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Centre for Intercultural Studies and Research
Faculty of Philosophy

PARTNERS

CESNUR

UNESCO Chair

Министерство за култура на Република Северна Македонија
Ministry of Culture of the Republic of North Macedonia

TWO CITIES PRESS

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Building upon two European Conferences (2019 and 2022) and four World Conferences (2023–2026), the Fifth Jubilee World Conference continues a sustained international dialogue among scholars, religious communities and practitioners. Since 2019, this conference series has brought together 436 participants from 46 countries and territories across five continents.

Artificial intelligence, digital communication and emerging technologies are reshaping the interpretation of sacred texts, the exercise of religious authority, and the experience of community and spirituality. These developments invite historically informed, philosophically rigorous, and empirically grounded investigation.

The conference invites historical, philosophical, theological, sociological, anthropological, psychological and interdisciplinary perspectives. Particular attention will be devoted to the ethical challenges of artificial intelligence, the transformation of religious authority and ritual in digital environments, and the possibilities for interreligious dialogue to promote human dignity, justice, mutual understanding and peace.

The conference is organised by the Centre for Intercultural Studies and Research at the Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, in cooperation with the UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Studies and Research, CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions), and Two Cities Press, with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of North Macedonia. These partnerships foster academic exchange across disciplines, institutions, and religious traditions.

Who is invited?

University professors, researchers, doctoral students, theologians, specialists in digital technology, religious leaders, educators, policymakers, and representatives of religious and cultural institutions are invited to submit their research.

Aims of the conference

- Examine technological developments through comparative and interdisciplinary study of religion.
- Engage religious, philosophical and ethical traditions in questions of AI, human identity, truth and responsibility.
- Strengthen international academic collaboration and constructive interreligious dialogue.
- Support research by emerging scholars and encourage cooperation across communities.

CONFERENCE THEMES

Proposals may address any of the themes below or closely related questions within the overarching conference theme.

01 Artificial Intelligence and the Human Person
Human dignity, consciousness, personhood, transhumanism, posthumanism and religious approaches to intelligent machines.

02 Interreligious Ethics of Technology
Comparative ethical principles; accountability, transparency, responsibility and AI governance.

03 Sacred Texts, Tradition, and Religious Authority in the Digital Sphere
Digital scriptures, AI-generated religious content, online interpreters, authenticity and authority.

04 Digital Worship, Ritual, and Community
Online liturgy, mediated ritual, virtual pilgrimage, communal presence and digital religious experience.

05 Religious Institutions and Digital Ministry
Institutional digital strategies, online congregations, streaming, pastoral care and AI-assisted ministry.

06 Digital Media, Interreligious Dialogue, and Peacebuilding
Online encounters, cross-cultural communication, interreligious diplomacy and peace initiatives.

07 Hate Speech, Disinformation, and Radicalization Online
Religious intolerance, deepfakes, extremism, digital harms and freedom of religion or expression.

08 Spirituality, Mental Health, and Wellbeing in a Hyperconnected World
Attention, loneliness, contemplation, young people, wellness practices and digital environments.

09 Spiritual but Not Religious: New Spirituality Across Cultures
Mindfulness, digital neo-paganism, astrology, manifestation practices and new spiritual markets.

10 New Religious Movements in the Digital Age
Online recruitment, conversion, self-representation, digital communities and generational change.

11 Religious Education and Digital Literacy
Teaching religion, training religious leaders, AI in education and ethical media literacy.

12 Religion, Technology, and Social Justice
Digital inequalities, bias, surveillance, privacy, minority rights, labour and inclusion.

13 Bioethics, Medicine, and the Digital Transformation of Life and Death
AI in healthcare, mourning, digital afterlives, end-of-life questions and religious bioethics.

14 Technology, Creation, and Ecological Responsibility
Digital infrastructure, energy demand, sustainability, religious ecology and care for creation.

