



REMEMBER: REsearch and Music CommEMorating the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes in Bulgaria and Eastern EuRope

The project REMEMBER: REsearch and Music CommEMorating the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes in Bulgaria and Eastern EuRope, was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens".

It took place in five partner countries: Bulgaria, Albania, Croatia, Germany and Romania in the period 09.2019 – 02.2023.

More than 6080 people were involved in the five events that were carried out within the project:

Event 1 - Music/art contest

Participation: 131 young artists participated in the event, including 97 participants from Bulgaria, 11 participants from Romania, 18 participants from Albania, 3 participants from Croatia, 2 participants from Germany.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Croatia and Germany from 20/09.2019 to 20.01.2020

Short description: Nowadays art, and especially music, has big impact on values formation of young people. The aim of the Music/art contest is to raise awareness about the totalitarian communist regimes in Eastern Europe and by the means of art and music to provoke the engagement of the young people. The REMEMBER Song Contest was organized in each of the five partners countries. In order to educate, motivate and engage the participants, the announcement of the contest was accompanied by the provision of illustrative and textual information, related to the history of the camps/prisons and fates of artists who were persecuted for their work. Twenty-five new songs were created, some of them based on poems, written from the victims. The respectful jury in each country has nominated the winners. Their songs were recorded in a professional studio and a CD with all the songs, lyrics and English translations was released in 7000 copies. The winners from the different countries participated at the Final Concert in Sofia.

Students from New Bulgarian University were involved with posters on the theme "Music behind the Iron Curtain" as part of the educational program of the Department of Design, inspired by REMEMBER project.

More information:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/732038717309905/>

<https://www.facebook.com/REMEMBER.EU>

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLK02nlxIEffHqQzGTA7ouViNrJYfw7iHO>

Event 2 - Concert REMEMBER: Art for Freedom and Commemoration

Participation: 786 people took part in the event, including 778 participants from Bulgaria, 3 participants from Romania, 3 participants from Germany, 2 participants from Albania.

Location / Dates: The two-days event took place in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 19.09.2022 to 20.09.2022

Short description: This was the Final Concert of the participants in the Music Contest, supported by well-known Bulgarian writers, artists and historians. The young musicians were joined on stage by famous Bulgarian bands: Stefan Valdobrev with the Usual Suspects and Vasko the Patch with Poduene Blues Band.

The event was accompanied by rich program of conferences, exhibitions, art installation and films. The variety of activities covered very different aspects of the history of the communist period: the viewpoints of the historians, writers, musicians, priests, public figures, students and young people were mixed and interacted on one event and on one stage.

Here are part of the topics in the conference panels: "The Totalitarian State and Young People", a panel with experts on history, „Communism and Psychic Trauma“, a panel of the New Bulgarian University, „Socialism at school - the hard lesson“, a panel presenting the school project "My Story of Socialism" 2021 in 91 German Language School in Sofia, "Persecuted for their faith!" a panel with representatives from different religion denominations, literary discussion - with the participation of well-known Bulgarian writers and poets.

Two performances, inspired by REMEMBER project were presented on the stage: "The Forbidden", work of the Art and Youth Initiatives "The Studio" and „Honor the graves“- with the participation of prof. Yosif Radionov-violin, prof. Angel Stankov-violin, the actors Silvia Lulcheva and Vasil Binev.

The event was accompanied by the following exhibitions and film screenings:

- VICTIMS WITHOUT EXECUTIONERS: Curatorial project, inspired from REMEMBER, by Andrey Vrabchev, sculptor and arch. Alexander Genchev. The exhibition features three artists who show the different faces of the victims of totalitarianism through their works:
Andrey Vrabchev with his sculpture “Repentance”- Memorial to the Victims of Communism;
Stoyan Karageorgiev with his 16 stained glasses of martyrs from different parts of the world, killed by different totalitarian regimes;
Peter Baychev, former prisoner in Belene camp with his portraits of prisoners, secretly painted during his 5-year stay in the camp.
- REMEMBER Mobile exhibition - All 30 posters were displayed. The 10 short films were presented on the event. (see full description in event 4)

Part of the Concert was filmed and short movies with the content is spreading on Remember YouTube channel.

More information:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/789145785840298> (52K people reached)

<https://www.facebook.com/REMEMBER.EU>

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLK02nlxIEffEjNtZJcxllj_INbmHvQR90

Event 3 – INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: Art as a Form of Freedom during the Totalitarian Communist Regime. Forbidden music and fate of repressed musicians in the period 9.1944-10.1989

Participation: The hybrid event involved 217 people.

On place in the town of Belene participated 70 people: 68 participants from Bulgaria and 2 from Croatia.

In Zoom were involved 117 participants as follows: Bulgaria- 92, Canada-3, Germany-4, Austria -2, Belgium-1, Albania-1, USA-5, Romania-3, Netherlands-2, France-2, United Kingdom-1 and China-1.

30 students followed online the conference from Paris, France from one Zoom registration.

Location / Dates: Belene, Bulgaria, 23-24 October 2021 and online

Short description: The aim of the Conference was to attract previously unreached audiences and to mix participants with different backgrounds to discuss on the themes of totalitarianism and freedom from their different perspectives. The Conference took place in condition of Covid-19 restrictions. It was organized with simultaneous translation as a hybrid event on line in ZOOM and in Belene and it was also spread in FB page as a live event. More than 25 experts participated in the conference as lecturers. 30 students from the Bulgarian school in Paris have organized group video participation in the conference online.

