

The project «The Iron Curtain Project: European Remembrance Across Generations» was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"

Applicable to the Strand 1 – "European Remembrance"

4 events have been carried out within this project:

Event 1: "Crossing Borders Iron Curtain Party"

Participation:

The event involved 105 citizens, including 53 participants from the city of Amsterdam and surroundings (**Netherlands**), 1 participant from the Oromia region (**Ethiopia**), 2 participants from (**Libya**), 1 participant from (**Somalia**), 1 participant from the Darfur region (**Sudan**), 47 participants from the city of **Helmstedt-Marienborn** and surroundings (**Germany**).

Location / Dates:

The event took place in a touring car, at the Grenzübergangsstelle and at the Zonengrenzmuseum (Helmstedt-Marienborn, Germany), 09/11/2014 and the documentary was presented at De Balie in Amsterdam (the Netherlands), 15/11/2014.

Short description:

When the Wall fell, we were children still. Germany celebrated deliriously, and we watched TV. We weren't very familiar with politics yet, but some of the sensation reverberated with us, too. The aim of the first event was to experience that feeling of euphoria with different nationalities, or at least investigate what was left of it. That's why, twenty-five years to the day after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a group of native and immigrant Dutch boarded a touring car and travelled to former border crossing Helmstedt-Marienborn for a chance to celebrate and commemorate the Mauerfall with the Germans.

Grenzübergangsstelle Helmstedt-Marienborn, also known as Checkpoint Alpha, was the place where Western Europeans would get stuck in the traffic on their way to Berlin. For East Germans it simply marked the end of the world. Until November 9, 1989. One Helmstedt resident remembers heavy traffic going the other way that day: "We were strolling through nature alongside the border when we smelled what could only be stroke engines. We walked to the checkpoint and to our surprise we saw East Germans in Trabants calmly crossing the border. Nobody had seen it coming, but the Wall had been torn down."

Twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, at a festive and symbolic location, we launch the Iron Curtain Project. With Eddie the Eagle Museum, Club Interbellum and our German partner organisation Neurenberg International Human Right Film Festival (NIHRFF) we organized a trip to Helmstedt-Marienborn. We were joined by people who took an interest in the program, but also by several 'border experts': former refugees and failed asylum seekers from We Are Here, who are faced with the reality of borders in Europe today. To get to know the local German population, they and the other travellers started off with a symbolic game of Jenga with the villagers in the Zonengrenz Museum. Building and breaking down walls with wooden bricks during the game provided for a playful setting for people from different backgrounds to talk together (or communicate in other, improvised ways) about their experiences and views on the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In the streets and on the squares of Helmstedt, the participants drink beers, children ride the carousel, and the local cover band plays Rock Me Amadeus for the third time. Oumar Berete from Sudan and his friends Ahmed and Azedin walk around with a sense of wonder. They seem lost in this German provincial town where the air is pregnant with the smell of bratwurst, but it's them who are pulled aside by locals the most. A German woman who fled from East to West Germany in the seventies wants to share her story, because she believes these men will understand.

During the event, the project website with double-portraits of personal memories on the Iron Curtain was launched and the audience was activated in a playful way with the Jenga game to start dialogues about the meaning of the Iron Curtain for current Europe. The event brought European citizens and European newcomers closer together. They felt a common identity because of common experiences they had at different locations. It generated a discussion on the meaning of the fall of the Berlin Wall for Europe today. Around the event, different double portraits and background articles were published on the project website and in renown media to stimulate the social debate on the Iron Curtain period and impact on Europe today.

Furthermore, a documentary was made during the event and published on the website. The documentary was presented at the event "'89 Civil Courage. Revolution. Democracy. Europe" in the Dutch renown debate center De Balie in Amsterdam on Saturday 15-11-2016, with more than 80 active participants.

