



Annual Report 2023

(working draft)

A word from the President

DRAFT

Another year marked by instability and war has entered the history books. In these turbulent times, the Platform of European Memory and Conscience is redoubling its efforts. We are committed to raising awareness about the history of totalitarian regimes, honouring the victims of these oppressive systems, and advocating for justice.

Last year, PEMC's influence on various aspects of memory policy in Europe grew significantly. Above all, our Platform's success is driven by our members' dedication. Each contribution is vital and enhances our collective significance. Particularly impactful are initiatives that highlight our work's international scope, showcasing how the Platform operates as a truly global institution across multiple countries simultaneously. Let me provide some examples below.

Our great success was the prosecution of Vratislav Vajnar, a high-ranking communist official, in the Czech Republic. In our opinion, he was responsible for specific crimes against individuals attempting to cross the Iron Curtain. The outcomes of our Justice 2.0 program were very important for the preparation of court proceedings in his case. In a related effort, our involvement in restoring the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Communism in Slovenia helped our colleagues from this country in their fight for memory. Additionally, our Bulgarian members' efforts led to the long-awaited decision to demolish the monument of Soviet soldiers in Sofia—a symbol of the totalitarian power of Soviet Russia. As PEMC, we appeared actively in the Bulgarian media. Despite opposition from the Russian Federation and attempts to challenge the decision of the Sofia authorities in court, the monument was demolished. The voice of the international community of memory institutions, represented by PEMC, played an important role at a key moment in this debate. We conveyed that people across Europe support this decision.

We tried to shape the discussions on history and memory within the European Parliament. In the spring of 2023, we held several meetings and presentations that focused primarily on the Pan-European Memorial for the Victims of Totalitarianism project in Brussels. A significant outcome of our work was the endorsement of our Memorial project in Brussels through an open letter signed by 69 members of the European Parliament.

Following that, we co-organised the official commemoration of the victims of Soviet deportations at the EP headquarters in Strasbourg and participated in a conference on the prospects for Ukraine's European integration. I believe that our notes and analyses provided to interested members of the European Parliament helped significantly amend the draft resolution on European historical consciousness (adopted by EP on 17 January 2024), which, initially unfavourable to us, now more closely aligns with the spirit of the Platform.

We also managed to advance our Pan-European Memorial project, although we are still in the initial stages and far from being satisfied. While we successfully re-established a dialogue with administrative authorities at various levels in Brussels, we have not yet obtained a decision regarding the location of the Memorial. On the other hand, we have made a considerable effort to enhance awareness and gain support for the project. I am confident that shortly there will be significant progress in this area of our activity.

Last year, we carried out several presentations of our exhibitions and publications. We closed 2023 with a very successful Annual Meeting in Warsaw, for which I would like to thank the Polish Institute of National Remembrance. Our internal discussions gave the entire Executive Board a lot of inspiration and fresh perspectives on advancing our network's development. Despite our modest resources, we had many opportunities to act, and as this report shows, our impact is growing.

During our Warsaw meeting, we decided to reschedule the Council of Members meeting to spring. And here we are in Vilnius. I would like to thank our Lithuanian friends, the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, for organising our meeting. Colleagues, I kindly ask each of you to review the attached report and consider renewing my mandate, enabling me to carry on my duties as the President of the Platform.

Marek Mutor
President of Platform

ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW

JANUARY

Another milestone in the Justice 2.0 project – the Czech Constitutional Court defends the right of the Iron Curtain victims to adequate compensation

Prague, 19 Jan – Citizens who were injured by Czechoslovak border guards while trying to escape through the Iron Curtain are entitled to extraordinary financial compensation, the Czech Constitutional Court has announced. This is another landmark and precedent-setting case in the Justice 2.0 project, which reverses the previous practice of courts awarding minimum compensation.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/01/19/another-milestone-in-the-justice-2-0-project-the-czech-constitutional-court-defends-the-right-of-the-iron-curtain-victims-to-adequate-compensation/>

The victims of the Holocaust commemorated at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial

Poland, 27 Jan – On 27 January 1945, Soviet troops liberated the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. In 2005, International Holocaust Remembrance Day was adopted by the UN General Assembly to preserve the memory of the Jews murdered during World War II.

Dr Marek Mutor represented the Platform during ceremonies that took place in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/01/27/platform-commemorates-the-victims-of-the-holocaust-today-at-the-auschwitz-birkenau-memorial/>

FEBRUARY

International conference Necropolis of Communist Terror: Locating and researching burial sites, the language and form of memorials

Tallinn, 8 Feb - *The International Conference Necropolis of Communist Terror: Locating and Researching Burial Sites, the Language and Form of Memorials* was held in Estonia on 8 Feb - 10 Feb 2023. The event was hosted in the Estonian Film Museum and organised by the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory, Memorial Research and Information Centre/Joffe Foundation. Mr. Marek Mutor represented PEMC and actively participated in a discussion panel titled *Emotionality and Aesthetics of Commemoration: Commemoration Practices, Language and Form*.

Read more:

- <https://mnemosyne.ee/en/international-conference-necropolis-of-communist-terror-mainpage>

The first person responsible for Iron Curtain crimes to stand trial in Czech court

Prague, 15 Feb – Former Communist Interior Minister Vratislav Vajnar (born 1930) has been charged with abuse of official authority that led to the deaths and injuries of seven people at the Czechoslovak state border in the 1980s. The indictment was filed on 9 February 2023 by Katarína Kandová of the District State Prosecutor's Office for Prague 2. This is an important output of the Justice 2.0 project.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/02/15/first-case-for-iron-curtain-killings-to-go-to-trial/>

The 75th anniversary of the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia commemorated in Prague

Prague, 25 Feb – The Platform and its Czech member organisations commemorated the anniversary of the Communist coup of 25 February 1948 at a solemn gathering on Nerudova Street in Prague. At this site, a peaceful march of several thousand students – the only protesters against the Communist seizure of power – was stopped and the students were beaten up by Communist-controlled police.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/02/25/the-75th-anniversary-of-the-communist-coup-in-czechoslovakia-commemorated-in-prague/>

European Gulag exhibition presented during Memory Days 2023 in Albania

Tirana, 28 Feb – The Platform representative, Mr Marek Murtor, attended the opening ceremony of the Memory Days 2023 (18-28 February 2023) and of the *European Gulag* exhibition. The Memory Days is a major event in Albania that deals with the recent communist history and brings exhibitions, workshops, conferences, and publications on this subject to the public. Since 2016, it has been organised by the Institute for Democracy, Media and Culture.