15 Digital Methods in the Study of Religion
Computational humanities, digitised manuscripts, large-scale data and research ethics.

16 Regional and Tradition-Specific Perspectives on Religion
Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and other traditions, including Balkan and diaspora contexts.

Comparative research and interdisciplinary approaches are particularly encouraged.

DISTINGUISHED KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

The conference welcomes distinguished scholars and practitioners whose research and leadership span religious studies, theology, ethics, religious freedom, interreligious cooperation, and the social implications of emerging technologies. Rev. Chris Hope will deliver the Special Keynote Lecture.

Rev. Chris Hope · *Special Keynote Speaker*

Lecturer, Boston University; Founder, The Loop Lab and The Hope Group, USA

A minister, educator and social entrepreneur working at the intersection of technology, ethical responsibility and social justice. Through The Loop Lab and related initiatives, he has promoted digital inclusion and wider access to technological opportunities. His work draws attention to human dignity, educational equity and the common good in an age of artificial intelligence.

Prof. Dr. Massimo Introvigne

Founder and Managing Director, CESNUR — Center for Studies on New Religions, Italy

A prominent researcher in the sociology of religion, known for extensive scholarship on new religious movements, contemporary spirituality and religious minorities. As founder of CESNUR, he has advanced the comparative study of religious diversity, while contributing to debates on freedom of religion or belief and the changing place of religion in modern societies.

Dr. Alexander Y. Hwang

President and Publisher, Two Cities Press, USA

A scholar of early Christianity, patristics and the history of Christian thought, especially the theology of Augustine and Late Antiquity. His historical and theological research examines religious identity and encounters across traditions. Through his academic and publishing work, he connects the study of Christian intellectual history with contemporary scholarly dialogue.

Eric Roux

Global Council Chair, United Religions Initiative; President, European Interreligious Forum for Religious Freedom, Belgium

An international advocate for freedom of religion or belief, human rights and interreligious cooperation. His work centres on protecting religious minorities and encouraging constructive engagement among religious and belief communities. Through international organisations and dialogue initiatives, he promotes mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence across religious traditions.

Prof. Dr. Gerard Kester

Emeritus Associate Professor of Social Sciences, International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands

A social scientist specialising in democratic participation, labour relations and social development. His extensive international research across Europe, Africa and Asia explores workplace democracy, social justice and participatory institutions. His work emphasises the importance of democratic cooperation, inclusion and human dignity.

Prof. Dr. Ratko Duev

Professor, Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje; Head, Centre for Intercultural Studies and Research, North Macedonia

A classical philologist and scholar of ancient religion and religious traditions in the Mediterranean and the Balkans. His research also examines the role of religion in shaping cultural identities, human relations, and perceptions of conflict and coexistence. Alongside his academic work, he has been actively engaged in promoting interreligious dialogue and cooperation, having organised the European and World Conferences for Religious Dialogue and Cooperation since 2019.

The titles of the keynote lectures and the final speaking schedule will be announced in the conference programme.

CALL FOR PAPERS — SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The conference welcomes submissions in English relating to the overarching theme or any of the sixteen conference topics. All proposals should identify the contributor's name, institutional affiliation and email address (http://icrd.fzf.ukim.edu.mk/5th-world-conference/).

Individual papers

Submit a 200–300 word abstract, together with the paper title. Accepted papers will be assigned to thematic working sessions by the International Scientific Programme Board.

Interactive workshops

Send a workshop title, a 200–300 word proposal, the name(s) of the organiser(s), and a short description of the proposed interactive format and any practical requirements.

Thematic working sessions

Research papers will be grouped by related subject matter. Suggestions for focused working sessions may be submitted with a short rationale and the names of proposed contributors.

Submission deadline and contact

Send abstracts and proposals to wcrdc@fzf.ukim.edu.mk no later than **5 April 2027**. Further information is available at http://icrd.fzf.ukim.edu.mk/5th-world-conference/.