Reports

- Online text and photo report of the event: www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/events/that-day-traffic-was-headed-the-other-way/
- Roadmovie (documentary) of the event: <https://vimeo.com/114034820>
- Publication of the final report on the website of the partner organisations Neurenberg International Human Right Film Festival www.nihrff.de, Stichting Bureau Boven www.bureauboven.com, Stichting Autres Directions www.autresdirections.nl

Publicity

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/ironcurtainproject/ (more than 550 likes) and www.facebook.com/events/1496994837215670/ and <https://www.facebook.com/bureauboven/>
- Twitter: [#ironcurtainproject](https://twitter.com/ironcurtainproject)
- Radio interview on Dutch National Radio live during the event www.eo.nl/ditisdedag/radio/item/ontmoetingsreis-bij-herdenking-val-van-de-muur/

- Publicity on the website of our partner organisation Neurenberg International Human Right Film Festival www.nihrrf.de
- Publicity on the website of our partner organisation Bureau Boven www.bureauboven.com/
- Presentation on the Iron Curtain Project during the Pecha Kucha Night in Utrecht on 11-12-2014, more than 100 direct participants www.pechakucha.org/cities/utrecht/events/543e3a2afbe5773265000002
- Journalistic double portrait on the Struggle of a football club in east berlin during Iron Curtain Period and in present times: www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/stories/ive-given-my-blood-for-union/
- Journalistic double portrait on Andreas Möller (71), a former Stasi prisoner who fights for more openness and acceptance of GDR history and Christian Schaft (23), youngest member of Die Linke in Thuringia, who rather looks to the future www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/stories/apologies-from-a-minister-president/
- Background article on how East and West Germany abused and drained their athletes during the Iron Curtain period www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/stories/ive-given-my-blood-for-union/how-east-and-west-germany-abused-and-drained-their-athletes/
- Background article on civil disobedience in East Germany during the Iron Curtain period www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/stories/ive-given-my-blood-for-union/one-day-youre-an-opponent-the-next-you-keep-schtum/
- Background article on 45 million Stasi archive shreds that are being glued together www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/stories/apologies-from-a-minister-president/45-million-stasi-archive-shreds-glue-that/
- Background article on why former Stasis are being treated with kid gloves www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/stories/apologies-from-a-minister-president/why-former-stasi-is-treated-with-kid-gloves/

Event 2: "I fled and I took with me. Pop-up Museum on the Iron Curtain"

Participation:

The event involved 183 citizens, including 112 participants from the city of Amsterdam and surroundings (**Netherlands**), 23 participants from the city of Utrecht (**Netherlands**), 5 participants from the city of The Hague (**Netherlands**), 4 participants from the city of Leiden (**Netherlands**), 2 participants from the city of Andijk (**Netherlands**), 17 participants from the city of Warschau and surroundings (**Poland**), 6 participants from the city of Brasov and surroundings (**Romenia**), 5 participants from (**Hungary**), 3 participants from (**Bulgaria**), 4 participants from the city of Plzeň and surroundings (**Czech Republic**), 2 participants from the city of Kaunas and surroundings (**Lithuania**).

Location / Dates:

The event took place in Podium Mozaïek and Erasmuspark as part of Festival Westwaarts (**Amsterdam, the Netherlands**), 20/06/2015, 28/06/2015 and 05/07/2015.

Short description:

What do you take with you when you have to leave your country forever? Between the trees of the Erasmus Park in Amsterdam our museum Exit Entry popped-up in June and July 2015.

Simple things as old shoes, a snail and a coin told the stories of people who came to the west before and after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Ten former refugees and migrants from Eastern Europe based in the Netherlands shared not only their personal belongings that remind them of the east side of the Iron Curtain but also their personal story for the museum. The artifacts were presented as in a 'real' museum: on columns with a transparant glass-like top over it. The accompanying stories were attached near to the objects, all in text, some of them also in audio. There were headphones to listen to them.