The presentation of the *European Gulag* exhibition started the Memory Days from the Site of Testimony and Memory in Shkodra. This was followed by a guided tour of this town, considered the centre of the Albanian anti-communist resistance.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/02/28/european-gulag-exhibition-presented-during-memory-days-2023-in-albania/>

MARCH

The first trial of a former high-ranking Czechoslovak state official for the Iron Curtain killings in April in Prague

Prague, 3 March – Judge Ms Kateřina Rybáková of the District Court for Prague 1 has ordered a main trial during which the court will hear the indictment of Dr Vratislav Vajnar (born 1930) for the particularly serious crime of abuse of official authority. This is the first case involving a former Communist state official and it has reached the stage where a main trial has been ordered. The trial comes five and a half years after the Platform filed a criminal complaint against Czechoslovak Communist leaders for setting up the border regime in direct violation of Article 12(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which explicitly states, "Everyone is free to leave any country, including his own." (No. 120/1976 Coll.)

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/03/02/the-first-trial-of-a-former-high-ranking-czechoslovak-state-official-for-the-iron-curtain-killings-is-scheduled-for-april-in-prague/>

Working meeting with European Remembrance Group and commemoration of the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in the European Parliament

Brussels, 28 March – The President of the Platform (PEMC), Mr Marek Murtor, presented the organisation's activities at the meeting with the MEPs from the European

Remembrance Group in the European Parliament in Brussels on 28 March. The meeting was attended by a dozen representatives of several political factions, including Ms Rasa Juknevičienė (President of the Group, LT, EPP), Ms Anna Fotyga (PL, EKR), Mr Bernard Guetta (FR, Renew), and Mr Juozas Olekas (LT, PSS).

The main agenda of the meeting was to present a Pan-European memorial to the victims of all totalitarian systems, with plans for its construction in Brussels in the coming years. Mr Tszwai So, the author of the Memorial's concept, elaborated on the project details.

On 29 March, Marek Mutor and Mrs Andreja Valič Zver, a member of the PEMC Executive Board, attended the celebration of the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/03/29/working-meeting-and-commemoration-of-the-anniversary-of-the-warsaw-uprising-in-brussels/>

APRIL

Representatives of the Platform at the Congress of National Remembrance in Warsaw

The President of the Platform, Mr Marek Mutor, and Miroslav Lehký participated in the Congress of National Remembrance on 13 – 15 April 2023. The event was organised by the Institute of National Remembrance at the PGE National Stadium in Warsaw. It was the first event of its kind to offer historical debates, games, exhibitions, workshops, film screenings, and much more to polish history enthusiasts. Prominent historians, educators, publicists, bloggers and vloggers, young programmers, social activists, and veterans, among others, were invited to Poland's most famous stadium.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/04/16/representatives-of-the-platform-participated-in-the-congress-of-national-remembrance-in-warsaw/>

Justice 2.0: The main trial of the former Czechoslovak Minister of the Interior opened

Prague, 25 April – On 25 April, the District Court for Prague 1 initiated the main trial of former Czechoslovak Interior Minister Vratislav Vajnar at the District Court for Prague 1, in his absence. The case pertains to the killing of civilians on the Iron Curtain between 1983 and 1988. The defendant excused himself for health reasons. After reading the

indictment and witness statements and reviewing the documentary evidence, the court requested a third medical report on the defendant based on the defence's argument. The court adjourned the hearing to 15 August 2023. The Platform's press conference followed.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/04/25/platforms-big-success-if-sane-ex-minister-vajnar-will-be-sentenced-for-killing-refugees/>

Representatives of the Platform meet with the Chairwoman of the Committee on Culture and Media in Bundestag

Berlin, 25 April – Today, Marek Mutor, President of Platform of European Memory and Conscience, met with representatives of the Bundestag: Katrin Budde, Chairwoman of the Committee on Culture and Media, and Evelyn Zupke, Federal Parliamentary Commissioner for Victims of the SED Dictatorship (SED-Opferbeauftragte beim Deutschen Bundestag), as well as Bundesarchiv Vice-President Alexandra Titze. They discussed cooperation in commemorating the victims of totalitarian regimes.

MAY

Two Platform representatives in Reykjavik

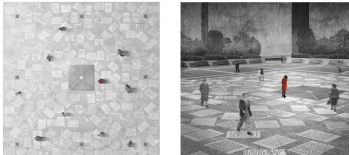
Prague, 16 May – Two members of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience delivered talks at an international conference held in Reykjavik on 12 May 2023 by the University of Iceland. The conference marked the retirement of Hannes H. Gissurarson as professor of politics at the University of Iceland. Professor Gissurarson has long been an active member of the Platform. At the conference, Yana Hrynko, Curator of the Holodomor Museum in Kyiv and a member of the Platform's Supervisory Board, provided a brief overview of the Great Famine in 1932–33 and the ongoing Russian war against Ukraine. Dr Neela Winkelmann, the Platform's former Executive director (2011 – 2018),

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/05/16/two-platform-representatives-in-reykjavik/>

Members of the European Parliament support Platform

Brussels, 17 May – Significant outcome of Platform’s work was the endorsement of our Memorial project in Brussels through an open letter signed by sixty-nine members of the European Parliament. It was the first step to restart dialogue with the local and regional administrations as well as significant public support for the project.



