

HUMANITARIAN OBSERVATORY FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

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This Special Issue of the Newsletter of the Humanitarian Observatory for Central and Eastern Europe (HOCEE) is an outcome of the project “Advancing Academia–NGO Knowledge Co-Production in Humanitarian Studies: Insights from the CEE Region (KNOWCEE)”, implemented in Poland between January and June 2026. The project was led by the Centre of Migration Research of the University of Warsaw (CMR UW), the academic co-coordinator of HOCEE, and carried out in close collaboration with two co-applicants: the Migration Consortium (MC), the NGO co-coordinator of HOCEE, and the Ukrainian House Foundation (UHF), a HOCEE partner organisation. The KNOWCEE project aimed to develop a model of academia–NGO knowledge co-production in humanitarian studies grounded in the experiences of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), strengthen collaborative research efforts, and lay the foundations for more

institutionalised forms of knowledge production within HOCEE, with potential for wider replication. Drawing on the expertise of HOCEE partners and taking into account recent developments and current dynamics across the CEE region, the project sought to foster meaningful dialogue and exchange between academic and non-governmental actors, as well as other interested stakeholders.

The project’s main activities consisted of preparing and delivering two in-person workshops, conducted in Polish, on academia–NGO knowledge co-production in humanitarian studies from a CEE perspective. Each workshop actively engaged both researchers and NGO practitioners, who shared their expertise and participated in discussions with attendees. The seminar-workshops were held in April and May 2026. They were attended by between 25 and 35 participants. Both events contributed to increasing the visibility and recognition of HOCEE among local audiences and strengthened connections between academic institutions and civil society organisations working in the humanitarian field.

- **HOCEE Seminar-Workshop No. 1**, “Disinformation: How Cyber Warfare Is Changing the Landscape of Civil Society Activities in Poland and How We Can Respond to This Growing Threat”, held on 27 April 2026 at the Ukrainian House Foundation in Warsaw. The event was co-organised by the Ukrainian House Foundation, the Centre of Migration Research at the University of Warsaw (CMR UW), the Migration Consortium, and the Humanitarian Observatory for Central and Eastern Europe (HOCEE). Recording can be found [here](#).
- **HOCEE Seminar-Workshop No. 2**, “Between Crisis and Normality: Integration, Knowledge,

and Academia-NGO Cooperation in Practice”, held on 29 May 2026 at the Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw (CMR UW), Warsaw. The event was co-organised by the Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw (CMR UW), the Ukrainian House Foundation, the Migration Consortium, the Humanitarian Observatory for Central and Eastern Europe (HOCEE), the MigLab at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (UMCS), the Mapuj Pomoc Network, the To Proste Foundation, and SGH Warsaw School of Economics through the CIVICA Research Hub TRANSCONNECT. Recording: can be found [here](#).

NGO PERSPECTIVE

Benjamin Cope, Ukrainian House Foundation

HOCEE Seminar-Workshop 1: “Disinformation: How Cyber Warfare Is Changing the Landscape of Civil Society Activities in Poland and How We Can Respond to This Growing Threat”

The theme of the first seminar was not one that is traditional for humanitarian studies or for NGO-academic cooperation. However, over the last 12 months, Ukrainian-led organisations in Poland, especially those led by women, have been subject to a series of cyber- and fake-attacks. When taken as a whole, this looks like a coordinated campaign against these organisations and the women who lead them. Over the same period, we witness a rise in political narratives in Poland

questioning the validity of continuing to provide support to refugees in Poland (even those in vulnerable situations) and of anti-Ukrainian sentiment amongst the host population. As a result, the seminar brought together academics and NGOs to work on the topic of what can be done to analyse and limit the impact of cyberwarfare and disinformation.



