

Z VARŠAVSKEJ UNIVERZITY

# PROF. MICHAŁ BILEWICZ

Celoakademická prednáška



## Conspiracy Beliefs as Adaptations to Historical Trauma

Konšpiračné presvedčenia ako adaptácie  
na historickú traumu

Prednáška bude prebiehať v anglickom jazyku bez tlmočenia.  
Po nej bude nasledovať panelová diskusia s vedkyňami a vedcami  
zo Slovenskej akadémie vied.



pondelok, 7. september 2026 | 10:00  
prednášková miestnosť Ústavu materiálov  
a mechaniky strojov SAV

### Program

09:30 – Káva a neformálne stretnutie účastníčok  
a účastníkov

10:00 – Prednáška prof. Michała Bilewicza

11:00 – Panelová diskusia a otázky z publika

### Účasť v paneli zatiaľ potvrdili:

Dr. Zuzana Panczová (Ústav etnológie a sociálnej antropológie SAV)

Dr. Monika Vrzgulová (Ústav etnológie a sociálnej antropológie SAV)

Dr. Magdalena Adamus (Centrum spoločenských a psychologických vied SAV)

Dr. Dominik Želinský (Sociologický ústav SAV)

Dr. Patrícia Fogelová (Centrum spoločenských a psychologických vied SAV)

Kapacita podujatia je obmedzená.

Registrovať sa môžete do 30. júla 2026 pomocou QR kódu:



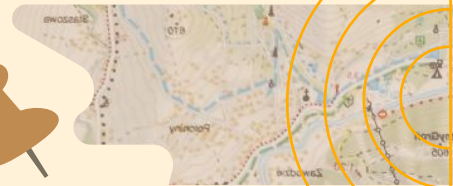
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## Conspiracy Beliefs as Adaptations to Historical Trauma

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Conspiracy beliefs represent one of the key challenges facing contemporary societies. They undermine social trust, fuel intergroup conflict, and can threaten democratic governance. Although conspiracy theories are typically explained as products of individual cognitive biases, personality traits, or motivated reasoning, I propose a complementary perspective that conceptualizes conspiracy beliefs as adaptations to historical trauma. From this perspective, conspiracy beliefs emerge in social environments characterized by war, colonization, political repression, and collective violence, where coordinated harm by powerful actors is not merely imagined but often constitutes a recurrent feature of lived reality. Under such conditions, conspiratorial interpretations may function as adaptive meaning-making systems that help individuals and groups make sense of experiences of victimization, powerlessness, and institutional betrayal.

In this talk, I examine whether the high prevalence of conspiracy beliefs in Central and Eastern Europe can be understood as a legacy of historical trauma associated with World War II and its aftermath. A growing body of evidence suggests that several core consequences of historical trauma constitute important antecedents of conspiracy beliefs. One such consequence is the erosion of personal and collective control. Historical trauma often leaves individuals and groups with a chronic sense of powerlessness, prompting them to seek explanations that attribute negative outcomes to the intentional actions of powerful actors. Consistent with this reasoning, perceived lack of control has been linked to stronger endorsement of conspiracy theories. For example, it predicts belief in Jewish conspiracy theories in Poland and conspiracy narratives blaming Germany for the economic crisis in Greece.

Drawing on cross-national surveys, experimental studies, and longitudinal evidence, this talk will examine the role of historical trauma in shaping conspiracy beliefs and discuss the mechanisms through which traumatic collective experiences continue to influence contemporary political cognition.