Mrs Elke Van den Brandt
Minister of the Government
of the Brussels-Capital Region,
responsible for Mobility,
Public Works and Road Safety
Botanic Building
Boulevard Saint-Lazare,
10 - 13th floor
1210 Brussels
Brussels, on 17/05/2023

Madam Minister,

The European Parliament declared 23 August, the date of the signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939 as the 'European Day of Remembrance' and called, in 2009, for the creation of a pan-European memorial in memory of all the victims of all the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century.

On 28 March, Marek Mutor, President of the European Memory and Conscience Platform, and Tszwai So, designer and architect from Spheron Architects, came to the Parliament to present the "An Echo in Time" project selected at the end of an international architectural competition launched in 2017, sponsored by the Parliament and the European Commission.

As you know, this memorial is planned to be built on the Jean Rey square. The promoters of this work have informed us of the difficulties encountered with the regional government of Brussels Capital to obtain the building permit.

Today, faced with the rise of extremism and oppressive authoritarian regimes, faced with the dangers that threaten democracy everywhere, it seems crucial to us that the Union, its institutions, its elected representatives, but also each of its territories and its leaders, should keep alive the memory and honour those who have fallen in the fight for freedom. The European Union, born of the lessons

learned from Europe's dark past, must more than ever show its determination never to let history repeat itself.

Brussels Capital, and more particularly its European quarter, would become the first and only place in the world where the millions of victims of fascism, Nazism and communism would be rightly honoured with this memorial.

We respectfully and solemnly appeal to you to give your permission for the construction of this memorial for future generations.

In the hope that our message will be heard, please accept, Madam Minister, our best wishes.

Signatories:

Members of European Parliament

- Bernard GUETTA, Renew, France
- Besa JUONEVYENĖ, EPP, Lithuania
- Juozas OLEKAS, S&D, Lithuania
- Jana FOTIGA, ECR, Poland
- Marjeta GREŠCOPVA, Greens/ EFA, Czechia
- Dace MELBARDE, EPP, Latvia
- Miriam EDMANN, EPP, Slovakia
- Sandra KALNEĒTE, EPP, Latvia
- Inese VAIDERE, EPP, Latvia
- Andrey KOVACHEV, EPP, Bulgaria
- Aulisa MALDENIENE, EPP, Lithuania
- Andrius KUBILIUS, EPP, Lithuania
- Michela SCUDROVA, EPP, Czechia
- Peter POLLÁK, EPP, Slovakia
- Marian-Jean MĂRNEȘCU, EPP, Romania
- Radan KANEV, EPP, Bulgaria
- Željka ŽIVKO, EPP, Croatia
- Roberts ZIE, ECR, Latvia
- Bart GROTHUIS, Renew, Netherlands
- Jaak SÄRKYJÄ-WOLSKA, ECR, Poland
- Koosha ZLOTYŃSKA, ECR, Poland
- Pieter LAROCQUETIUS, S&D, France
- Milan ZVER, EPP, Slovenia
- Márió GYÖNGYÖSI, NI, Hungary
- Traian BĂSEȘCU, EPP, Romania
- Javier NART, Renew, Spain
- Enikő GYÖRÉ, NI, Hungary
- Urmas PAET, Renew, Estonia
- Andrus ANSP, Renew, Estonia
- Andreas BOCSKOR, NI, Hungary
- Matte PAGAŻAURTUNDUA, Renew, Spain
- László TRÓCSÁNYI, NI, Hungary
- Ádám KÓSA, NI, Hungary
- Ełbbieta KRUK, ECR, Poland
- Ludus MAZYLIUS, EPP, Lithuania
- Viktor USPASZCZI, NI, Lithuania
- Balázs HIDVÉGHÉ, NI, Hungary
- Dominik TARCZYŃSKI, ECR, Poland
- Max ORVILLE, Renew, France
- Javier ZARZALEJOS, EPP, Spain
- Beata KEMPA, ECR, Poland
- Kriszta GÁL, NI, Hungary
- Ivan ŠTEFANEČ, EPP, Slovakia
- Vilja BLINKEVIČIUTE, S&D, Lithuania
- Petras AUSTREVIČIUS, Renew, Lithuania
- Romana TOMAC, Renew, Slovenia
- Andrius Wrośid MALICKI, EPP, Poland
- Benoit LUTGEN, EPP, Belgium
- Andrzej Wrośid MALICKI, EPP, Poland
- Paryk JAŁO, ECR, Poland
- Ełbbieta RAFAŁKA, ECR, Poland
- Monika BENOVA, S&D, Slovakia
- Jordi SOLÉ, Greens/ EFA, Spain
- Viola VON CRAMON-TALBADEL, Greens/ EFA, Germany
- Beata MAZUREK, ECR, Poland
- Viola GEORGHE, Renew, Romania
- Witold Jan WASZCZYKOWSKI, ECR, Poland
- Herrmann TERTSCH, ECR, Spain
- Zbigniew KUŚMIK, ECR, Poland
- Reinhard BUTIKOFER, Greens/ EFA, Germany
- Jadwiga WISNIEWSKA, ECR, Poland
- Emmanuel FRANKOS, ECR, Greece
- Dina CHARANZOVA, Renew, Czechia
- David LEGA, EPP, Sweden
- Carlo FRANCA, ECR, Italy
- Edina TÓTH, NI, Hungary
- Siegfried MUREȘAN, EPP, Romania
- Charles GOERENS, Renew, Luxembourg
- Pirkko RUOHONEN-LERNER, ECR, Finland

Read more:

- <https://www.facebook.com/pemceu/posts/pfbid02UZYER5W7ymRsp6h2hJuGxMCYyccvQaLSEeWSx2d329zNnCViodMw2FRaSrUoDvUl>

Statement on Slovenia's decision to abolish the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Communism

The Platform of European Memory and Conscience is deeply saddened by the decision to abolish the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Communism in Slovenia. This decision dishonours the memory of all innocent victims of communist injustice. It also fails to support the building of a united and resilient Europe established after the Second World War on the principles of law, democracy, human rights, and dignity.