Photo: CMR

The attacks against the Ukrainian House Foundation presented by Myroslava Keryk ranged from fake letters written in the Ukrainian House's name to public authorities, through deep-fake videos (for example, connecting Jewish and Ukrainian topics), fake websites (both of Polish public institutions and Ukrainian organisations), fake social media accounts making provocative pronouncements, to fake accounts of foundation staff on sex dating sites. These attacks require new procedures in how to respond and gather evidence; new modes of cooperation between migrant NGOs and relevant state authorities, and continual reflection on how best to manage the foundation's communication strategies in a context of intensifying disinformation.

The invited panelists, Agnieszka Legucka and Joanna Grabarczyk-Anders, confirmed that this is an area of quickly evolving threats that require institutional innovation and new modes of cooperation. Prof. Agnieszka Legucka, Deputy Director of the Strategy Department at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promoted the use of the term "FIMI" (Foreign Information Manipulation and Influence) over that of disinformation, as it better characterizes the organized information campaigns that we confront. She described how, in 2022, anti-vaccine groups immediately and on a mass scale transformed into anti-Ukrainian groups. She argued that in Poland, the impact of Russian disinformation is under-estimated and that Russian cyberwarfare needs to be seen as a broad, well-coordinated and well-financed campaign.

Joanna Grabarczyk-Anders, chair of the Advisory Team on Bias-Motivated Crimes for the Prosecutor General and expert affiliated with the Jewish Czulent Association, argued

that the state has laws and institutions to deal with the rise in cyber-attacks, but active support from NGOs and minority groups is needed to enable adequate reaction to the new context of cyber-warfare and hate-attacks. Cyber- and hate-attacks are under-reported and difficult for state institutions to react to: NGOs need to work together with state institutions to ensure efficient responses to hate-crimes and support and encourage victims of attacks in the process of reporting. The key role of NGOs in enabling interaction between the different parties engaged in response to intensified cyber-warfare needs to be recognised and financially supported.

After the panel with the guest speakers, three smaller groups worked on different aspects of the new context. The first developed ideas to respond to the threats of the exploitation of the theme of migrants and refugees in the campaigns for the government elections to be held in Poland in 2027. The group discussed the need to build counter-narratives around positive values (e.g. freedom and equality) and to nuance content to different kinds of media. The group also postulated the need for wide coalitions (between NGOs and state institutions, academia and amongst NGOs at national and European levels) to monitor information and build social resilience to disinformation among particular groups (e.g. the silent "middle ground", the young, etc.).

The second group addressed the lack of research connecting social opinions about migration with disinformation. The group noted that migration is a complex issue, meaning that it is difficult to survey and that the lack of accurate statistical information about migration leaves the field open to the influence of disinformation. The heated

political context that emerges in the light of disinformation campaigns also puts extra pressure on the issue of how academics build both their methods of searching for information and also their ways of constructing and communicating the results of their findings. The group posited a need for further cooperation between NGOs and academics to build expertise around this issue.



Photo: CMR

The third group concentrated on operational responses. Deepfake attacks require: research of what is at stake; identification and prosecution of sources; efficient blocking of falsified content; and confirmation of progress in the prosecution of cases. The group posited a need for a scaling-up of training about identifying and reporting cyber-crimes, and for NASK (National Research Institute in Poland, formerly: Research and Academic Computer Network) to communicate its reports not only to the government, but also to the wider public. Introducing media literacy to school curricula was seen as a positive step, but such programs need to be systematically supported. The need for every public institution to have a disinformation expert

monitoring and correcting misinformation at the local level was also suggested.

HOCEE Seminar-Workshop 2: “Between Crisis and Normality: Integration, Knowledge, and Academia-NGO Cooperation in Practice”

The second seminar addressed the strange moment for considering humanitarian support that we encounter in Poland, as one where the discourse of normalization conflicts with evidence that crises are continuing with undiminished intensity (e.g. the war in Ukraine or the migration crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border).