At the opening event on World Refugee Day, migrants and former refugees were interviewed in front of a live audience by the journalists of Bureau Boven. Romanian writer Mira Feticu wrote a monologue about 'her' Eastern Europe for the purpose of the opening event. As part of the event, audience and speakers had a debate on current and former migration in Europe and on being "European" versus being Dutch, Romanian, Polish or Check.

The pop-up museum was a big success. Lots of people read and listened to the stories and talked about what they would take with them if they had to leave forever. The focus on artifacts makes the conversation on this controversial topic more accessible and stimulates the transnational dialogue between Dutch and former refugees. It makes abstract topics like borders, refugees and asylum concrete and personal, in a way that everyone - young and old - can relate to it. It stimulated the social and political debate on the meaning of borders, on the current situation in Europe and enhanced the mutual understanding among Europeans from different backgrounds on migration.

The personal stories were also published in book form, so participants of the event could take them home and share them with family and friends. Furthermore, different double portraits and articles were published on the project website and in renown newspapers to generate more publicity and to enhance the social debate so people from different European countries could read, watch and hear about the way the curtain is still present in the lives of fellow European citizens from other countries. The documentary Exit-Entry that was made for the opening event, is also shown during the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) on 18-11-2015 together with a side-talk on the European relevance of the Iron Curtain Project with more than 50 direct participants.

Reports

- Online text and photo report of the event: www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/events/exit-entry-pop-up-museum/exit-entry-pop-up-museum-2/
- Online video of the event: vimeo.com/133661146
- Documentary Exit-Entry: <https://vimeo.com/138318254>
- Publication of the final report on the website of the partner organisations Bureau Boven www.bureauboven.com, Stichting Autres Directions www.autresdirections.nl

Publicity

- 10 personal stories of Eastern European refugees: www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/events/exit-entry-pop-up-museum/
- Publicity on the Festival website of Westwaarts www.podiummozaiek.nl/programma/westwaarts
- Publicity on the website of our partner organisation Bureau Boven www.bureauboven.com
- Article to promote the event in national newspaper NRC Handelsblad, 19-06-2015
- Journalistic double portrait on the renewed fear for the Russians in Lithuania in Dutch National newspaper The Correspondent, 07/07/2015 decorrespondent.nl/3045/In-Litouwen-is-de-dienstplicht-weer-ingevoerd-uit-angst-voor-Rusland/536056358145-67e88522 (English version on project website: www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/stories/renewed-fear-of-the-russians-in-lithuania/)
- Journalistic double portrait on Mirka Chojecki-Nuckowska (60), who fled Poland with her three young children in 1987 and went to the Netherlands. Her youngest daughter Ewa prefers not to know why. www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/stories/what-ewa-knows/
- Radio interview on Amsterdam FM Radio, a radio station for youngsters
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/ironcurtainproject/ (more than 550 likes and the event reached more than 300 people)
- Twitter: [#ironcurtainproject](https://twitter.com/ironcurtainproject)

Event 3: "Iron Curtain - One Question. The interview workshop"

Participation:

The event involved 29 citizens, including 25 participants from the city of Budapest and surroundings (**Hungary**), 1 from Germany, 5 participants from the city of Amsterdam (**the Netherlands**).

Location / Dates:

The event took place in the House of Dialogue (**Budapest, Hungary**), on 15/10/2016 and 11/12/2015.

Short description:

One can read a hundred history books, but sometimes you have history sitting right next to you at your dining table: because it's your own parent, uncle, grandparent. What do you really know about your own family members' past? Could you ask them about it? In October 2015 we conducted an interview workshop in Budapest with Hungarian students; post '89 youngsters. We provided them with tips and tricks on interviewing, and discussed the importance of oral history. We asked them to go and interview their own (grand)parents about the communist times, to ask that one question they never dared to ask. And, very important, register it on video.