This memorial day commemorates the tragic events of 12 May 1942, when innocent civilians, including women and children, were massacred by communist partisans. The international expert community advocates for a thorough discussion to assess cases, identify victims, and hold those responsible to account. The historical experiment of a multi-ethnic Yugoslavia has failed, and coming to terms with the past has been a slow process. The consequences of this approach led to a civil war decades ago and are now being repeated in Eastern Europe.

The Slovenes' voluntary decision to join the European community meant embracing democratic principles, pluralism of opinion, and respect for individual rights. The European Union has adopted several official declarations in which it has condemned the undemocratic regimes of the past (fascism, Nazism, and communism) and called for the commemoration of victims and the righting of wrongs, etc.

Approximately 700 mass graves and sites of communist crimes exist in Slovenia. Many of the crimes occurred immediately after WWII when more than 100.000 people of various nationalities were killed by the communist authorities on Slovenian soil. Abolishing the right to remember and pay tribute to all these victims, many of whom haven't even been officially buried, is a reprehensible act.

The Platform of European Memory and Conscience calls for the Slovenian Government to reconsider its position.

On 23 May 2023

International Day of Heroes of the Fight against Totalitarianism

25 May – The Platform in cooperation with its member organisations, coordinated and commemorated this day with many on-site and online activities of its members in Slovakia, Romania, Albania, Poland, and international forums.

Platform active in the European Parliament

31 May, Brussels – Marek Mutor attended a conference at the European Parliament in Belgium, dedicated to commemorating the Day of Heroes on 25 May. During the event, Mutor presented the book *Lest We Forget* to the audience. On 31 May 2023, we attended the naming ceremony of one of the rooms in the Parliament's headquarters in Brussels, honouring Witold Pilecki, along with the accompanying conference.

Read more:

- https://www.facebook.com/pemceu/posts/551549643854295?ref=embed_post

JUNE

European Gulag Exhibition in Prague

The international travelling exhibition, *European Gulag*, had its Czech premiere in Prague and was available to the audience from 6 to 30 June 2023 at the Ambit Gallery in the Franciscan Monastery of Our Lady of the Snows.

The exhibition's opening took place on Wednesday, 7 June 2023, in the Convent of Our Lady of the Snows refectory in Jungmann Square. The event featured a debate with historians Adam Hradílek, Jan Dvořák, Zdeněk Bauer, and Wojciech Bednarski, which was by Petr Blažek.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/05/31/european-gulag-exhibition-in-prague-in-june/>
- https://www.facebook.com/pemceu/posts/556299643379295?ref=embed_post

Platform active in the European Parliament

Representatives of the Platform (PEMC) have been active in the European Parliament in recent weeks. Mr Marek Mutor, PEMC President, and Ms Andreja Valic-Zver, member of the Executive Board, attended the commemoration event for the victims of Soviet deportations, which took place on 14 June at the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The event was attended by Ms Roberta Metsola, President of the Parliament, and several MEPs, including Ms Rasa Juknevičienė, Chair of the Informal Group on European Remembrance and the initiator of the event. PEMC has been involved in this project for several years, acting as a co-creator.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/07/04/platform-active-in-the-european-parliament/>
- https://www.facebook.com/pemceu/posts/559845853024674?ref=embed_post

JULY

European Gulag exhibition in Szczecin

Szczecin, 14 July – The Platform exhibition, *European Gulag*, opened at the National Museum in Szczecin, the Dialogue Centre Upheavals, on 13 July. The exhibition commemorates the history of forced labour camps that were set up in Central and Eastern Europe after the Second World War in countries ruled by communist regimes: East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Moldova. The exhibition will be on display in Szczecin

until 24 September 2023, after which it will travel to Pitesti, Romania, and Tirana, Albania.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/07/13/european-gulag-exhibition-in-szczecin/>

Continuing prosecution in the cases of killings on the Iron Curtain and warning against further delays

Prague, 21 July 2023 - Despite media headlines following the death of former Minister of Interior Vratislav Vajnar (1930 – 2023), the prosecution of perpetrators from the Iron Curtain in former Czechoslovakia continues. On 30 June, the Czech Office for the Documentation and Investigation of the Crimes of Communism charged the next in the chain of command – Jan Muzikář, former First Deputy Chief of the Main Administration of the Border Guard and the State Border Protection. The accused is 89 years old this year. The Platform pointed out that its criminal complaints from 2016 and 2017 named a few hundred more people, and warned against further unacceptable delays in criminal prosecution, similar to what happened with former Prime Minister Štrougal and former Minister Vajnar.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/07/21/platform-welcomes-continuing-prosecution-in-the-cases-of-killings-on-the-iron-curtain-and-warns-against-further-delays/>

Baile Tusnad 2023

On 23 - 28 July 2023, the summer university and school event took place in Tuscányos/Baile Tusnad in Romania. The Platform was represented by its board member, Mr Zsolt Szilágyi. Free Summer University and Student Camp is an event organised since 1990 in Romania as a large-scale intellectual workshop promoting cross-border cooperation in the region.

AUGUST

Century of Martyrs exhibition opened in Pitești, Romania, in connection with the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes

Pitești, 23 August – The Platform, in cooperation with The Prison Memorial in Pitești, opened the *Century of Martyrs* international exhibition on Wednesday, featuring figures of martyrs persecuted by totalitarian political regimes. The event took place on the occasion of the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes.

