

# East Central European Émigrés and the Shaping of Civil Societies in the Low Countries

Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and Polish émigré agency during the Cold War

May 11-12, 2023 , ELTE University of Budapest

The past decade has seen a boom in research on historical and contemporary migrant communities. Next to the non-European migration in the postwar decades, there is also a growing body of research on Eastern European migration. However, further exploration of the contribution of these migrant communities to contemporary European culture is needed. Specifically, this project aims to stress the active agency of Eastern European migrants and ask how these émigrés affected the local communities they joined and what influence they had on social movements, civil society and community values.

“Émigré Europe” seeks to explore the means and methods through which Central and Eastern European migrants were able to engage new or existing civil society structures within their host countries to set or express their own agendas and interact with their host societies on a range of levels, from local grassroots initiatives up to institutional European organizations and decision-making bodies.

Among the questions being assessed, we ask: how did migrants express their agency through self-mobilization in civil society? In what ways did they build networks between each other and among their fellow migrant communities and host societies? What kind of mobility existed between the stratified layers of civil society structures? How did intersectionality influence the personal and collective engagements of different migrant communities? How did they utilize or produce heritage in negotiating their presence and purpose in society? How did both individual and collective memories of liminality translate into public action and diplomacy? And in what ways were their goals conforming or contrasting with the broader political climate of East-West relations?

The case studies being developed by the “Émigré Europe” team follow rich and diverse strands of inquiry, from the cultural and community spheres, to humanitarian initiatives, and reaching up into the very foundations of the European institutions themselves. These migrants harnessed a range of familiar and unfamiliar structures from the transnational labour movement and the church, to heritage preservation and local committees of solidarity.

Through a fusion of the existing historiography on migrant mobilization and previously untouched and neglected archival and digital resources, “Émigré Europe” will contribute to the fields of scientific research, public heritage, and digital humanities through means of data collection and visualization.

The conference invited scholars from different backgrounds to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and discussion on the future potential of the research model for a wide-ranging study of European migration. We encourage contributors to think broadly about the porous geographical, temporal and political boundaries of European migration during and also immediately after the Cold War.

## Program

### DAY 1, Thursday

14:00 Welcome and introduction

14:15 PANEL 1: Links: Across Borders and Generations @ ELTE BTK Kari Tanácssterem [ELTE Faculty Council Chamber], ground floor (4/A Múzeum körút, Budapest 1088)

Vera Hajtó From Private to Public: Migration, Intergenerational Transfer and Cultural Memory Practices in Belgian Families with Hungarian Descent

Stéphanie Cirac Travels as Links between Exile and Dissidence

Manuel Herrera Crespo Challenging State Socialism in the “Springtime of European Relations”: Human Rights, Transnationalism, and Dissidents in Opérations Villages Roumains, 1989-1990

Coffee

15:30 PANEL 2: Émigré Missions

Wim Coudenys Mission and Migration: Alexis Strýček SJ in Belgium (1939-1945)

Luke Dodds The Question of God in Émigré Ghent: Religious Identity as Performance and Dialogue among Migrants and Hosts during the Cold War

### DAY 2, Friday

9:00 PANEL 3: Elite Refugees @ ELTE BTK Dékáni Kis Tanácssterem [ELTE Faculty of Humanities Dean's Small Council Chamber], room 144 on the 1st floor (4/A Múzeum körút, Budapest 1088)

Miroslav Michela – Michaela Šmidrkalová Attracting Skilled Migrants: Czech and Slovak Doctors in the Netherlands, 1948–1989

Tamás Scheibner Conservative Humanitarianism: A Nobelman’s Journey from Mussolini to Building European Civil Society

Viktoria Ivashchenko & Yulia Kiselyova “Elite Refugees?”: Identity and Practices of Professional Self-Mobilisation among Ukrainian Academic Migrants

10:30 Conclusions

## Partners

The academic participants of “Émigré Europe” are equal members of the Central Europe Leuven Strategic Alliance (CELSA) research initiative:

- KADOC-KU Leuven, Documentation and Reserach Centre on Religion, Culture, and Society (Belgium)
- Charles University, Prague (Czech Republic)
- Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest (Hungary)
- Jagiellonian University, Kraków (Poland)

in collaboration with the Institute of History at the Research Centre for the Humanities (Budapest, Hungary).

More information on “Émigré Europe” can be found on the KADOC-KU Leuven research website: [https://kadoc.kuleuven.be/english/08\\_projects/2021/2021\\_04\\_emigre-europe](https://kadoc.kuleuven.be/english/08_projects/2021/2021_04_emigre-europe)

## Organizing Committee

Kim Christiaens | Luke Dodds | Miroslav Michela | Dorota Przaszłowicz

Main organizer: Tamás Scheibner

## Timing

**Add details.**

## Venue

Faculty Council Chamber (039.), [Faculty of Humanities](#), Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest (Hungary)

The conference will be conducted in English.