Additional key dates

- Registration deadline: 5 May 2027
- Final conference programme: 31 May 2027
- Full-paper submission deadline: 21 September 2027

The Scientific Programme Board will review submissions and confirm the final arrangement of presentations, workshops and discussions.



REGISTRATION AND PARTICIPATION

Conference fees and included services

Regular participant	**€220**
Participant from specified higher-income countries	**€320**
Doctoral student	**€150**
Online participant	**€120**
Accompanying person	**€120**

The €320 registration fee applies to participants from Canada, Hong Kong, Kuwait, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The registration fee includes

- Conference materials, programme, book of abstracts and certificates of participation.
- Opening ceremony and welcome reception on 13 June 2027.
- Working sessions, academic discussions and coffee breaks.
- Visits to cultural and religious heritage sites included in the conference programme (including the gala dinner).
- Opportunity to publish conference papers in the academic journal *Religious Dialogue and Cooperation* (https://journals.ukim.mk/index.php/rdc/en), following the journal's standard editorial procedure.

Online participants (€120)

The registration fee covers online participation in the academic programme. On-site services, social events and cultural visits are not included.

Accompanying persons (€120)

The registration fee includes participation in the conference's social and cultural programme, including organised visits, receptions and conference dinners. Attendance at academic sessions is not included.

Registration fees and accommodation

Payment of conference registration fees and hotel reservations are handled by the conference organisers. Travel and accommodation costs are not included in the registration fee. For payment instructions and hotel reservations, please contact: **wcrdc@fzf.ukim.edu.mk**

Visa information and invitation letters

Participants who require a visa to enter North Macedonia are advised to contact the relevant Macedonian embassy or consulate well in advance of the conference. The Organising Committee will provide official invitation letters upon request and, where necessary, consult the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of North Macedonia to assist with visa-related procedures. For assistance, please contact: **wcrdc@fzf.ukim.edu.mk**

Conference enquiries and proposals: wcrdc@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

VENUE, ACCOMMODATION AND CULTURAL PROGRAMME

Conference venue

The conference is scheduled at Hotel Granit in Ohrid. Accommodation for participants is available at special conference rates with breakfast and lunch (half board).

Single room · per person, per night, half board	**€83**
Double room · total per room, per night, for two, half board	**€140**

Hotel website: https://hotelgranit.com.mk

Registration fee payments and hotel reservations: wcrdc@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

Cultural and religious heritage programme

14 JUNE: Visit to significant cultural-historical monuments and religious sites in Ohrid, followed by dinner at a traditional Macedonian restaurant.

15 JUNE: Visit to the Bigorski Monastery of St. John the Baptist, including a guided tour of the monastery complex and dinner at the monastery.

16 JUNE: Visit to Vevčani, its cultural-historical monuments and a gala dinner.

The detailed cultural itinerary is subject to the final scientific programme and local arrangements.

INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION

A growing global network across five continents

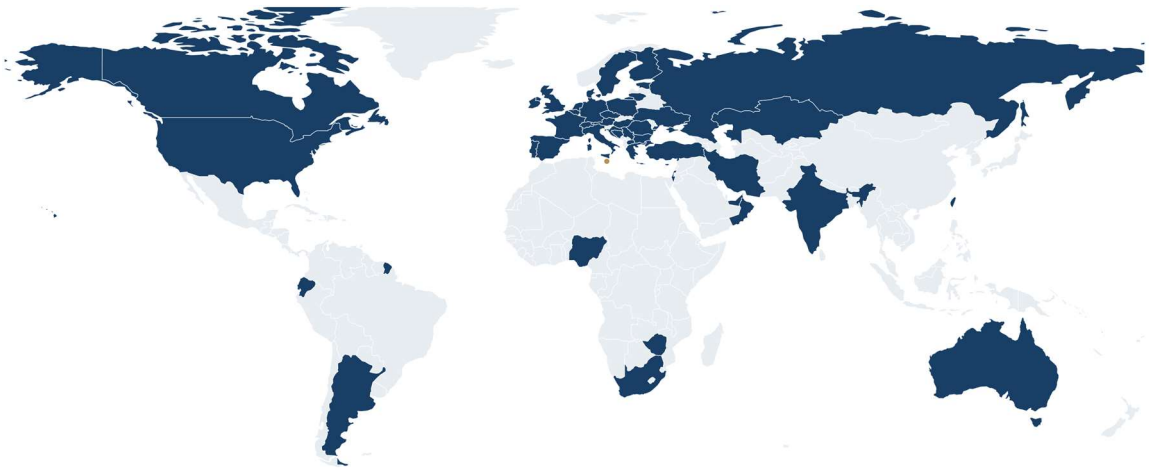
Since 2019, the conferences held in Struga, Strumica, Kruševo and Skopje have offered a setting for exchange across research disciplines and religious communities.

436

Participants across six previous conferences

46

Countries and territories represented



Previous participant countries and territories (Malta marked separately).

Countries and territories represented

Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Zimbabwe.

The geographic reach of the conferences provides a foundation for sustained international research collaboration, mutual understanding and dialogue across traditions.

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME BOARD

01. Professor Zoran Matevski, PhD (North Macedonia), President of the International Scientific Programme Board

02. Professor Ratko Duev, PhD (North Macedonia), Head of the Centre for Intercultural Studies and Research

03. Professor Oliver Bakreski, PhD (North Macedonia), Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje

04. Professor Massimo Introvigne, PhD (Italy), Founder of CESNUR, Turin

05. Alexander Y. Hwang, PhD (USA), President and Publisher, Two Cities Press, USA

06. Professor Pablo Argárate, PhD (Austria), UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue for South-East Europe

07. Eric Roux (Belgium), President of the European Interreligious Forum for Religious Freedom (EIFRF)

08. Professor Iulian Moga, PhD (Romania)

09. Professor Dyron Daughrity, PhD (USA), Dean of the Religion and Philosophy Division at Pepperdine University in Malibu

10. Professor Marija Todorovska, PhD (North Macedonia)

11. Professor Rachel Erhard, PhD (Israel)

12. Professor Gerard Kester, PhD (Netherlands)

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23. Professor Svetlana Trbojevikj, PhD (North Macedonia)

24. Professor Ognen Spasovski, PhD (North Macedonia)

25. High Reverend Naum, Metropolitan of the Strumica Diocese, PhD (North Macedonia)
26. Professor Dushka Matevska, PhD (North Macedonia)
27. Professor Tatjana Stojanoska Ivanova, PhD (North Macedonia)
28. Professor Anica Dragovikj, PhD (North Macedonia)
29. Professor Marija Drakulovska Chukalevska, PhD (North Macedonia)
30. Assistant Ivana Gegoska, MSc (North Macedonia)
31. Rosita Šorytė (Lithuania), President, International Observatory of Religious Liberty of Refugees (ORLIR)
32. Professor Daniel Bramer, PhD (USA)
33. Professor Danica Igrutinovic, PhD (Serbia)
34. Professor Vladan Stanković, PhD (Serbia)
35. Professor Zoran Milosavljević, PhD (Serbia)
36. Yana Fileva, MSc (Bulgaria)
37. Professor Marian Niezgoda, PhD (Poland)
38. Professor Liudmyla Fylypovych, PhD (Ukraine)
39. Evelyn Reuter, PhD (Germany)
40. Dinka Marinović Jerolimov, PhD (Croatia)
41. Professor Pál Iván Szontagh, PhD (Hungary)
42. María Vardé, MA (Argentina)
43. Jason Cherng, PhD (Taiwan)
44. Professor Emma Chen, PhD (Taiwan)
45. Senior researcher Reet Hiiemäe, PhD (Estonia)
46. Professor Rita Santillan, PhD (Canada)
47. Professor Rendani Tshifhumulo, PhD (South Africa)
48. Professor Vlaho Kovačević, PhD (Croatia)