The first part of the seminar addressed the question of how the humanitarian response in Poland to the war in Ukraine has impacted understandings of and approaches to migrant integration. Oksana Pestrykova, head of the Ukrainian House’s Support Centre, highlighted that integration has risen as a topic of political interest, along with the perception that the crisis is over. However, when seen through the eyes of those in the vulnerable groups who come to the Ukrainian House’s Support Centre, it seems their crises are very much continuing. This is particularly marked at a moment when those in the most vulnerable situations have, from day to day, in the light of the Law on the Phasing Out of Special Protection ([Dz.U. 2026 poz. 203](#)), found themselves deprived of access to medical support ([Homo Faber et al.](#)). The term integration is rarely mentioned by those that come to the Support Centre: for them practical issues of everyday life, especially residence legality, are more important.



Photo: Marta Pachocka

When assessing the current situation, Oksana described that a key aspect of the support of Ukrainians in Poland has been its provisionality: for many war refugees (and those trying to support them), there is still uncertainty about how their temporary protection status can be transformed into other kinds of legal basis for their continued residence in Poland. At the same time, the appearance of such phenomena as assistance for foreigners in medical institutions or intercultural assistants in schools, are evidence of how the crisis has led to the emergence of an integrational infrastructure for foreigners in Poland. However, there are still considerable challenges to the sustainable development of this infrastructure, as evidenced in the struggles to convince schools to join the “Friendly School” program for developing an educational system in Poland inclusive of war-refugee and migrant children.

Dr. Karolina Podgórska, Head of the MigLab at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (UMCS), discussed how the humanitarian crisis had impacted on the methods of those researching migration in Poland, for instance, encouraging participative methods to become standard. She noted how cautious Poland has been in developing migration policy, with even cities

being tentative in developing strategic documents for migrant integration. In this context, she noted that NGOs *de facto* act as an unprecedented avant-garde of integration, developing and testing innovative approaches to migrant integration. Karolina dwelt on an unfortunate recent example from Lublin, where a Ukrainian working for the city council promoting the internationalization of students in Lublin universities has become a victim of a defamatory attack. Dr. Podgórska described how, up until this point, Lublin had been a success story of building an identity as a university town with a multi-cultural student community. Constructing this identity had involved academic and NGO engagement with city authorities and had led to a widely accepted consensus. However, even in this case, a targeted attack against a local official on the basis of their Ukrainian origin and accusations of importing families from Zimbabwe to Poland had been enough to shake the foundations of city identity. Our speaker argued that this example raised uncomfortable questions of the challenges facing NGOs and academics in seeking to build local resilience to populist attacks. This case also provided further evidence of the relevance of the issues around disinformation, discussed in the first HOCEE seminar.

The issue of NGO-university cooperation was taken up by Dr. Marta Jaroszewicz, Head of the Migration Policies Research Unit and a Horizon Europe INNOVATE project coordinator at CMR UW, who described existing potential and barriers. While the CMR UW research community cooperates intensively with NGOs, Marta also pointed to the existence of barriers, such as competition for resources and for authority in a changing



Photo: Marta Jaroszewicz

landscape of knowledge production. Universities have more rigorous procedures for authorizing articles and collaborative projects, which require more time for responding to changing circumstances. NGOs are more flexible, but the quality of research is less subject to control. Both NGOs and universities are concerned about how to monitor and strengthen the impact of the knowledge they produce.

Monika Miłowska, Chair of the Mapuj Pomoc Network and President of the To Proste Foundation, described successful examples of NGO and academic cooperation in research reports and conferences. Monika argued that NGOs, and in particular INGOs, would not be able to produce their reports on the changing situation of humanitarian support in Poland without engaging the work of local academics. She saw this cooperation between NGOs and academics in producing and disseminating knowledge about the positive contribution of refugees and migrants to the Polish economy and society as a particularly needed counterpoint against populist anti-migrant narratives. Monika praised the approach to cooperation with NGOs developed at the Centre of Migration Research, and argued that the neutral and expert voice of academia played a vital role in moderating discussions involving NGOs engaged in migration support. Monika argued

that more concentrated academic/NGO cooperation could be beneficial in many fields. Firstly, she saw academic/NGO cooperation as an important element in advocacy work, in seeking to improve and influence new projects of laws. Monika also proposed networks of NGOs, such as Mapuj Pomoc, as an additional resource for providing quick access to geographically diverse empirical information for research into the situation of migrants in Poland. Furthermore, Monika saw that cooperation with academia could be crucial in providing access to the wide range of expertise needed when dealing with local-level migrant support (e.g. from legal expertise to social welfare provision). She identified difficulties inherent in the different temporalities and language paradigms of NGOs and universities, but saw that building more mechanisms for cooperation could help build the social influence of both parties.

