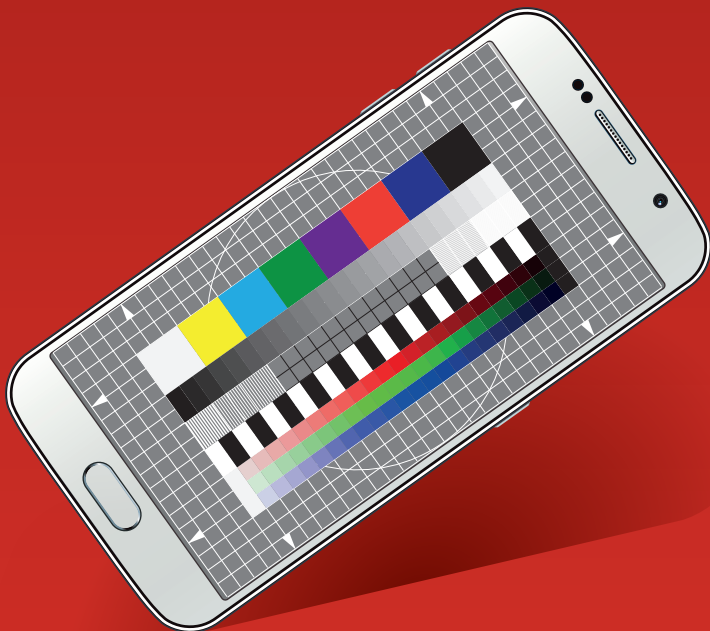


# DGO

► Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Osteuropakunde e.V.



## LABORATORY EASTERN EUROPE

**Public Sphere and Media in  
Times of Dictatorship and War**

CONFERENCE | 13–14 MARCH 2025

Auditorium Friedrichstraße | Quartier 110  
Friedrichstraße 180 | 10117 Berlin

In cooperation with:



Sponsor:

**ZEIT  
STIFTUNG  
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# LABORATORY EASTERN EUROPE

## Public Sphere and Media in Times of Dictatorship and War

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of our journal OSTEUROPA, the annual conference of the DGO is entitled Laboratorium Osteuropa. Public Sphere and Media in Times of Dictatorship and War. In many East-Central and Eastern European countries, digital transformation is occurring much more rapidly than in Germany. Digital media not only facilitate individual communication but also play a central role in the production and dissemination of information, while simultaneously serving as key instruments of disinformation. Clear boundaries between these functions are becoming increasingly difficult to define. This conference will examine how journalistic work operates under these conditions, considering the diverse political contexts across different Eastern European countries.