The conference was opened by President Petar Stoyanov (1997-2022) and Father Paolo Cortesi, parish priest of Belene. Andrey Kovachev, Member of the European Parliament, online from Brussels and Milen Dulev, Mayor of Belene welcomed the participants.

Here are some part of the conference panels:

“Culture as resistance. Everyday life and violence during the communist period” with participation of historians, writers and journalists;

“Communism & Trauma: Individual and socio-cultural trajectories” with the participation of psychoanalyst, artist, journalist and historian.

“Music during the plague” with participation of famous Bulgarian musicians. The panel was moderated by a popular music journalist Vassil Varbanov. The panel ended with musical performance of Vasko The Patch. The online streaming of this panel reached 10K people.

“Labor Camps and political prisons in Bulgaria, Albania, Romania and Croatia” with the participation of the partners in the project.

Each panel was followed by heated discussions, which continued and after the hours of the conference in an informal atmosphere. Many questions were also asked online and discussions continued even after the event was over.

The event was accompanied by the REMEMBER mobile exhibition.

More information:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/821044078573104> (17K people reached)

<https://www.facebook.com/REMEMBER.EU>

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLK02nixIEffEnLB7-sux8oBD-6sgmynJ>

Live streaming of "Music during the plague" <https://fb.watch/ixXbeDiUnL/> (10K people reached)

Event 4 – REMEMBER Mobile exhibition: Forbidden music and the fate of musicians under totalitarian regimes in former socialist countries.

Participation: Until the end of the project, the event involved 4810 citizens and since then the number is increasing.

The mobile exhibition was visited by 3570 people: 3130 from Bulgaria, 120 from Germany, 320 from Romania.

The online virtual exhibition was seen by 1240 people from Bulgaria, Germany, Romania, Albania and Croatia and the number is increasing – the exact distribution per country could not be followed.

Location / Dates:

- Belene 15-20.10.2021;
- International Conference in Hamburg, Germany, 20.11.2021, online;
- International Conference in American University in Bulgaria – AUBG, Blagoevgrad 14.04.2022-14.05.2022;
- International Conference in Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad, 19.05.2022-06.06.2022;
- Concert REMEMBER: Art for Freedom and Commemoration, Sofia 19-20.09.2022;
- European Jazz Conference / Europe Jazz Network, Sofia 22-25.09.2022;
- National Day of the commemoration of the victims-01.02 2023, Sofia, NDK;
- Cathedral of St. Joseph, Sofia 01.02 2023-28.02.2023;
- Pitesti Memorial, Romania 01-02.2023;
- Conference in Jena, Germany, 12.11.2022

Due to the interest, the schedule of exhibitions in the Cathedral of St. Joseph, Sofia and Pitesti Memorial, Romania is extended and the number of visitors increases.

Upcoming visits of the mobile exposition: Bulgarian Archives, New Bulgarian University, schools and others.

Short description: The mobile exhibition is visiting universities, conferences, municipalities, state administration buildings and different events, telling the stories about the Forbidden Music and the Fate of Musicians under Totalitarian Regimes in Former Socialist Countries. Often the exhibition is accompanied by lecture and performance of well-known musician, actors, historians and others. The films from the Virtual exhibition are taking part in different events and are spreading online via FB and YouTube.

It consists of:

- **Poster Exhibition:**
The exhibition consists of 20 posters with stories of musicians, repressed during the regime. Ten others posters (5 in English and 5 in Bulgarian) present former camp or prison in each of the partner countries:
The camp on the island of Persin near Belene in Bulgaria;
The Prison for Students in the city of Pitesti, Romania, known as the "Pitesti Experiment";
The camp on the island of Goli Otok in Croatia;
The camp in Spach, Albania;
The KGB prison in Potsdam, Germany.
Ten of the posters are translated in English and printed in the partner countries.
- **Poster Exhibition: Music Behind the Iron Curtain** (in partnership with New Bulgarian University) The exhibition contains 16 posters with drawings made by students of the NBU Interior Design program as a course assignment between 2020 and 2021. Since then, inspired from Remember project, NBU has made this course part of the university program.
- **Virtual exhibition:** The exhibition comprises 10 short films. Five films present the five camps/prisons mentioned above and five films present the fate of repressed musicians in these countries.

More information:

<https://www.facebook.com/REMEMBER.EU>

<https://www.facebook.com/REMEMBER.EU/posts/pfbid0qjHqo5VBZU33cQ5cMfUMzHuMK4NWePV5n35D3wWZFMc3QMyZJ6zhszALHYU5mtRLI>

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLK02nlxIEffEsrRivHMSMXGz6gX0TsvvD>

Event 5 – Stage performance at the concentration camp in Belene

Participation: The event involved 140 citizens, including 138 from Bulgaria and 2 from Croatia

Location / Dates: Belene 24.10.2021

Short description: The stage performance was planned as the culmination of the National Remembrance day in Belene. Due to Covid 19 restrictions the number of people had to be reduced only to the participants of the conference and students from the local schools. The participants commemorated the memory of the victims with speeches, music and literature reading.

The President of the "America for Bulgaria" Foundation, Nancy Schiller, and the Mayor of Belene, Milen Dulev, also participated in the event.

For the first time in the history of the former camp, the building of the so-called "hooligan period" was opened for visits. Here in 1959 were closed youths accused of listening to western music, wearing tight pants, short skirts and long hair. This was very moving not only for the musicians from the conference, whose music was banned during communism, but also for the young visitors.