

Workshop and Conference "Post-Imperial and Post-Socialist Legacies in Today's Populisms in Central and Eastern Europe", December 2021 / June 2022

The workshop "Post-Imperial and Post-Socialist Legacies in Today's Populisms in Eastern Europe" took place online on 14 December 2021 and was organised by the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) in cooperation with the Research Institute Social Cohesion (FGZ) and the Leibniz ScienceCampus "Eastern Europe – Global Area" through the contribution of the EEGA Research Area Coordinators Katja Castryck-Naumann (RA 4), Frank Hadler (RA 2) and Alexander Yendell (RA 5).

In the first session, Zsuzsanna Végh (European University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder), Edit Zgut (Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw) and Daniel Hegedüs (German Marshall Fund of the United States, Berlin) spoke on "Populism, Euroscepticism and Foreign Policy in Eastern Europe". In the second session, Kostiantyn Yanchenko (University of Hamburg) and Artur Lipiński (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) discussed "Historical specifics of populism in Eastern Europe". In Kostiantyn Yanchenko's case, the effect of EEGA's networking activities in recent years can be seen very directly. Yanchenko, who got to know the EEGA at a summer school, was now actively involved again with his contribution in the context of this workshop.

During the workshop it became clear that the topic deserves further attention because references to historical predecessors – who opposed to past foreign interference into the respective nations – can be observed in the populisms in East-central Europe. The aim is to reconstruct national myths and identities that have emerged since the interwar period. However, this aspect tends to be under-researched in the scholarship. Consequently, in June 2022, numerous researchers gathered in Leipzig for a two-day conference to take a deeper and comprehensive look at "Post-Imperial and Post-Socialist Legacies in Today's Populisms in Central and Eastern Europe". The first panel "Historical Narratives, Identities and Populism in Eastern and Central Europe" consisted of two parts. Part one featured Andrzej Sadecki (Charles University, Prague), Pál Dunay (George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, Garmisch-Partenkirchen) as well as Jogilė Ulinskaitė, Monika Verbalytė, Rosita Garškaitė (Vilnius University, Vilnius) and Alexander Yendell (FGZ) as commentator. Two of the lectures within the first session dealt with Hungary, one with Viktor Orbán' Hungary and the exploitation of the legacies of the Treaty of Trianon (Sadecki), and one with the experiences of Hungary's populist transition (Dunay). The third lecture discussed "Emotional Narratives of Post-communist Transformation" (Ulinskaitė, Verbalytė, Garškaitė) using the example of Lithuania.

In part two of the panel Edit Zgut (Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw), Hana Antal (GWZO) and Paolo Zucconi (FGZ) presented their research projects with a comment by Juraj Marušiak (Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava). The topics ranged from "Eurosceptic Populism in Hungary and Poland" (Zgut) over "A Comparison of the Austrian, Slovakian and Czech Populists" (Antal) to the "Complex Relationship between Historical Legacies and Populism" in the Czech Republic and Russia (Zucconi). From the three case studies it became clear that populism in the countries presented, although historically shaped in different ways, has commonalities in many aspects

On the second conference day, Matthew Blackburn (University of Warsaw), Victor Apryshchenko (Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don) and Valeria Korablyova (Charles University, Prague) talked about "Ukraine and Russia: Imperial Legacies, Nationalism and Populism". The discussion illustrated that a concrete definition of terms, be it populism, hegemony or legacies, is indispensable.

Frank Hadler (GWZO) and Gert Pickel (Leipzig University) wrapped up the two days in a final discussion and described populism as a global but context based phenomenon. All contributions were characterised by transnationality, interdisciplinarity and a wide range of methodology. The participants agreed that history does not simply repeat itself, but also that not all phenomena are new. Rather, historical experiences help to better understand and contextualise current political situations.