
23rd East-West European Memorial Meeting in Krzyżowa

08 - 11 April 2026, International Meeting Place Krzyżowa/Kreisau

Memory is rarely harmonious: it is conflictual, polyphonic, and shaped by social contestation. After 1989/90, narratives about mass violence, Nazi crimes and communist rule collided in memorial sites across Eastern and Western Europe. These tensions are rooted, on the one hand, in the prescribed antifascism of the GDR and other Eastern European states, and on the other, in West German and Western European interpretations of National Socialism that long marginalized the crimes committed under communist regimes. The struggle over Holocaust remembrance and the commemoration of Stalinist mass violence was marked by processes of negotiation and gave rise to new debates about previously overlooked victim groups.

Memory does not lead to consensus but is characterized by dissent—productive when made visible and capable of sparking debate. The 2026 Memorial Conference focuses on the transformation of European sites of memory and learning after 1989/90 and asks: How have narratives, institutions, and museums changed since 1989? How controversial were these transformations locally and within their societies? What conflicts shaped them, and how are these reflected, curated, or even silenced in the histories and educational work of memorial institutions themselves?

The conference operates within a field significantly shaped by *Memory Studies*. It examines how the past is remembered in the present by applying interdisciplinary analytical frameworks to narrative and museological representation. Which individual, collective, and national memories emerge in specific contexts and shape interpretive frameworks? Who holds power over the attribution of meaning? And how is it decided which narratives become dominant?

Cultures of remembrance are not only shaped by governments and institutions but also by civil society actors—victims' associations, NGOs, and social movements. Debates over narratives of remembrance are themselves a form of democratic participation: conflictual, yet precisely through that, vital and dynamic. At stake are the tensions between remembering and forgetting, and the recognition of diversity without relativizing suffering.

Since 1989/90, the democratization of remembrance in Europe and the visibility of previously marginalized experiences have expanded to include new themes. Today, we observe tendencies both to pacify conflicts and to embrace them as productive sites of contestation. This is particularly visible in the concept of multidirectional memory: In Krzyżowa, we aim to explore how various histories of violence—Holocaust, Stalinism, and colonialism—can illuminate rather than compete with one another.

These theoretical insights are highly relevant to memorial practice. Professionals working in museums and memorial sites face the daily challenge of representing history from multiple perspectives, offering competing interpretations, and enabling visitors to engage with historical complexity and differentiation. The conference in Krzyżowa seeks to empower participants to address these challenges while integrating perspectives from Western, Eastern, and Central Eastern Europe. Until 1989, remembrance culture and policy in both East and West were dominated by the memory of Nazi crimes. Only after the collapse of the communist regimes in 1990 did it become possible to address the experiences of communist dictatorship more fully.

Programme

Wednesday, 8 April 2026

until 5:00 pm	Arrival and registration (reception, Kuhstall building)
5:00 pm	Guided tour of the site (meeting point: Kuhstall building)
6:30 pm	Dinner
7:30 pm	Welcome and introduction to the memorial meeting by the organisers (Multipurpose Hall, Scheune building) Interactive introduction of participants (short presentations)
Afterwards	Informal exchange and conversations (Café U Hrabiego, Kuhstall building)

Thursday, 9 April 2026

8:00 am **Breakfast**

9:00–10:00 am **Keynote Lectures**

Dr. Andrea Genest, Ravensbrück Memorial, Fürstenberg/Havel

Dr. Jacek Konik, Museum of Independence, Warsaw

Moderator: **Dr. Irmgard Zündorf**, Leibniz-Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung, Potsdam

10:00–10:15 am **Coffee break**

10:15–11:45 am **Panel I – Sites of Dissent: Memorial Sites Past and Present**

The first panel focuses on sites of dissent—memorial sites addressing multiple dictatorial pasts and processes of coming to terms with them. Conflicts and dissensus, as well as constructive exchange and approaches to conflict resolution, are placed at the centre of the discussion. Drawing on concrete examples from professional practice—museums, memorial sites, and documentation centres across Europe—the topic will be examined from a range of perspectives.