During the workshop, history professor András Joó from our partner organization Cold War History Research Center gave a small lecture that provided the students with contextual background about Hungary during communist times. Marton Baranyi from the museum Terror Haza talked about the importance of oral history. Frank Odzuck, CEO of the Hungarian liquor company Zwack Unicum, shared his own oral history about how he fled the country. The students received tools on how to conduct interviews with their relatives from the journalists of Bureau Boven. After that, the students publicly interviewed professor Gyula Jobbagy about his personal experience as a student opposition leader during the communist time. After a good practice, they were sent home to conduct, record and translate the interviews.

Not an easy assignment, but they came up with some spectacular stuff. Remarkable stories like a plane hijack, and small drama like giving birth during the revolution are being told in the videos made by the Hungarian youngsters.

During the screening of the videos on the 11th of December in Budapest, the participants of the contest shared their experiences and discussed their videos with the public. It wasn't always easy to make the relatives tell their stories in front of a (smartphone) camera, the participants recall. "My grandparents still seem scared to talk about communist life. If they do, they tend to whisper, because 'the neighbours might hear'", says a young man in the public who was amazed by the openness of one of the interviewees in the videos. One participant admits that he indeed needed his mother - who is a lawyer - to convince his grandmother to participate.

In the videos people tell about their personal life during the communist period in Hungary. A grandmother tells about her little rebellion against the anti-religious attitude at her school; a father tells about his love for the scarce western products that he could acquire, like a pair of jeans. "These personal stories make me imagine how I would have behaved in their shoes", says a student from the public in reaction to the videos. Some youngsters figure that the tendency to think that 'when it's from the west, it is better' still exists, even in their own generation.

At the second meeting in December, the winner of the contest was also announced. The jury consisted of the famous Hungarian documentary making couple Eszter Cseke and András S. Takács, known from their series On the Spot. Also the award winning documentary maker Eszter Hajdu and the historian specialized in oral history Eszter Tóth took part in the jury. They had unanimously decided on the video of Balázs Ficzer, a finance student. He interviewed his grandmother who tells how, as a little girl, she was afraid that people would find out that her family did 'illegal pig slaughtering' in order to have more food. Cseke and Takács called his film in the jury report 'not only a beautiful oral history, it also draws a picture about the way of life in an era behind closed doors.'

In the discussions about the videos at the meeting it became clear that the students usually don't tend to ask their relatives much about the past. On the other hand, the relatives themselves do not openly talk about it that much - except for a few anecdotes that are being repeated at every family diner. One contestant says she's very thankful to the project, since it motivated her to go and ask for it proactively. She ended up finding things out she didn't know about her family.

All the seven videos made by the students are published on <https://vimeo.com/album/3914371>.

The university college Szent Ignác Jezsuita Szakkollégium considers to make the interview workshop part of the curriculum because of the valuable impact this event had on the students to dig into their family history of the Iron Curtain period and exchange the impact it has had with fellow students.

Reports

- Online written and photo report www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/events/one-question-the-interview-session/
- Publication of the final report on the website of our Hungarian partner organisations Kinekinto kitekinto.hu/europa/2015/09/18/mi_maradt_1989_oroksegebl/#.VugGzuLhDIV and Cold War History Research Center <http://coldwar.hu/>

Publicity:

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/events/1648365675448297/ almost 16.000 people were reached, 412 people viewed the event and 42 people engaged www.facebook.com/ironcurtainproject/ (more than 550 likes)
- Twitter: [#ironcurtainproject](https://twitter.com/ironcurtainproject)
- Publicity on the website of our partner organisation Kinekinto, in the form of two news articles, on 18/09/2015 http://kitekinto.hu/europa/2015/09/18/mi_maradt_1989_oroksegebl/#.VfwFzNXtmkoans on 23/09/2015: http://kitekinto.hu/europa/2015/09/23/romboljuk_le_egyutt_a_sajto_hatarait/#
- During a campus weekend organized by Szent Ignác Jezsuita Szakkollégium, the ICP was promoted, and the documentary Exit/Entry was being screened for the students
- Publicity on the website of our partner organisation Cold War Research Center <http://coldwar.hu/>
- News article in renown Hungarian media, 29/10/2015: http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20151028_iron_curtain_project_interju

Event 4: "European Debate on Iron Curtain Family Secrets: Remember or forget?"