In the discussion with all the participants and the audience that followed, examples were given of institutions which served as good practice in building frames for long-term cooperation between NGOs and academics, or incubating “pracademics” (practitioner/academics), such as [the Development Studies Association in Ireland](#) or [International Society for Third Sector Research](#). In light of the war in Ukraine, migrant related NGOs in Poland are in a state of radical and open-ended transition: working at a larger scale and with an ever more frantic struggle for resources brings challenges regarding how to set up systems and practices that make the results of their work available for analysis.

In the case of Ukrainian NGOs, the full-scale war brings existential and institutional questioning of the value and social roles of

knowledge: what kinds of modes of thinking and working are needed in light of the experiences of those at the front or those providing frontline humanitarian support? This intensified interrogation about the nature and roles of knowledge resonates with a long-term academic reflection on the place and roles of universities in changing social landscapes of the production and exchange of ideas, such as that proposed by Bill Readings in [The University in Ruins](#). The work of the HOCEE seminars in exploring modalities of NGO-academic cooperation in the light of humanitarian response can perhaps be fruitfully seen as a new twist on the frames that Readings set out in his thought-provoking book.

The discussion concluded with reflections that in the field of migrant studies and support, NGO-academic cooperation is a sine qua non – but that further joint projects and joint writing are needed to fulfil the potential of this cooperation and build resilience to impending social challenges.

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ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVE

Marta Jaroszewicz, Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw

Academic knowledge regarding disinformation and its impact on migration and migrant communities often fails to keep pace with the dynamics of the phenomenon itself. This stems, amongst other things, from the anonymous, decentralised and rapidly evolving nature of contemporary information campaigns, which remain difficult to identify

not only for researchers but also for public institutions operating in this field. Secondly, in Poland, the field of disinformation has often been institutionalised within security studies and strategic studies, especially since 2014 and even more after 2022. As a result, researchers working in migration or humanitarian studies may find fewer obvious connections to the disinformation field than they would in countries where the topic is more strongly embedded in communication,

media, or sociology departments. At the same time, disinformation campaigns in Poland are expanding in scope and influence. It is, therefore, reasonable to ask whether, in the case of Poland and narratives concerning migration, we are still dealing with disinformation in the classical sense – based on false or deliberately misleading messages – or rather with more diffuse mechanisms of influence affecting public debate, the social and political activity of migrants, and the perception of migration. Another question requiring further in-depth analysis is to what extent such disinformation campaigns influence the actual image of foreigners, and in particular Ukrainian citizens, in the eyes of Poles, and how this influence can be measured.



Photo: Marta Pachocka

Disinformation is defined as the deliberate dissemination of false or misleading information to achieve political, social or economic gains or to cause harm, whereas misinformation refers to false content disseminated without awareness of its falsity (Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017). In the field of migration, disinformation poses a significant challenge to public debate, although knowledge of its direct impact on migration decisions and migration policies remains limited (NASK, 2025). Available research indicates that migration is one of the most

frequently exploited topics in manipulative campaigns, which rely on evoking strong emotions—particularly fear, anger and a sense of threat—as well as on presenting individual incidents as representative of entire groups of migrants (NASK, 2025). Analyses of the Polish migration discourse also show that narratives concerning migration are heavily influenced by current political and crisis-related events, which contributes to the perpetuation of simplified images of migrants as a threat to security, the economy or cultural identity (Homel & Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2025). Similar conclusions emerge from European analyses, which indicate that dominant narratives portray migration as a threat, a crisis or an economic burden, influencing the way the public interprets facts (EC JRC, 2025). The significance of these processes is amplified by the nature of social media, where false and sensationalist information spreads faster than true information, particularly if it provokes strong emotional reactions (Vosoughi et al., 2018). As a result, disinformation can contribute to increased social polarisation, worsen attitudes towards migrants, and hinder evidence-based debate on migration (EC JRC, 2025; NASK, 2025).