### PROGRAM

#### THURSDAY, 13 MARCH 2025

6:00 pm OPENING

##### **Welcome**

**Ruprecht Polenz**, DGO, Berlin/Münster

**Anja Osterhaus**, Reporters Without Borders, Berlin

##### **Award Ceremonies**

Klaus Mehnert Preis

Karin Wolff Preis

6:45 pm PANEL DISCUSSION

##### **Power(less): The Media in Times of Disruption**

**Gesine Dornblueth**, Journalist, Berlin

**Vasili Golod**, ARD, Kyiv

**Olga Rudenko**, Kyiv Independent

**Bartosz Wieleński**, Gazeta Wyborcza, Warsaw

Chair: **Kateryna Stetsevyeh**, Federal Agency for Civic Education, Berlin

8:00 pm RECEPTION

## FRIDAY, 14 MARCH 2025

9:00 am LECTURE

**100 years of the Journal OSTEUIROPA:  
a German View on Eastern Europe**

**Manfred Sapper**, DGO/OSTEUIROPA (Berlin)

9:45 am PANEL DISCUSSION

**Eastern Europe as Avant-Garde:  
the Role of Digital Media**

**Felix Ackermann**, Fern-Universität Hagen

**Tetyana Lokot**, Dublin City University

**Iryna Vidanava**, International Media Support

Chair: **Sebastian Lambertz**, DGO, Berlin

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11:15 am COFFEE BREAK

11:45 am PARALLEL PANELS

**War Correspondence: Reasons and Challenges**

**Moritz Gathmann**, Journalist, Berlin

**Ellen Heinrichs**, Bonn Institute, Bonn

Chair: **Felix Eick**, DGO/Osteuropa, Berlin

**Media as a Political Litmus Test: Georgia,  
Kyrgyzstan and Belarus in Comparison**

**Khatia Kikalishvili**, Zentrum Liberale Moderne,  
Berlin

**Ingo Petz**, deko, Berlin

**Birger Schütz**, Reporters Without Borders, Berlin

Chair: **Gabriele Freitag**, DGO, Berlin

**Disinformation: Russia's Media Influence  
in Germany**

**Marcus Bensmann**, CORRECTIV, Berlin

**Susanne Spahn**, freelance journalist, Berlin

Chair: **Heike Winkel**, Federal Agency  
for Civic Education

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1:15 pm LUNCH BREAK

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- 2:15 pm FORUM MEDIA  
**Space for Media and Journalistic Initiatives**
- 3:00 pm PANEL DISCUSSION  
**Media Freedom and Repression: Requirements for Independent Journalism**  
**Szabolcz Panyi**, VSquare.org, Budapest  
**Katerina Abramova**, Meduza  
**Leyla Mustafayeva**, Abzas Media, Berlin  
Moderation: **Gemma Pörzgen**, Reporters Without Borders, Berlin
- 4:30 pm END OF CONFERENCE

## TEILNEHMER\*INNEN

**Katerina Abramova** is the Head of Communications and deputy CEO at Meduza — the largest remaining independent Russian news outlet published in both Russian and English. She also oversees Meduza's crowdfunding and fundraising efforts. Before joining Meduza, Katerina worked at one of Russia's largest charitable foundations and managed various cultural projects.



**Felix Ackermann** is Professor of Public History at the Institute of History at the Fern-Universität in Hagen. There he heads the Institute for History and Biography as well as a Hans Böckler junior research group on the emergence of digital war publics. He has previously held positions in Frankfurt (Oder), London, Lviv, Warsaw, Grodno, Vilnius and St Petersburg.



© Jan Zappner

**Marcus Bensmann** reported for German media in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq for 20 years. He has been researching for CORRECTIV since 2014, including on Russian influence and the New Right.

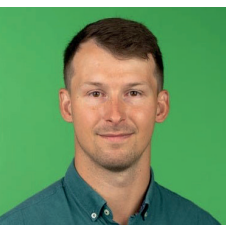


© CORRECTIV/Ivo Mayr

**Gesine Dornblüth**, born in 1969, is a Slavist, radio journalist and book author. She has been reporting from Eastern Europe since the early 1990s, from 2012 to 2017 as DLF correspondent in Moscow. Most recently, she published her bestseller *Jenseits von Putin. Russia's Toxic Society* and *Putin's Poison. Russia's Attack on Europe*, both with Thomas Franke.



© Dornblüth



**Felix Eick** is an editor of the magazine OSTEUROPA since November 2024. He previously worked as an editor and page editor in the business and finance department at WELT. He studied Eastern European Studies at the FU Berlin and Interdisciplinary Russian Studies in Potsdam.



© Dmitry Brushko

**Gabriele Freitag** is executive director of the German Association for East European Studies. Previously, she was managing director of the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies at the Free University Berlin. She received her doctorate with a thesis on Jewish migration in the early years of the Soviet Union.



© Anush Babajanyan

**Moritz Gathmann** has been a reporter focusing on Eastern Europe for 20 years, since 2023 mainly for the magazine stern. He studied Russian and history at the Humboldt University in Berlin. In 2013/14 he reported on the Euromaidan in Kyiv and the war in eastern Ukraine, and from 2022 onwards he has been reporting intensively on the Russian invasion in Ukraine. He lives in Berlin.



© WDR/Annika Fußwinkel

**Vassili Golod** studied political science and history at the Universities of Göttingen and Aberystwyth. As an ARD correspondent in London, Golod reported on Brexit, the coronavirus pandemic and the royal family, among other things. He later moved to the WDR newsroom. Here he worked as a reporter, editor and chief of service for Tagesschau and Tagesthemen, among others. Vassili Golod has been reporting from Ukraine as a correspondent since 2022. He has headed the newly established studio since 2023.

