

The IMAGO International Project: How Do Images Speak Beyond Religious and Cultural Boundaries?

SIBIU, ROMANIA, June 26, 2026

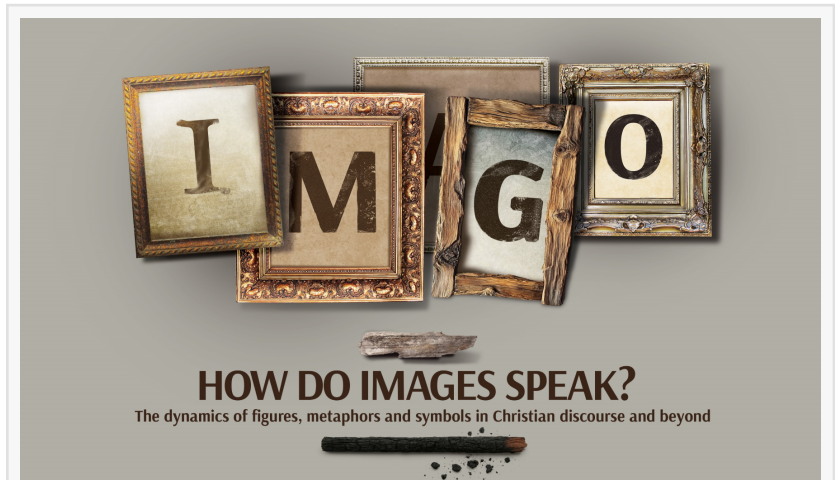
[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- In the contemporary era, the use and circulation of images in both Christian and secular discourse represent a complex and highly significant research topic. The international research project [IMAGO](#) – How do images speak? The dynamics of figures, metaphors and symbols in Christian discourse and beyond aims to explore these dynamics in depth. Funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) through the MAPS (Multilateral Academic Projects) program and UEFISCDI, the project spans a four-year period, running from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2029.

A Prestigious Academic Consortium

The IMAGO project is the result of close international and interdisciplinary cooperation within an academic consortium that brings together research teams from three prestigious higher education institutions. These are the University of Bern in Switzerland, through the Institute of Old Catholic Theology; [Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu](#) in Romania, through the Faculty of Orthodox Theology; and Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in Bulgaria, through its own Faculty of Orthodox Theology.

Objectives and Research Areas

Throughout history, certain places, people, or events have been ascribed complex symbolic



IMAGO Project



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roles, granting visual images enormous potential to spread narratives, values, and norms across different cultural spaces and eras. In this context, IMAGO explores the various frameworks in which images "speak" about our relationship to the divine and to one another. The project analyzes in detail how these images circulate as metaphors and symbols, as well as the messages they convey across religious, cultural, and linguistic boundaries.

To achieve this, the interdisciplinary research covers a wide range of essential fields, starting from biblical and patristic literature, the history of Christianity, iconography, and art, to rituals, liturgical celebrations, philosophical influence, the reception of images, and their impact on modern society.

Specifically, researchers are studying the dynamics of images in relation to three fundamental categories: body images, organic images, and inorganic images. Drawing on theories from the philosophy of language and new approaches to cognitive metaphors, iconology, and iconography, the project will explore the entire transformation of images—from early biblical and patristic writings, through Byzantine art and modern theology, to their contemporary use in secular contexts. Through this interdisciplinary and intercultural approach to interpreting symbols, the project aims to promote best practices in intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

A Major First Success: The International Symposium in Sibiu

A significant first event of scientific scale has already been organized within the framework of the project. This was the international symposium "Imagining the Body: Metaphors in Early Christian Literature and Beyond", which took place from June 4 to June 7, 2026. The event was hosted by the "Sfântul Andrei Şaguna" Faculty of Orthodox Theology at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu.

The conference brought together faculty members, researchers, PhD candidates, and students from Romania, Switzerland, and Bulgaria, as well as from extended partner countries including Australia and Hungary. They gathered for a dynamic, interdisciplinary dialogue dedicated specifically to body images, metaphors, and symbolic structures in ancient Christian literature and European cultural traditions, marking a successful debut for the project's academic activities.

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