During a joint seminar organised by the Ukrainian House Foundation, the Centre of Migration Research UW, the Migration Consortium and partners on May 27, 2026, within the KNOWCEE project, as part of the HOCCE activities, all three guest speakers emphasised the significance of this phenomenon, its rapid evolution towards increasingly organised forms, and the difficulties associated with identifying and countering it. In their presentations, they noted that the scale and dynamics of contemporary disinformation activities

increasingly go beyond the traditional understanding of disinformation as isolated false or misleading messages.

In her speech, Myroslava Keryk, President of the Ukrainian House Foundation, drew particular attention to the case of attacks against Ukrainian organizations in Poland, emphasising their influence not only on the perception of migration in public debate, but also on social engagement, the sense of security, and migrants' opportunities to participate in public life. Myroslava Keryk presented the experiences of the Ukrainian House as an example of systematic actions targeting Ukrainian organisations and female community leaders in Poland, including fake accounts, fabricated materials, deepfakes, website cloning and discrediting campaigns. She emphasised that these activities form part of broader narratives linked to Russian influence operations, the aim of which is to strengthen anti-Ukrainian sentiment and weaken support for Ukraine. She also drew attention to the growing scale, professionalism and diversity of these activities, as well as the need to build mechanisms for cooperation and counteraction.

In turn, Prof. Agnieszka Legucka, Deputy Director of the Strategy Department at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted that disinformation and hybrid activities have a particularly strong impact on groups perceived as more vulnerable, including women, minorities and migrant communities. She emphasised that disinformation does not create new divisions, but rather reinforces existing tensions, for instance, anti-Ukrainian, anti-immigrant narratives, and more broadly – all attitudes and messages based on prejudice against groups perceived as 'others'. She argued that the targeting of

women with migration experience, particularly Ukrainian women, needs to be recognised as a tool in Russian hybrid activities, playing on social emotions to increase the effectiveness of information influence and exacerbate social tensions. In her view, countering these phenomena requires not only monitoring and response, but also better coordination of actions, cooperation with digital platforms, and more effective regulatory tools to limit content targeting particularly vulnerable groups.

Joanna Grabarczyk-Anders – an expert in the field of hate crime, hate speech and cybersecurity – emphasised that effectively combating disinformation requires not only institutional action, but also the active reporting of incidents by organisations and individuals affected by them. She pointed out that many actions targeting migrant organisations – such as impersonation, threats or coordinated campaigns – may constitute hate crimes and should be reported to the police, the prosecution service, the Internal Security Agency (ABW), the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) and digital platforms. She also highlighted the need for better documentation of incidents, data collection and the development of cooperation between civil society organisations and state institutions, in order to identify patterns and respond more effectively.

In the second part of the meeting, during breakout sessions, participants discussed the risks associated with disinformation concerning migrants and Ukrainian citizens in the context of the 2027 elections in Poland, as well as ways to build effective, positive narratives based on the values of equality, freedom and community. Participants emphasised the importance of monitoring