**Ellen Heinrichs** began her career at the Rheinische Post and came to Deutsche Welle via positions at international organizations. The trained journalist first drove the development of the DW Akademie and then the digitalization of Deutsche Welle's programming. She initiated the founding of the internal network DW Minds and the DW Innovation Lab. She was the first German to be a Fellow at the Constructive Institute of the University of Aarhus/Denmark.

© Bonn Institute



**Khatia Kikalishvili** is the Programme Director for Eastern Partnership at the Centre for Liberal Modernity (LibMod). Before joining LibMod, she worked for several years as a foreign and European policy advisor in the German Bundestag. Her areas of expertise are: Eastern Partnership, EU integration, German foreign policy towards Russia and Eastern Europe. Khatia Kikalishvili holds a doctorate in European law from Saarland University.

© Stefan Lengsfeld



**Sebastian Lambertz** has been a public relations spokesperson at the German Association for East European Studies (DGO e.V.) since 2022. He previously worked in the creative industries. Central topics of his work at the DGO include the promotion of scientific communication in Eastern European studies, hate speech and hostility as well as dealing with Russian disinformation.

© Falko Alexander



**Tetyana Lokot** is Associate Professor in Digital Media and Society at the School of Communications, Dublin City University, Ireland. She researches protest and mobilisation, threats to digital rights, networked citizenship, digital authoritarianism, internet freedom, and internet governance in Eastern Europe.

© Pavel Urusov





© Daniel Keil

**Leyla Mustafayeva** is the acting editor-in-chief of Abzas Media, an exile based Azerbaijani independent media outlet, focused on corruption investigations. With 16 years experience in journalism she has focused on fact-based reporting especially in the last years and has collaborated with local and international networks of investigative journalists.



© Anke Phoebe Peters

**Anja Osterhaus** has been responsible for the political work and strategic direction of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Germany since April 15. She was most recently head of program work at Oxfam Germany. Prior to that, she worked in the international secretariat of Transparency International, where she was responsible for whistleblower protection.



© VSquare.org

**Szabolcs Panyi** is a Budapest-based investigative journalist covering Viktor Orbán's Hungary, Russian and Chinese influence in Central Europe, national security, and corruption. He works for non-profit investigative outlets VSquare.org (Poland) and Direkt36 (Hungary). He participated in the Pegasus Project, which uncovered the abusive use of spyware for surveillance in Hungary. In 2024, he received the Free Media Award from Zeit Stiftung Bucerius and Fritt Ord.



© Sjarhei Balai

**Ingo Petz** is head of the Belarus project at the non-profit media platform dekode.org. He has been dealing with Eastern Europe and Belarus in particular in political analyses and cultural-historical essays for over 25 years. His articles have appeared regularly in SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG, FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG and STANDARD, among others. His book *Rasender Stillstand: Belarus – eine Revolution und ihre Folgen* will be published in March 2025.



**Ruprecht Polenz** is president of the German Association for East European Studies. From 1994 to 2013, he was a member of the Bundestag and, from 2005 to 2013, chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Polenz studied law in Münster.

© Ansgar Gilster



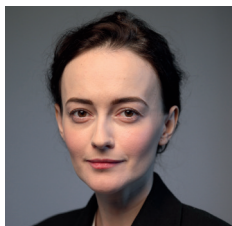
**Gemma Pörzgen** works as a freelance journalist specializing in Eastern Europe in Berlin. She worked as a news editor and later as a foreign correspondent in the Balkans and in Israel/Palestine. Today, the journalist works as an editor in the online editorial department of Deutschlandfunk, as editor-in-chief of the magazine "Ost-West. European Perspectives" magazine, as an event moderator and freelance author. She is a co-founder and honorary board member of Reporters Without Borders Germany.

© Dietmar Gust



**Olga Rudenko** is the chief editor and co-founder of the Kyiv Independent, Ukraine's main English-language online newspaper. She has written for international media, was a 2021 fellow at the Chicago Booth School, and was named a Time magazine "Next Generation Leader" in 2022.

© Kostiantyn Chernichkin



**Manfred Sapper** is editor-in-chief of the journal OSTEUROPA. He studied political science, history and sociology in Frankfurt/Main, Siena and Moscow. Sapper received his doctorate with a thesis on the impact of the Afghan war on Soviet society.

