

International African Conference Explores Relations between African and Central and Eastern European Countries

In the past, the conference VIVA AFRICA was organized under the patronage of the Czech Association for African Studies at several Czech universities, and this year, it will be held at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, on 15-17 September. The main organizer of the event is the Centre for African Studies at CU FA.

The twelfth season of the conference revolves around the following theme: Africa and (the Other) Europe: Imageries – Discourses – Exchanges. “The gathering aims to illuminate the nature of the mutual exchange of thoughts, knowledge, goods, artefacts, and people between Africa and Europe in the context of various political and economic conditions, modes of imagination, and products of knowledge,” one of the organizers, Dr Vít Zdrálek, introduces the conference.

The conference offers Afro-European relations in the past and present as the main theme with particular focus on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which participated in the colonial system, although they usually did not have colonies themselves. Nonetheless, these countries had their take in global economic and cultural transfers that profited from the colonial system or reflected it in particular ways. Thus, even there, specific colonial ideas and discourses about non-European countries and people emerged.

One of the main goals of the conference is, therefore, to present the idea of Europe as a single entity that is solely

recognized as a part of “the West” or “global north,” and offers a more diverse and accurate image of the mutual relations and cultural exchange.

The conference is to be opened by Prof Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Chair of Epistemologies of the Global South at the University of Bayreuth in Germany, with his paper on African Studies in the Context of the Cognitive Empire and Global Economy of Knowledge Reflections on Decolonial Turns. The following programme is divided by themes into seven sections, such as social ideas in Afro-European relations, the roles of Central and Eastern European journalists and missionaries, and the Czechoslovak involvement in Africa, and six panels focused on, for example, African students in the Socialist Countries, relations of Poland and post-colonial Africa, and Eastern Europe and decolonization of Southern Africa.

Due to the epidemic situation, the gathering is to be held in a hybrid form (in-person and online). All sections of the programme are to be streamed on the ZOOM platform; you may ask for the link at viva.africa.conference@gmail.com. On 14 September, there is a preceding cultural programme in Campus Hybernská where new publications related to African studies will be presented along with some documentaries.