disinformation campaigns, cooperation between civil society organisations, local authorities and expert communities, and the use of analytical tools to identify and counteract hate speech and information manipulation. Educational initiatives targeting young people, strengthening digital literacy, and developing legal and civic instruments to protect groups vulnerable to exclusion and disinformation were also key elements of the discussion. Attention was also drawn to the limited number of studies allowing for a clear assessment of the impact of disinformation on public attitudes towards migration, which stems both from the complexity of the migration phenomenon itself and from the methodological difficulties associated with analysing disinformation content. During the discussion, attention was drawn to the role of social media algorithms in spreading anti-Ukrainian content and hate speech, as well as to the methodological difficulties associated with studying the impact of foreign information manipulation on public opinion. It was also stressed that disinformation often contains elements of truth, is devoid of context, and is deliberately designed to evoke strong emotions, which makes it difficult to identify and analyse. An additional challenge remains in conducting and communicating research findings in the context of strong political polarisation, where even reliable analyses can be interpreted through the prism of current social and political disputes. Participants highlighted the need to develop local research, collaborate with civil society organisations, and create a shared platform for knowledge exchange that will enable more effective monitoring of and

counteraction against disinformation concerning migrants and refugees.

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YOUNG VOICES – STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVE

Mateusz Kwiatkowski, Master’s student at SGH Warsaw School of Economics, Poland

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine that began in February 2022, as well as forever changing Ukraine also brought profound transformation to Poland. Within weeks, over three million people had crossed the border with Poland, trying to escape the imminent danger to their lives and well-being. The initial reaction of Polish citizens was extraordinary. What we witnessed at first was a spontaneous, citizen-led response coordinated almost entirely through digital platforms, such as Facebook groups and Telegram channels. These channels connected volunteers, donors, and newly arrived migrants faster than any institutional mechanism could have ever managed. As a Master's student conducting research for my thesis at SGH Warsaw School of Economics titled “The ambivalent role of multi-sided platforms in the adaptation of Ukrainian forced migrants in Poland: an analysis of opportunities and threats”, I quickly discovered that this story has two sides, and that understanding both requires the kind of knowledge exchange that initiatives like the KNOWCEE project implemented by the Humanitarian Observatory for CEE seek to foster. Digital platforms provided an unprecedented opportunity for migrants to access basic needs connected to their livelihood within hours of crossing the border. At the same time, they became another form of battlefield, a space for Russia's hybrid war activities.

The same platform that helped a family find temporary housing one day was displaying anti-Ukrainian content the next. Not because someone at Facebook decided so, but because that is how the algorithm works. The

algorithm runs on one thing: clicks. The more extreme the post, the more people react. The more they react, the wider it spreads. By 2024, research by Demagog and the Institute for Media Monitoring had identified nearly 327,000 anti-Ukrainian posts in Polish-language online spaces (Demagog, 2024). The most frequent narratives included fabricated crime statistics, claims about unfair economic privileges, and scapegoating framed as legitimate public debate. The discourse online directly impacted Polish public opinion. According to CBOS, the share of Poles who considered their country's support for Ukrainian refugees excessive shifted from 26% in early 2023 to 50% by September 2025 (CBOS, 2025). The sentiment did not stay contained within Polish society. Research by the Mieroszewski Centre found that the share of Ukrainians holding a positive view of Poles fell from 83% in 2022 to 41% in 2024 (Centrum Mieroszewskiego, 2024). Disinformation reshapes attitudes on both sides of the border.



Photo: Marta Pachocka

An issue of this scale requires a direct response. In Poland, organisations like Demagog worked to debunk specific false narratives as they circulated, while initiatives like Google's Jigsaw campaign experimented

with pre-bunking, exposing audiences to manipulation techniques before they encountered them while using the web. At the regulatory level, the EU's Digital Services Act introduced binding obligations for large platforms to assess and mitigate risks related to the spread of harmful content (European Commission, 2026). None of these responses is a complete solution. Pre-bunking works best with audiences already open to it. Fact-checking reaches a small fraction of those exposed to false narratives. The DSA is still being implemented. But together, they represent a shift from treating disinformation as an unfortunate side effect of digital platforms to treating it as a problem that requires a structural response.