The panel participants included Sergiu Rizescu, former political prisoner, Wojciech Bednarski, curator of the exhibition, and Dragoș Ursu, historian. Maria Axinte, the founder of the Pitești Prison Memorial, moderated the discussion.

The European Parliament proclaimed the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes in 2008, in commemoration of the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact on 23 August 1939. The Pact divided Europe between totalitarian regimes and marked the onset of war, constituting one of the most devastating chapters in European history. The commemoration event took place in many locations, and Platform members contributed in many ways to the event.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/08/24/century-of-martyrs-exhibition-opened-in-pitesti-romania/>

SEPTEMBER

***Century of Martyrs* exhibition opened in the educational centre in Hejnice, Czech Republic**

Prague, 4 September – The opening of the Czech version of the *Century of Martyrs* exhibition occurred at the Hejnice Monastery – Educational, Conference, and Pilgrimage House on Friday, 1 September. The Platform prepared the project in cooperation with the Twentieth Century Memorial Museum. An English-Czech catalogue was published to accompany the exhibition.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/09/04/century-of-martyrs-exhibition-opened-in-hejnice-monastery/>

Czech court respects the Constitutional Court ruling and increases compensation for the German victim injured on the Iron Curtain

Prague, 14 September – The District Court for Prague 2 has increased the amount of money to be paid by the Justice Ministry to former GDR citizen Thomas Bartsch. In the summer of 1989, he attempted to flee through Czechoslovakia to the West. However, border guards in Domažlice shot him in the knee. Initially, the man was awarded CZK

5,550, but after the Constitutional Court intervened, the judge has now awarded him almost CZK 80,000 more in damages.

Compensation and rehabilitation of victims of the Iron Curtain have been carried out since 2017 as part of the Justice 2.0 project in cooperation with the German UOKG and the victims' lawyer, Dr Lubomír Müller.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/09/14/czech-court-respects-constitutional-court-ruling-and-increases-compensation-for-victim-injured-on-iron-curtain/>

Prague Conference on Disinformation and Hybrid Activities

Prague, 26 September – An expert conference titled *Disinformation and Hybrid Activities, Response of State and Public Institutions* was held in the Czech Parliament's Chamber of Deputies on Monday, 25 September 2023. The event was opened by the Minister of the Interior, Vít Rakušan, under the auspices of the Chairman of the Committee on Security, Pavel Žáček. The conference aimed to present the activities of individual ministries and institutions against disinformation and hybrid activities. The Platform was represented at the conference by Peter Rendek, Managing Director.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/09/26/prague-conference-on-disinformation-and-hybrid-action/>

Exhibition opened in Tirana

Tirana, 27 Sept - The Platform's exhibition, *European Gulag*, was opened at the Tirana Design Week in Albania. The exhibition was prepared in cooperation with Albanian member organisations – ISKK (Instituti i Studimeve për Krimet dhe Pasojat e Komunizmit). It received wide coverage in the local media. The PEMC was represented by Jonilla Godole, an Executive Board Member.

Read more:

- https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=324598926854459&id=100079130634490&ref=embed_post

The Platform once again partners with the NNW festival in Gdynia

Gdynia, 29 September – On 29 September, an expert discussion took place as part of the 15th NNW International Film Festival, held in Gdynia from 27 to 30 September.

The discussion titled *How to tell the world about totalitarianism?* featured such speakers as Dr Marek Mutor, Platform's President, Dr Karol Nawrocki, Chairman of the Institute of

National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej), Dr Marcin Zarzecki, Chairman of the Polish National Foundation, Dr Réka Földváryné Kiss, Chairwoman of the Hungarian Memory Committee, Mr Ganbaatar Adiya, former Ambassador of Mongolia to Poland, and Mr Krzysztof Flizak, retired US Army Captain.

The Platform also organised a discussion on the topic of *Is Shared Memory Possible? How Should We Look at This Issue And Can We Provide a Final Answer?* The panel featured Andrzej Jerie from the Depot History Centre (Centrum Historii Zajezdnia), Petr Blažek from the Muzeum paměti XX. století, Imre Molnár, a historian and diplomat, and Wojtek Bednarski from the Platform. This engaging dialogue was skilfully moderated by Paweł Ukielski from the Warsaw Rising Museum (Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego). During the discussion, we presented the *Lest We Forget* book.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/09/29/platform-once-again-a-partner-of-the-nnw-festival-in-gdynia/>

OCTOBER

Exhibition on the European Gulag at the Vojna Memorial

Prague, 25 October – The exhibition of the Platform, *European Gulag*, has been on display since October in the Vojna Lešetice Memorial, which is part of the Mining Museum in Příbram. The Vojna Memorial is an authentically preserved prison area, unique in Central Europe. Located between former uranium mines, it was originally a prison camp for German war prisoners and in 1949-1951 served as a forced labour camp. The site continued as a prison for political prisoners of the communist regime until 1961. The exhibition commemorates the history of forced labour camps established in Central and Eastern Europe after the Second World War in countries ruled by communist regimes: East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Moldova.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/10/25/the-european-gulag-exhibition-is-on-display-in-the-vojna-memorial/>

Collaboration on a documentary about the war on education in Ukraine

Prague, 22 October - We were approached by a Dutch team from EuroClio to collaborate on a *War on Education* documentary about education in war-torn Ukraine. The documentary aims to raise awareness of the impact of the war on education, and how it has been used as a tool. The director, Stefano di Pietro, and his team came to Prague, where they interviewed Peter Rendek. Rendek discussed the ongoing hybrid war in

Russia concerning education and the similarities to the communist style of education he personally experienced. The film premiered in February 2024.

