

**“VWI invites Research Center for the History of Transformations (RECET),
University of Vienna”**

Wednesday, 20th October 2021, 3:00 pm (CET)
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86206212127>

Katarzyna NOWAK

'RECIVILISING' REFUGEES:

DISPLACED EASTERN EUROPEANS IN THE HEART OF DIVIDED EUROPE, 1945-1956



Two Polish children are given soup at No.17 Displaced Persons Assembly Centre located in Hamburg Zoological Gardens, © Imperial War Museum

This project will reassess the experiences of Eastern European refugees airbrushed out of the main narratives of World War II displacement. During and after WWII, refugees from Eastern Europe – Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Roma, and others originating from pre-war Poland’s territory – were exposed to the rehabilitation projects drawn up by both the Western Allies and their own national elites. My research will focus on the hitherto unexplored topic of postwar humanitarian aid as a 20th century form of ‘civilising mission’, which aimed to incorporate these displaced Europeans into the communities of the Western world to hasten post-war reconstruction. To add nuance to the understanding of the refugee experience in the early Cold War period, this work integrates a bottom-up perspective with an institutional one by tracing and unearthing archival materials created by refugees from various social and ethnic backgrounds, who found themselves in Allied-occupied Germany and Austria.

Commented by Claudia KRAFT

Katarzyna Nowak is a historian specializing in cultural and social history of Eastern Europe with a particular interest in refugee and migrant history. During her doctoral and postdoctoral research at the University of Manchester, she focused on Displaced Persons in the early Cold War period in a global perspective. She is currently completing her first monograph, entitled *Kingdom of Barracks. Polish Displaced Persons in Allied-occupied Germany and Austria, 1945-1952*. She has published on the history of gender, refugees, and diaspora.

Claudia Kraft is a Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna since March 2018. She specializes in 20th century comparative European and particularly Central and Eastern European history. Her main fields of research are history of everyday life in state socialist societies after WWII, gender history, history of forced migrations after WWII, memory cultures and politics of history in Central and Eastern Europe, comparative legal history, and new approaches to area studies.