

KLIMENT DAYS

AT THE INSTITUTE OF SLAVONIC STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

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In the winter semester of 2025/26, the Department of Slavonic Studies at the University of Vienna hosted a series of presentations, discussions and workshops in honor of Saint Kliment – the first Slavic bishop and a disciple of Cyril and Methodius. He is considered one of the most significant personalities within the South Slavic cultural sphere. The Department of Slavonic Studies therefore organized these festivities to commemorate his extraordinary contribution to the Slavic written tradition and the spiritual heritage of medieval Bulgaria. The events were organized by the professor of Bulgarian language, Marchela Oleinikova, together with Dr. Ivan Petrov. Their aim was to raise awareness of the wide range of topics that are covered by Bulgarian Studies, which, despite being a relatively small field within the department, represents an important area of research. Moreover, the series also highlighted the presence of Bulgarian Studies in Austria and was open to students, researchers and anyone interested in Bulgarian culture.

The events were preceded by a smaller student-oriented event in June, during which presentations from various fields were held. Prof. Dr. Romyana Koneva introduced the work of the Bulgarian Cultural Institute and Bulgarian Studies in Vienna. Marchela Oleinikova introduced her hometown Plovdiv, while Doz. Dr. Bisserka Dakova discussed the Bulgarian community in Vienna. Doz. Dr. Diana Stoeva offered an introduction to Bulgarian folk dance

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and folklore. Furthermore, with the help of her instructions, the visitors got to dance *horo* and prepare traditional Bulgarian dishes.

The official opening ceremony took place on November 4th, 2025, and featured a speech by the Bulgarian ambassador to Austria, Desislava Naydenova-Gospodina. In addition, the head of the Department for Slavonic Studies, Prof. Dr. Stefan Michael Newerkla, emphasized the importance of the institute's work and presented Bulgarian Studies as continuation of the scholarly tradition established by Prof. Heinz Miklas. This connection was further underlined by Prof. Dr. Rumyana Koneva, head of the Bulgarian Cultural Department at Dom Wittgenstein in Vienna. In addition, Prof. Dr. Jürgen Fuchsbauer from the University of Innsbruck introduced two academic projects focusing on Greek-Slavic translations. The opening ceremony concluded with a folklore concert by the Vienna-based Yagoda choir, whose members come from diverse international backgrounds, as well as a reception. Among the audience were students, faculty members and other individuals with strong personal or academic ties to Bulgaria or Southern Slavonic Studies.

In order to reflect the diversity of the Bulgarian Studies at the University of Vienna, presentations were held in both linguistics and literary studies. With the colloquium on Regional and Cultural Studies: Intellectual Exchange and Cultural Entanglements: Byzantium and the Slavic World, organized by Dr. Ivan Petrov, several guest lecturers from international universities were invited to contribute to the event series by sharing their findings. These events were promoted via the department's website and were therefore open to any interested participants. Two of the lectures were also held online.

The first guest lecture, held on November 4th, was delivered by Dr. Monica White (University of Nottingham), who presented "The First Phase of Byzantine–Rus Relations: Raiders, Traders and Missionaries." Her presentation explored early contacts between the Rus and other regions, highlighting their role in trade networks and cultural exchange. The following week, Prof. Dr. Vasiya Velinova (Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies "Prof. Ivan Dujčev") held a lecture titled "Literary Culture in the First Bulgarian Empire in the 9th Century, Byzantine Uncial Script and the Cyrillic Alphabet". Several (primarily Greek and Bulgarian) inscriptions from this period were discussed. Moreover, the lecture showed the two main scripts – Glagolitic and Cyrillic - that have influenced the Slavia and illustrate a deep-rooted connection between Slavic literacy and Bulgaria. On November 18th, Prof. Dr. Alessandro Maria Bruni (University of Naples "L'Orientale") presented "Byzantine Literature and its reception among the Slaves", followed by another presentation about "The Septuagint tradition and the Old Church Slavonic

translations of the Old Testament“ on Thursday, November 20th. In his first lecture, the focus lay on the oldest translations of the *Slavia Christiana*, provided an overview of Byzantine literature and presented a case study about Old Church Slavonic translations from Greek. Prof. Dr. Bruni was also honored by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 2025. The final lecture in this series was delivered by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aneta Dimitrova (Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"), titled “Sharing Knowledge: Translation and Reception of Byzantine Science in the Medieval Slavic World“. Specializing in Old Church Slavonic and Byzantine studies, she demonstrated how ancient knowledge was adapted within a Christian framework and transmitted through Slavic translations. Her presentation included examples from scientific fields, such as astronomy and medicine.

In the field of literary studies, Mag. Alexander Sitzmann, who is responsible for lectures on linguistics, as well as regional and cultural studies, conducted a workshop on literary translation for students of Slavonic studies. Mag. Sitzmann is a professional translator of Bulgarian and Macedonian, as well as several Scandinavian languages. He has received numerous awards so far, such as the Austrian State Prize for Literary Translation. So far, he has translated works of numerous prominent Bulgarian authors, such as Georgi Gospodinov, Teodora Dimova and Viktor Paskov. In this workshop, he provided valuable insights into the profession of literary translation and explored how theory and practice intersect in the process of translating literature, addressing both linguistic challenges and cultural nuances. The second event in literature studies was a presentation held by Doz. Dr. Bisserka Dakova, who is responsible for Bulgarian language and literature at the institute. She discussed Georgi Gospodinov’s latest novel *Death and the Gardener*, translated into German by Mag. Alexander Sitzmann. This novel presents an autofictional narrative centered on a father’s agony and death. This grievous plot is interrupted by short episodic memories narrated by the main character, which represent flashbacks to earlier times in his life. In her presentation, Doz. Dr. Dakova focused particularly on these embedded stories and their structural and emotional impact on the novel as a whole.

Overall, the event series emphasized the thematic breadth and interdisciplinary nature of Slavonic Studies at the University of Vienna. By combining linguistics, literary studies and cultural history, the program illustrated the complex interactions between Byzantium and the Slavic world, as well as the longstanding cultural connections between Bulgaria and Austria. All events were attended by numerous people with different backgrounds, which further underscores the significance of Bulgarian in both national and international contexts.