Read more:

<https://www.waroneducation.org/trailer>

European Gulag exhibition opened in Tirana

Prague, 28 October – The Platform's exhibition, *European Gulag*, opened on 27 October at the National History Museum (Muzeu Historik Kombëtar) in Tirana. The ceremony was inaugurated by Mr Çelo Hoxha, Director of the Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes and Consequences in Albania (ISKK), along with Slovak Ambassador, Mr Albín Otruba, Polish Ambassador, Ms M. Zuchniak-Pazdan, and a representative from the Bulgarian Embassy in Tirana. The Platform was represented by Ms Jonilla Godole, Member of the Executive Board and CEO of the Institute for Democracy, Media and Culture.

Read more:

- <https://www.facebook.com/pemceu/posts/pfbid02zvegmfft5S72YTb2VszCzByvaUFKp4Gub7etneySSG4b2RT5yFLEhMov5M2ESACvI>
- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/10/28/11953/>

NOVEMBER

Remembrance and Future Forum

Wrocław - The Platform was a co-organiser of the 4th edition of the Remembrance and Future Forum in Wrocław at the Depot History Centre. The conference titled *Between the City and the Region - Great Memory Beyond the Metropolis* explored examples and efforts to restore historical monuments and events "from the periphery" to their rightful place in the collective memory of nations. The reading of *Lest We Forget* also took place during the event. Many PEMC member organisations actively participated in the event. The Platform was represented by Marek Mutor and Wojciech Bednarski.

Read more:

- <https://remembranceandfuture.com/?lang=en>

European Gulag exhibition in the Lithuanian Parliament

Vilnius, 17 November – On the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the Lithuanian Political Prisoners and Exile Union (Lietuvos politinių kalinių ir tremtinių sąjunga), memory organisations from different countries gathered at the Lithuanian Parliament in Vilnius (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas) on 17 November to discuss the issues of deportations, Communist crimes and the culture of memory as part of the Forum-23 event. Marek Mutor spoke on behalf of the Platform during the ceremonial opening of the event. He highlighted Lithuania's position as one of the European leaders in this field. A special event in the program was the grand opening of our exhibition, *European Gulag*. The ceremony featured speeches by Member of European Parliament, Rasa Juknevičienė, Deputy Speaker of Seimas Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė and Monika Rogers, a member of our Supervisory Board. Wojtek Bednarski, the exhibition curator, introduced everyone to the *European Gulag* exhibition.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/11/18/opening-of-the-european-gulag-exhibition-in-the-lithuanian-parliament/>

Activity in Brussels

Brussels, 27-29 November - The Platform's President, Mr Marek Mutor, was a speaker during the high-level conference *European Integration of Ukraine - the Path to Lasting Peace on the European Continent* organised in the European Parliament. The visit to

Brussels was also an opportunity to present the project of the Pan-European Memorial to such dignitaries as the Ambassador of Poland to Belgium, Rafał Siemianowski, Ambassador of Lithuania to Belgium, Dainius Petras Kamaitis, Nuncio of the Holy See to the European Union, Noël Treanor, and the former President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy.

There was also a meeting with Jean-Pierre Boublal, a representative of the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organizations, responsible for communication between various levels of the Brussels administration and the European Parliament. The meeting was followed up at the beginning of the next year with the participation of a delegation of MEPs led by Sandra Kalniete and aimed at resolving the deadlock concerning the location for the Memorial planned by PEMC. Marek Mutor, Wojciech Bednarski, and architect Tszwai So from the Platform attended the meeting. Representatives from Brussels, including Perspective Brussels (Pierre Lemaire, Maarten De Backer), Urban.Brussels (Mieke Tanghe), City of Brussels (Thi-Tiên Trân), and Bruxelles Mobilite (Jean Bériaux), were also present. Other attendees included MEP Sandra Kalniete from the European Parliament, along with a representative from the offices of MEP Rasa Juknevičienė. As a result, a roadmap was created to explore alternative locations for the Memorial.

DECEMBER

2023 Annual Meeting of the Platform and the Remembrance as a Key to Understanding the Present...conference

On 5-7 December the Platform of European Memory and Conscience held its Annual Meeting in Warsaw. The event brought together high-ranking representatives of member organisations and guests. The Institute of National Remembrance, Poland's member organisation of PEMC, served as the host for the meeting.

Representatives of member organisations addressed the most pressing challenges facing PECM, including the project concerning the erection of the Memorial for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes in Brussels.

During the Meeting, The Council of Members elected Pavel Žáček (CZ) to the Board of Trustees. Monika Rogers (LT) was also re-elected for another term as a member of the Supervisory Board. Additionally, the Silesian Center for Freedom and Solidarity (PL) was admitted as a new member organisation to the Platform. Candidate status was granted to the Centre for Renewal of Culture (HR) and the Museum of Repressed Writers (GE). The Council of Members approved the Annual Report for 2022.

The accompanying academic conference was attended by, among others, IPN President, Karol Nawrocki, PhD, Ambassador of Israel to Poland Yacov Livne, PhD, Elizabeth Spalding, PhD, Chairman of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation and Founding Director of the VoC Museum in Washington D.C., Prof. Stéphane Courtois, renowned author of the Black Book of Communism, and H.E. Juris Poikāns, Ambassador of Latvia to Poland. We also hosted Rasa Juknevičienė, MEP, leader of the European Remembrance Group in the European Parliament, and many opinion leaders.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/12/28/2023-annual-meeting/>
- <https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/10932.2023-PEMC-Annual-Meeting-and-Conference-57-December-Warsaw-Poland.html>

Dismantling of the Soviet Army Monument in Sofia

Sofia, December 2023 - The Platform was active in the media in connection with the long-awaited decision to demolish the Monument to Soviet Soldiers in Sofia. This issue has been the focal point of efforts by Bulgarian PEMC members for many years. The culminating events took place at the end of December 2023, when Sofia authorities decided to demolish the monument. This decision sparked protests from the Russian Federation and prompted discussions in Bulgaria. There was an attempt to challenge this decision in court. In response, the Platform engaged extensively in public debate. The Executive Board issued a statement, and President Marek Mutor spoke during a prime-time program on national Bulgarian television, among other actions.