© Ole Witt





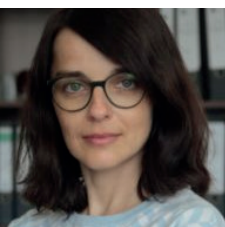
© Jörg\_Müller

**Birger Schütz** is press officer for Eastern Europe and Central Asia at Reporters Without Borders (RSF). He studied political science and Russian studies. He then worked for various newspapers and reported from Russia for two and a half years as editor of the Moscow-based *Deutsche Zeitung*.



© Nitro Lammel

**Susanne Spahn** is a proven expert on Russia's media and disinformation. Spahn worked on international projects at the London School of Economics and the Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis. Since the launch of the Russian foreign media RT and Sputnik in Berlin in 2014, she has written six studies and numerous publications on Russia's disinformation campaigns, including for the European Parliament. In October 2024, she published her book "Das Russland-Netzwerk. How I became an expert on Russia and why I can no longer be".



© bpb

**Kateryna Stetsevykh** is Head of the Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe project group at the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb). Worked for several years as a curator, moderator and lecturer for international intermediary organizations such as Goethe-Institut, GIZ as well as cultural institutions and foundations in Germany. Studied literature, language, culture and Eastern European studies at the University of Czernowitz and the Free University of Berlin.



© Amanda Farah Cox, IMS

**Iryna Vidanava** serves as a Business Viability Advisor at IMS (International Media Support), where she leads the capacity development program for public interest local and niche media in Europe. Iryna has over 20 years of experience in publishing, digital innovation and media management. She is a co-founder of CityDog.io, a leading independent Belarusian multiplatform magazine.

**Bartosz T. Wieliński**, born in Katowice in 1978, is deputy editor-in-chief of Gazeta Wyborcza. He studied journalism, political science and international relations at the University of Silesia in Katowice and at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. From 2005 to 2009 he was Gazeta Wyborcza's correspondent in Berlin. He writes mainly about foreign policy.

© Mateusz Skwarczek



**Heike Winkel** studied Slavic and German studies in Heidelberg, Moscow and Berlin. After completing her doctorate with a thesis on the letter as a form of political expression in the Stalinist Soviet Union, she worked as a research assistant at the Free University of Berlin (Institute for East European Studies and Peter Szondi Institute for AVL). From 2017–2023 she was coordinator of an international research and documentation project on the fates of Soviet prisoners of war at the German War Graves Commission. Since 2023, she has been a specialist for political education on Russian disinformation in the Eastern, Central and South-eastern Europe project group at the Federal Agency for Civic Education.

© Tanja Novikova



# FORUM MEDIEN

## Abzas Media

**Contact:** Leyla Mustafayeva

[www.abzas.org](http://www.abzas.org)



## CORRECTIV

CORRECTIV is a common-good-oriented media company that strengthens democracy. As a multi-award-winning editorial team, we stand for investigative journalism. We trigger public debates, work with citizens on our research and promote an active society with our educational programs. As part of CORRECTIV.Exile, we support exiled journalists. We offer them a platform to continue reporting independently, work investigatively and make their voices be heard in public discourse. In this way, CORRECTIV.Exile contributes to defending press freedom across borders.

**Contact:** [info@correctiv.org](mailto:info@correctiv.org)

[www.correctiv.org](http://www.correctiv.org)



# dekoder

## dekoder

Dekoder offers media, expertise and knowledge, especially on Russia and Belarus. The non-profit project brings Russian and Belarusian journalism and academic expertise from European universities onto a common platform. dekoder has received several awards, including the Grimme Online Award twice. In May 2024, the Russian Prosecutor General's Office declared dekoder the first German media outlet to be an "undesirable organization".

**Contact:** Ingo Petz für Belarus ([ip@dekoder.org](mailto:ip@dekoder.org))  
und Leonid Klimov für Russland ([lk@dekoder.org](mailto:lk@dekoder.org))

[www.dekoder.org](http://www.dekoder.org)





## International Media Support

International Media Support (IMS) is a non-profit organisation supporting local media in countries affected by armed conflict, human insecurity and political transition. We push for quality journalism, challenge repressive laws, and keep media workers of all genders safe so they can do their jobs. Peaceful, stable societies based on democratic values rely on ethical and critical journalism that aims to include, not divide national Media Support.