Researching this topic made clear that neither academic literature nor civil society reporting alone gives the full picture. Academic sources provide the theoretical frameworks and the longer historical perspective. Reports from organisations like Demagog or Naukowa i Akademicka Sieć Komputerowa (NASK) provide the specificity and the timing that a crisis situation demands. The most useful insights in my thesis came from treating both as equally legitimate sources of knowledge. That is what projects like KNOWCEE are built around and what makes the cooperation between NGOs and academia crucial.

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Lara Kohlbrenner, Bachelor student at SGH Warsaw School of Economics, intern at Centre of Migration Research UW, Poland

As the discussion during the HOCEE seminar-workshop within the KNOWCEE project on May 29, 2026, demonstrated, promoting knowledge cooperation between academia and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is of great importance. Despite differing research traditions, both sides benefit from a more intensive exchange of knowledge, particularly in the light of societal changes, frequent crises, and increasing refugee and migration flows. Migration today is more complex and multifaceted than ever before. While academia can draw on long-term studies, it often struggles to quickly grasp new developments and adapt strategies accordingly. NGOs, on the other hand, are in direct contact with those affected through their daily work and possess valuable practical experience. For a long time, academic research enjoyed greater prestige due to its educational mission. However, this has changed in recent years, as NGOs gained increasing importance due to their proximity to current situations. This has led, in part, to competition between the two actors. Beyond overlapping research interests and competing claims to expertise, academia and NGOs increasingly rely on the same funding schemes, intensifying competition for limited resources. Closer collaboration and regular exchange could help overcome these challenges by combining academic knowledge with practical experience. Through sharing expertise and resources, both sectors can enhance the quality and relevance of migration research while fostering a more comprehensive

understanding of contemporary migration processes.

It is becoming clear that academia and non-governmental organizations are more interdependent than previously assumed. Their knowledge is not identical, but rather complementary. Closer knowledge exchange and stronger collaboration are therefore essential. They offer an opportunity to strengthen both sectors and contribute to a more informed migration debate. While issues such as migration management, legal status, and security have been paramount so far, questions of successful integration are receiving growing attention. Integration extends far beyond the process of settling in a new country and touches on a wide range of social, economic, and educational dimensions. Creating a sense of security, establishing clear policies and procedures, and offering long-term prospects are all important elements of successful integration.

Equally important are raising public awareness, communicating facts, providing reliable information about migration, and combating misinformation. In recent months, migration-sceptical and right-wing political narratives have become more visible in Poland. Even in cities like Lublin, which were long considered role models, debates and accusations directed at migrants have become increasingly prominent. These developments highlight the need for informed and constructive public dialogue. If discussions are increasingly shaped by

isolated negative incidents, there is a risk that public perceptions of migration will become distorted and fail to reflect the experiences and contributions of the vast majority of migrants.



Photo: Marta Pachocka

Such dynamics can undermine social cohesion, complicate integration efforts, and weaken support for migration-related initiatives that have previously enjoyed broad public acceptance. This is particularly relevant in the case of international students, whose presence has long been viewed as beneficial for local communities, universities, and the economy. Strengthening cooperation between researchers, NGOs, policymakers, and local communities is therefore essential for promoting evidence-based discussions, countering misinformation, and developing sustainable responses to current and future migration challenges. Cooperation between academia and non-governmental organizations can thus become a significant and groundbreaking step in shaping the country's future migration policy.

PROJECT

The [Humanitarian Observatory for Central and Eastern Europe](#) was established in 2024, as a new member of the international network of [Observatories](#). It is an organised space and network that undertakes activities dedicated to understanding local, regional or national humanitarian governance. It is self-governing, and consists of a Host Organisation, and multiple participating individuals and/or organisations from sectors including, but not limited to, academia, humanitarian action, research, government, and civil society organisations. The network coordinator for the Observatories is [The Hague Humanitarian Studies Centre](#), based at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

The aim of the cooperation is to develop joint research activities, identify key thematic areas for exchange and collaboration in humanitarian ethics, reassess humanitarian studies and promote inclusion and effectiveness in humanitarian action, with a regional focus on Central and Eastern Europe, and refugee response.

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