OUR MISSION AND INVITATION

Religion · ethics · spirituality · interreligious dialogue

Religion is often perceived as a source of division and conflict. Yet religious and spiritual traditions also provide important foundations for peace, compassion, coexistence and the protection of human dignity. Since 2019, the conference series has sought to create an international forum for the critical examination of religion's role in contemporary society and its potential to foster dialogue and mutual understanding.

This commitment was reaffirmed in the **Krushevo Declaration** (2025), adopted at the Third World Conference for Religious Dialogue and Cooperation, held in Kruševo, North Macedonia, from 23 to 27 June 2025. The conference addressed the political misuse of religion, discrimination against religious minorities and the growing polarisation of societies. The Declaration emphasised the responsibility of scholars and religious communities to promote peace, tolerance and coexistence through dialogue among religions, spiritual movements and nonbelievers. Following its adoption, participants disseminated the Declaration to international organisations, governments in their respective countries, religious communities and other relevant institutions, seeking to extend its message of peace, mutual understanding and interreligious cooperation beyond the conference itself.

Building upon these principles, the Fifth World Conference for Religious Dialogue and Cooperation turns to the challenges of artificial intelligence and digital culture. The rapid development of new technologies raises fundamental questions concerning truth, authority, identity, ethical responsibility and the common good. The conference invites scholars and practitioners to examine these transformations from historical, philosophical, theological and interdisciplinary perspectives, while exploring the contribution of religious traditions and intercultural cooperation to a more just and peaceful world.

We look forward to receiving your paper abstracts and proposals for workshops, roundtables and scholarly working sessions.

On behalf of the organisers

Prof. Dr. Zoran Matevski
President, International Scientific Programme Board; UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Studies and Research

Prof. Dr. Ratko Duev
Head, Centre for Intercultural Studies and Research, Faculty of Philosophy

Ivana Gegoska, MSc
President, Organising Committee

Contact and submissions

Conference website: http://icrd.fzf.ukim.edu.mk/5th-world-conference/

Abstracts, workshop and working-session proposals: **wcrdc@fzf.ukim.edu.mk**

Hotel and travel enquiries: **wcrdc@fzf.ukim.edu.mk**

KRUSHEVO DECLARATION 2025

Adopted at the Third World Conference for Religious Dialogue and Cooperation

Krushevo, North Macedonia | 23–27 June 2025

From 23–27 June more than 70 scholars from 20 countries from all over the world gathered in Krushevo at the Third World Conference for Religious Dialogue and Cooperation, where we met to discuss the pressing religious conflicts of this world.

Religion is often perceived as a problem. The conference explored how to make religion a resource for international dialogue and peace. Aware that we cannot solve all problems, as scholars we believe that creating spaces of dialogue between and within religions offers valuable opportunities for promoting peace.

Religion today is often misused for political purposes and for supporting wars, while secular ideologies try to exclude religion from the public sphere. Persecution and discrimination of religious minorities continue in different parts of the world. Religions are expected to act as a voice for peace, forgiveness, coexistence, tolerance, and understanding. The essence of religion is to celebrate the creation of the world, not its destruction. However, religions have produced a divided society, with divided identities, divided education, divided loyalties, divided worldviews, which may and often does lead to polarization and conflicts. Instead, religions can promote values that bind and unite, inspire flourishing interreligious relations.

Who we are? We are scholars of religion.

What we want? We want peace among religions, spiritual movements and nonbelievers.

What we do? Since 2019, we hold an annual conference in North Macedonia, a multireligious, multicultural, and multiethnic country, where we discuss religions' role in a global and fractious world.

We welcome all scholars of religion and religious leaders to this conference.

We hope you will join us.