Participation:

The event involved 57 citizens, including 42 participants from the city of Prague and surroundings (**Czech Republic**), 2 participants from the city of Vsetin (**Czech Republic**), 2 participants from the city of Bystřice nad Pernštějnem (**Czech Republic**), 8 participants from the city of Amsterdam and surroundings (**the Netherlands**), 3 participant of the city of Baarn (**the Netherlands**).

Location / Dates:

The event took place in the Audience Center of the Lucerna Art Gallery (**Prague, Czech Republic**), 13/03/2016.

Short description:

This year the generation that was born in 1989 turns 27. They have no live memories on the Iron Curtain. But the divide is still prominent in the memories of older generations. The past can sometimes be difficult to talk about, on an individual (family) level and in international relations between nations. That's why we found a format to make it easier to reveal these stories.

With the ToldUntold event we collected true stories about the communist past that people still find difficult to talk about with our Czech partner organisation PostBellum and the Czech National Radio Station Rozhlas. Weeks prior to the event, citizens were activated via different media to send in their 'secret' regarding the communist time, anonymously, if they preferred. We received over 40 personal stories and probably many more people were activated to think of their personal story because of the radio call.

By changing the six most prominent stories into animation and theatre, we turned the personal stories into universal stories. It was a great way to bring anonymous personal stories to a broad audience. During the event, three short animation films by Dutch animators Marieke Hollander, Anne van Wieren and Ineke Goes were presented together with two short audio documentaries by journalist Britt Jenssen of Czech national radio station Rozhlas. The acclaimed Slovak theatre director and playwright Dodo Gombar wrote a theatre monologue, specifically for the purpose of this event, named "The Hangman". It was performed during the event at Jeden Svet (One World Film Festival) by actor Jacob Erfteimeijer from the Svandovo Theatre Company. The Hangman is a light and funny piece, based on a story that was sent to us. It's about a man who entered the army after finishing his studies to become a veterinarian. But in the army they saw him as a doctor, so he had to work as one. From The Hang Men:

"In November '89 I cried, I do not remember anything so strongly, only the fact I was crying. My daughters did not get it, but did not ask either. Although they were small at that time, they were sensitive. That was what that unfree world did with us, it taught us to be more besotted on the one hand, more sensitive on the other."

After the presentation of the stories, a debate took place on taboos on the Iron Curtain period that still exist in the Check Republic. On how delicate it is to talk about Communist Party membership for example, while it is so important to know your past to understand the present and think about the future of Europe.

The Check radio station Rozhlas declared during the event that they will continue to collect personal stories from ordinary Check citizens, to continue to break the existing taboos and to promote the importance of oral history and the relevance to remember.

Report

- Online written and photo report: www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/events/told-untold/
- Publication of the final report on the website of our Czech partner organisation Post Bellum www.postbellum.cz/

Publicity

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/events/456333904573052/ (more than 150 reactions) and www.facebook.com/ironcurtainproject/ (more than 550 likes)
- Radio interview on Dutch National Radio about the event and the relevance of the Iron Curtain Project on 09-03-2016: www.radio1.nl/item/347339-Iron%20Curtain%20Project:%20de%20invloed%20van%20Izeren%20gordijn.html
- Publicity on the website of our partner organisation One World Film Festival www.oneworld.cz/2016/radio-documentaries
- Publicity on the website of our partner organisation Post Bellum www.postbellum.cz/
- Publicity on the website of our partner organisation Bureau Boven www.bureauboven.com/
- Twitter: [#ironcurtainproject](https://twitter.com/ironcurtainproject)