

14.10.2025

Civic Participation and Marginalised Knowledge: GWZO Opens New Department in Prague

(Leipzig/Prague) The Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO), based in Leipzig, is strengthening its presence in the neighbouring Czech Republic. With the establishment of the new department 'Knowledge and Participation' in Prague, the institute is set to explore an innovative research field dedicated to studying the interplay between academic and non-academic knowledge production.

The new department will investigate participation in knowledge production and science in Central and Eastern Europe, both in the past and in the present. It addresses a set of pressing social questions: Who has contributed – and continues to contribute – to the formation of knowledge? Where do the boundaries between experts and laypeople lie? Can and should everyone participate equally? What are the opportunities and risks of participatory research? Special attention will be given to the voices of marginalised groups and to knowledge generated, transmitted and interpreted at the margins of society. At the same time, the department plans to analyse the impact of digital tools. Artificial intelligence, in particular, is currently transforming decisively how knowledge is produced and perceived.

With its humanities profile, the department positions itself as a laboratory for new forms of citizen knowledge and civic participation. Adopting an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach, its work is closely connected to the GWZO's other research activities.

The Prague department is headed by historian Dr. Michal Frankl, who brings with him an extensive international network and years of experience conducting innovative historical research. Most recently, he was principal investigator of the ERC-funded project 'Unlikely Refuge? Refugees and Citizens in East-Central Europe in the 20th Century,' and he also has experience working in the museum sector. 'We are investigating how citizen science can expose divisions and boundaries within our societies. Can these be bridged by involving marginalised groups as *citizen scientists* – and by archiving their knowledge? We are starting with a workshop on archives of migration to ask how migrants, refugees and NGOs contribute to academic knowledge,' explains Dr. Michal Frankl.

Professor Maren Röger, Director of the GWZO, adds:

'Located in Prague, the new department provides an important additional interface with Czech as well as Central and Eastern European research organisations. It builds on the GWZO's long-standing cooperation with the Czech Academy of Sciences and strengthens exchange between academic institutions and civil society initiatives.'

More information on the new GWZO department can be found here:

<https://www.leibniz-gwzo.de/en/research/research-departments/dept-knowledge-and-participation>

The Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) is one of the world's leading research and educational institutions for the study of the history and culture of Central and Eastern Europe. Our wide-ranging, interdisciplinary approach and broad historical scope are distinctive: From antiquity to the present day, we explore the unique features and transformations of this historically and geopolitically significant region. The GWZO's research focuses on some of the most urgent issues of our time: dynamics of globalisation and migration, knowledge systems and competing historical narratives, environmental challenges and violence. |

<https://www.leibniz-gwzo.de/en>

Academic contact

Dr. Michal Frankl
Head of Department
michal.frankl@leibniz-gwzo.de

Media contact

Virginie Michaels
Media Relations
virginie.michaels@leibniz-gwzo.de



This measure is co-financed by tax revenue on the basis of the budget approved by the Saxon State Parliament.