**Contact:** [info@mediasupport.org](mailto:info@mediasupport.org)  
[www.mediasupport.org](http://www.mediasupport.org)



## Jinn

Jinn is a Berlin-based NGO dedicated to promoting press freedom, supporting media in exile, and assisting independent journalists at risk. Founded in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Jinn provides consultancy, training, mentorship, and funding. Through the Exile Media Hub Berlin and international educational and fellowship programs, Jinn supports investigative projects and fosters cross-border collaboration among media professionals, strengthening independent journalism in East Europe, Central and North-East Asia, West Balkans and Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Contact:** [info@jinn-media.org](mailto:info@jinn-media.org)  
[www.jinn-media.org](http://www.jinn-media.org)



# JX' FUND

## JX Fund

The JX Fund supports exile media from countries where independent reporting is no longer possible due to repression, persecution, and censorship. Without exile media, censorship, propaganda, and disinformation prevail.

**Contact:** [iwekev@gmail.com](mailto:iwekev@gmail.com)  
[www.facebook.com/iwekev/](https://www.facebook.com/iwekev/)



# meduza

## Meduza Publishing Initiative

Meduza publishes books that can no longer be released in Russia due to censorship. The initiative ensures that banned voices are heard by first offering printed editions for sale — helping to support both the authors and Meduza's independent newsroom. Later, all books become available for free through Meduza's mobile app, which is designed to bypass censorship and remains accessible in Russia without a VPN.

**Contact:** [shop@meduza.io](mailto:shop@meduza.io)  
[www.meduza.io](https://www.meduza.io)





border crossing journalism

## **n-ost**

n-ost is a European journalistic network. The media NGO has a focus on Eastern Europe and is committed to cross-border and multiperspective reporting. n-ost connects journalists and media, supports research and provides training: 500 correspondents, photographers and editors work from across Europe. n-ost headquarters are based in Berlin, Germany..

**Contact:** [community@n-ost.org](mailto:community@n-ost.org)  
[www.n-ost.org](http://www.n-ost.org)



## **Reporters Without Borders**

Reporters Without Borders documents violations of press freedom and freedom of information worldwide and alerts the public when journalists and their staff are in danger. We advocate for more security and better protection for journalists. We fight online and offline against censorship, against the use and export of censorship software and against restrictive media laws.

**Contact:** [kontakt@reporter-ohne-grenzen.de](mailto:kontakt@reporter-ohne-grenzen.de)  
[www.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de](http://www.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de)





► Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Osteuropakunde e.V.

## German Association for East European Studies

The German Association for East European Studies (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde, DGO) is the largest network within the German speaking realm engaged in research on East European affairs. Since 1913, the DGO has been active as a forum for the discussion and analysis of politics, economics, and culture in Europe's East. It provides information about current developments, serves as a conduit of knowledge, and promotes dialogue between East and West. DGO members are important multipliers from academia, politics, commerce and industry, cultural life, and the media. The DGO is an independent, non-profit organisation based in Berlin.

### Contact

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FB: [www.facebook.com/DGO.Berlin](https://www.facebook.com/DGO.Berlin)

Instagram: [dgo\\_e.v](https://www.instagram.com/dgo_e.v)



## Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung

The work of the Federal Agency for Civic Education focuses on promoting awareness for democracy and political participation. It addresses current and historical topics with events, print products, audio-visual and online products. The CEE project group at the bpb realizes political education projects on Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe.

### Contact

Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung | Office Berlin

Friedrichstr. 50 | D-10117 Berlin

Mail: [info@bpb.de](mailto:info@bpb.de)

Web: [www.bpb.de](http://www.bpb.de)





## Reporters Without Borders

Reporters Without Borders documents violations of press freedom and freedom of information worldwide and alerts the public when journalists and their staff are in danger. We advocate for more security and better protection for journalists. We fight online and offline against censorship, against the use and export of censorship software and against restrictive media laws.

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## CONCEPT

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde in cooperation with Reporter ohne Grenzen e.V. and Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung funded by ZEIT STIFTUNG BUCERIUS