Statement: Recently, we have received the long-awaited news of the imminent dismantling of the monument to the Soviet army in Sofia. The symbol of Soviet tyranny should have disappeared a long time ago. This is a requirement of democracy and the preservation of European values. As a global community of institutions dedicated to honouring the memory of victims of totalitarian regimes, we extend our gratitude to all who contributed to this positive development. We have been attentively monitoring administrative attempts to hinder this process and earnestly appeal to all parties to refrain from obstructing this crucial endeavour.

PEMC Executive Board.

European Gulag presentation in Timișoara, Romania

From 15 Dec 2023 to 28 Feb 2024 the *European Gulag* exhibition was presented in Timișoara, Romania. The event was part of the European Capital of Culture 2023 and was co-organised by the Timisoara Society, member organisations from Romania, and

the Museum of the Revolution in Timișoara. The Mayor of Timișoara, Dominic Fritz, opened the ceremony. Zsolt Szilagyi and Paweł Ukielski outlined the Platform's mission to promote remembrance of the victims of totalitarian regimes and to fight against all forms of totalitarianism. They expressed hope that the exhibition would contribute to fostering a more democratic and just Europe.

Wojtek Bednarski, the exhibition's curator, provided a substantive introduction to the exhibition's themes and guided attendees through the exhibits.

The exhibition was also a great opportunity to show the effects of our collaboration with Romanian and Hungarian partners. Zsolt Szilagyi presented two language versions of *Lest We Forget* and *Across the Iron Curtain* books.

The educational game *Across the Iron Curtain* re-released in the Czech Republic

Prague, 29 December – In cooperation with the Twentieth Century Memorial Museum the PEMC has prepared an expanded edition of its educational board game *Across the Iron Curtain*. The game is based on the original English version of the game “*Across the Iron Curtain*” and has been published in Czech in a second edition. Players, playing the role of people smugglers, help refugees from Eastern totalitarian Europe to get out of the country to freedom in eight different ways. Compared to the original version, the game has been slightly redesigned and the manual contains several new authentic stories of successful and unsuccessful attempts of Czechoslovak citizens to escape from the communist country.

Read more:

- <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2023/12/30/the-educational-game-across-the-iron-curtain-re-released-in-the-czech-republic/>

Activities of the Board

In 2023, monthly joint online meetings of the Executive and the Supervisory Boards were conducted. The Board carried out the activities related to the operation of the organisation and discussed the internal affairs and operational issues. Board members worked closely with politicians across Europe to advance and advocate for the Platform's objectives. Direct communication continued on the EU level and with representatives from the Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania, etc.

Acknowledgment of Support

The Platform is grateful for the support provided by the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Poland in 2023. We appreciate the financial assistance provided by the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory and the material and financial support from the Polish National Foundation and the Depot History Centre in Wroclaw. Additionally, we would like to thank the Institute of National Remembrance for financing our annual meeting in Warsaw.

Platform collaborators

The 2023 Platform team in Prague/Wroclaw included Peter Rendek (Managing Director and IT); Wojciech Bednarski (Program Manager and Researcher), Olga Kolany (Project Coordinator), Katarzyna Kienhuis (Project Coordinator) and external co-workers: Neela Winkelmannová, Yveta Schmalzová, and Lubomír Augustín. Accounting services were provided by MAZARS, s.r.o.

Platform in the media

In 2023, the Platform's activities garnered widespread coverage in the media of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, particularly concerning the first trial of the high representative from the former Communist regime of Czechoslovakia responsible for border killings before 1989. Regarding the educational tools and annual conference we were also visible in the Polish and Czech media. Additionally, the Platform received publicity in Albania (Memory Days, exhibitions), France, Slovenia, and Bulgaria (Red Army Memorial in Sofia). We were also involved in a documentary about the war on education in Ukraine directed by Stefano di Pietro; the film crew conducted filming on our premises.

The Platform published 26 articles and press releases on its official website. We were active on social media through our Facebook, Twitter and YouTube profiles.

Platform in the media (selection)

1. [Kommunistische Vergangenheit: Ex-CSSR-Minister steht in Prag wegen Grenztoten vor Gericht | ZEIT ONLINE](#)
2. [Enttäuschender Auftakt: Ex-ČSSR-Innenminister kommt nicht zu Prozess | OberpfalzECHO](#)
3. [Former minister on trial for border deaths in communist era – DW – 05/25/2023](#)
4. https://bnt.bg/news/imat-li-pametnicite-srok-na-godnost-v357634-324240news.html?fbclid=IwAR0isEn_QFJbZ8bWNt1GzSPnLUATN0Lx2IPp-LkvcXD7ol_JQhkN3ws5sFE
5. [Antoine Arjakovsky : "Pour sortir de la guerre"](#)
6. [Obžalován první komunistický ministr za střelení na hranicích - Seznam Zprávy](#)
7. [Zemřel komunistický ministr Vajnar, čelil obžalobě za zákroky na hranicích - iDNES.cz](#)
8. [Zemřel komunistický ministr vnitra Vajnar. Čelil obžalobě kvůli zákrokům pohraničnicků v 80. letech — ČT24](#)
9. [W Warszawie rozpoczęły się obrady Platformy Europejskiej Pamięci i Sumienia | dzieje.pl](#)
10. [We Wrocławiu rozpoczęło się forum poświęcone upamiętnieniu ofiar totalitaryzmów | Polska Agencja Prasowa SA](#)

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PLATFORM AS OF 7 DECEMBER 2023

President

- Dr Marek Mutor (PL)

Executive Board

- Prof. Antoine Arjakovski (FR)
- Toomas Hiio (EE)
- Zsolt Szilágyi (RO)
- Dr Paweł Ukielski (PL)
- Dr Andreja Valić Zver (SI)
- Dr Jonila Godole (AL)

