

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS – IAFP Annual Conference 2026

Belonging and Othering: The Stranger as the Projective Canvas

Malta, 28–30 May 2026

The International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy welcomes submissions for the 2026 Annual Conference in Malta. This year's theme addresses global concerns around exclusion, structural violence, identity-based hostility, and the increasing social, political, and institutional pressures affecting both forensic systems and clinical work.

Around the world, governments and institutions are enacting policies restricting personal freedoms, speech, and difference. These shifts generate intense societal anxieties, foster mechanisms of projection and boundary-making, and create hostile environments for those perceived as “strangers”. The conference examines these dynamics through psychoanalytic and systemic thinking, exploring their impact on individuals, institutions, and societies.

We welcome submissions from colleagues across psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, forensic mental health, psychology, psychiatry, social work, criminal justice, law, probation, organisational consultancy, and related fields.

KEY AREAS OF INTEREST

Societal Anxiety, Threat, and Authoritarian Shifts

- Rising hostility toward marginalised groups (racialised, gendered, LGBTQ+, trans, socio-economic)
- Political, legal, and linguistic processes shaping exclusion
- The role of social media and AI in mobilising fear, hatred, cohesion, and identity formation

Applications and Reflections in Forensic Psychotherapy

- How societal and political climates enter therapeutic and institutional spaces
- Therapist roles as stranger, advocate, activist
- Countertransference, silencing, and clinicians being othered
- Trauma, safety, and therapeutic containment in dangerous times

Marginalisation, Criminalisation, and Structural Violence

- Intersectional identity-based exclusion (racialised, gendered, sexual, socio-economic, political)
- Institutional practices that reproduce or resist othering

Psychodynamics of Othering and Belonging

- The stranger as container for projections and unwanted psychic material
- Individual and group processes of exclusion, purification, boundary-policing, and fantasies of purification
- Collective narratives, linguistic and political drivers of othering

Projective Processes in Forensic and Criminal Justice Work

- Projection, scapegoating, and attribution of dangerousness
- Projective identification between clients, clinicians, institutions, and systems

(Re)Creating Safety, Inclusion, and Belonging

- Therapeutic, systemic, and policy-level interventions
- Restorative and relational justice approaches
- Trauma-informed frameworks supporting cohesion and inclusion

These categories are intended to guide—not limit—submissions.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR SUBMITTERS

(You do not need to answer these explicitly; they are for reflection only.)

1. What psychological, clinical, organisational, or systemic dynamics of belonging or othering does your work illuminate?
2. How does your material relate to forensic psychotherapy or the criminal justice system?
3. In what ways does your work respond to current social, political, or institutional pressures?
4. What implications does your work hold for clinical practice, organisational functioning, or broader societal understanding?

IMPORTANT – PLEASE ADHERE TO THESE GUIDELINES

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION DETAILS

Please submit an abstract of up to 300 words to:
iafp2026abstracts@googlegroups.com

Abstracts must be submitted as a Microsoft Word document and include:

- Title of presentation
- Author(s) (underline the presenting author)
- Organisation / institutional affiliation
- Address for correspondence
- Country
- Telephone number
- Email address
- Required technical or accessibility requirements
- Accessibility requirements

Deadline for submissions: **30th January 2026**

Early review will be available to support travel planning.

ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS

All clinical material must be fully anonymised. Composite, blended or fictionalised vignettes are recommended. Explicit consent is required where anonymisation is not possible.

PUBLICATION (IAFP Journal)

Authors may be invited to develop their presentation into a journal submission. Writing with publication in mind from the outset may ease this process. Further details and author guidelines are available on the IAFP journal website.

CONFERENCE DETAILS

IAFP 34th Annual Conference – Malta, 28–30 May 2026

Venue: Hotel Ta' Cenc & Spa, Gozo

This is an **in-person only** event and will include keynote lectures, panels, and parallel sessions.