Supervisory Board

- Yana Hryenko (UA)
- Dr Monika Kareniauskaitė (LT)
- Maria Axinte (RO)

Managing Director

- Peter Rendek (SK)

Board of Trustees

- Rasa Juknevičienė (LT)
- Dr Łukasz Kamiński (PL)
- Göran Lindblad (SE)
- Prof. Stéphane Courtois (FR)
- Pavel Svoboda (CZ)
- Sandra Kalniete (LV)
- Vytautas Landsbergis (LT)
- Tunne Kelam (EE)
- László Tökés (RO)
- Paweł Robert Kowal (PL)
- Monica Luisa Macovei (RO)
- Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (LT)
- Martin Mejstřík (CZ)
- Alexandr Vondra (CZ)
- Wojciech Roszkowski (PL)
- Janez Janša (SI)
- Ondřej Vetchý (CZ)
- Pavel Žáček (CZ)

PEMC MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

As of 5 December 2023, the Platform of European Memory and Conscience is now networking 72 (69 members, 3 candidates) institutions and organisations from 24 countries in Europe and North America.

Albania

- ★ Institute for Democracy, Media & Culture
- ★ Institute for the Integration of Persecuted People in Albania
- ★ MEMO Center
- ★ The Institute for the Studies of Communist Crimes and Consequences
- ★ Kujto Foundation

Bulgaria

- ★ Citizens` Initiative for Dismantling the Soviet Army Monument in Sofia

Canada

- ★ Czech and Slovak Association of Canada
- ★ Black Ribbon Day Foundation

Croatia

- ★ Center for Renewal of Culture (member-candidate)

Czech Republic

- ★ Association of Former Soldiers of the Auxilliary Technical Battallions – Military Forced Labour Camps with Seat in Prague
- ★ Centre for Documentation of Totalitarian Regimes
- ★ Confederation of Political Prisoners of the Czech Republic
- ★ Memory (Paměť)

- ★ Political Prisoners.eu
- ★ Post bellum
- ★ Prague Academic Club 48
- ★ Security Services Archive
- ★ The Memory Traces
- ★ The Twentieth Century Memorial Museum
- ★ Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes

Estonia

- ★ Estonian Institute of Historical Memory
- ★ Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom

France

- ★ Collège des Bernardins
- ★ Musée de la Résistance de Limoges (member-candidate)

Georgia

- ★ Georgian National Museum
- ★ Museum of Repressed Writers (member-candidate)

Germany

- ★ Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial
- ★ International Association of Former Political Prisoners and Victims of Communism
- ★ Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V.

- ★ Saxon Memorial Foundation for the Remembrance of Victims of Political Tyranny
- ★ The Stasi Records Archive (the German Federal Archives)
- ★ Union of the Associations of the Victims of Communist Tyranny (UOKG)

Hungary

- ★ Hungarian Committee of National Remembrance
- ★ The Public Foundation for the Research of Central and East European History and Society – House of Terror Museum

Iceland

- ★ Icelandic Research Centre for Innovation and Economic Growth

Italy

- ★ Gariwo, la foresta dei Giusti

Latvia

- ★ Koknese Foundation
- ★ The Occupation Museum Association of Latvia
- ★ The Occupation of Latvia Research Society

Lithuania

- ★ Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania
- ★ Secretariat of The International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania

Moldova

- ★ Centre for the Study of Totalitarianism

Netherlands

- ★ Foundation History of Totalitarian Regimes and their Victims

Poland

- ★ Institute of National Remembrance
- ★ Polish History Museum
- ★ Remembrance and Future Institute
- ★ Warsaw Rising Museum
- ★ Pilecki Institute
- ★ KARTA Center Foundation
- ★ Silesian Centre for Freedom and Solidarity

Romania

- ★ Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile
- ★ The Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anticommunist Resistance
- ★ Timisoara Society
- ★ Former Deportees from Baragan Association
- ★ Pitești Prison Memorial Foundation

Slovakia

- ★ Inconspicuous Heroes
- ★ Ján Langoš Foundation
- ★ Nation's Memory Institute
- ★ Truc sphérique
- ★ Living Memory

Slovenia

- ★ Nova slovenska zaveza
- ★ Study Centre for National Reconciliation
- ★ Jože Pučnik Institute

Sweden

- ★ The Institute for Information on the Crimes of Communism

Ukraine

- ★ Center for Research on the Liberation Movement
- ★ Foundation to Preserve the History of Maidan
- ★ Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People
- ★ National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide

- ★ Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance
- ★ UIPN State Archive

United Kingdom

- ★ Museum of Communist Terror

United States of America

- ★ Joint Baltic American National Committee
- ★ Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation

FINANCIAL REPORT

Period	1 Jan 2023 - 31 Dec 2023
Account name	Closing balance in CZK
Cash on hand	890
Bank account CZK	1 731 916
Bank account EUR	19 488
Deferred costs	79 108
Goods in stock	1 753 211
Customers	1 212
Operating advances	13 210
Fixed assets	134 897
Corrections to fixed asset	-104 274
Total assets	3 629 659
Suppliers	45 663
Other payables	39 662
Accounts receivable passive	39 000
Deferred income	1 579 545
+Profit/-loss for last period	1 797 646
+Profit/-loss for period	128 143
Total liabilities	3 629 659
Office supplies, energy consumption	120 901
Sold goods	235
Repairs and maintenance services	605
Travel expenses	53 852
Other services	1 455 584
Donations	30 758
Exchange losses	44 145
Miscellaneous operating expenses	30 340
Tangible fixed assets depreciation	22 396
Total costs	1 758 817
Operational subsidies	1 764 540
Revenues from merchandise	235
FX gains	1 810
Other revenues	120 375
Total income	1 886 960