Christoph Meißner, Museum Berlin-Karlshorst, Berlin

Dr. Aliaksandr Dalhouski, Minsk-Geschichtswerkstatt/IBB

Dr. Joanna Ostrowska, QueerMuzeum, Warszawa

Susanne Schade, Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, Berlin

Lena Casiez, Camp des Milles, Aix-en-Provence

Moderator: **Juliane Haubold Stolle**, Bundesarchiv, Berlin

12:00–1:00 pm **Lunch break**



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1:00–2:30 pm **Panel II – The Role of Civil Society and Memory Culture**

The second panel examines the role of civil society in Eastern and Western Europe. NGOs, civic initiatives, and public historians play a key role in shaping memory while also seeking to engage with conflicts involving state institutions. The focus is not limited to civil society as an object of representation in exhibitions at memorial sites and documentation centres. Rather, the panel also incorporates perspectives from the immediate post-war period, the 1968 movement, forms of state opposition under communist rule, and post-migrant communities, all of whom have, in different ways, claimed interpretive authority and participation in memory-making processes.

Zbigniew Gluza, Fundacja Ośrodku KARTA, Warszawa

Sara Spring, Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedenszeichen e.V., Berlin

Julia Wolrab, Dokumentationszentrum Nationalsozialismus Freiburg

Hanna Lehun, Arolsen Archives, Bad Arolsen

Anna Krenz, Kollektiv Dziewuchy, Berlin

Moderator: **Dr. Katarzyna Bock-Matuszyk**, Centrum Historii Zajezdnia, Wrocław

2:30–2:45 pm Coffee break

2:45–4:15 pm **Panel III – Generations, Narratives, and Identities: Soviet Camps as Sites of Memory after 1990**

The third panel foregrounds generations, narratives, and identities and examines how different generations have shaped perspectives on Soviet internment after 1945. What challenges emerged in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War? What additional challenges have arisen in addressing the victims of Soviet repression since 1989/90 and the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe?

Katharina Bergmann-Pfleger, Ludwig Boltzmann Institut für Kriegsfolgenforschung, Graz

Evita Feldentale, Latvijas Okupācijas muzejs, Riga

Dr. Elke Stadelmann-Wenz, Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen, Berlin

Dr. Petra Haustein, Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten, Oranienburg

Dr. Dariusz Iwaneczko, IPN, Warszawa

Moderator: **Dr. Marta Gałuszka**, Centrum Historii Zajezdnia, Wrocław

4:15–4:30 pm Coffee break

4:30–6:30 pm **World Café – Workshop on Artificial Intelligence and Memory**

Artificial intelligence is being deliberately applied in museums and memorial sites, yet its use also involves significant challenges and pitfalls. The speakers will present examples from their everyday professional practice. In a World Café

format, participants will discuss opportunities and potentials as well as obstacles and risks associated with the use of artificial intelligence in relation to visual material, documents, and objects.

Paweł Sawicki, Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oświęcim

Dr. Ulrich Mählert, Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung, Berlin

Michael Gordon, Filmuniversität Babelsberg Konrad Wolf, Potsdam

Dr. Marcin Wilkowski, Uniwersytet Warszawski

Konstantin Schönfelder, Zentrum verantwortungsbewusste Digitalisierung, Darmstadt

Moderator: **Lena Ens**, Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur, Berlin

7:00 pm Dinner

Evening Informal time for conversations

Friday, 10 April 2026

8:00 am Breakfast

9:00–10:30 am Panel IV – A Transnational Perspective

The fourth panel offers a transnational perspective on memory cultures. It explores how memories of the Second World War and the post-war period continue to differ across Western and Eastern Europe. Debates surrounding 23 August as the *European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes*, as well as differing approaches to history and memory politics and their respective trajectories, will be at the centre of the discussion.

Bas Kortholt, Westerbork

Oliver Gaida und Laura Stöbener, Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Berlin

Dr. Anna Czerner, Centralne Muzeum Jeńców Wojennych, Lambinowice

Simina Badica, House of European History, Bruxelles

Moderator: **Dr. Jacqueline Boysen**, Evangelische Akademie Berlin

from 11:00 am Książ Castle as place of remembrance: tunnels and Nazi Forced Labour, Project Riese

Introduction: Adam Kerpel-Fronius, Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Berlin

12.00 – 13.40 pm Lunch break

13.45 Departure to Castle Książ, Parkplatz

15.00 – 17.00 Guided tour: Project Riese beneath castle Książ



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18.00 Conference Dinner, Restaurant Zamek Książ

20.00 Return to Krzyżowa

Informal time for conversations (Café U Hrabiego)

Saturday, 11 April 2026

9:30–11:00 am Panel V – The Future of Memory

This panel addresses how geopolitical changes in Europe and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine are reshaping memory culture and presenting memorial sites with new opportunities and challenges. What might the future of remembrance in Europe look like? What are the key questions facing European memory cultures today? And where can memorial sites and places of remembrance learn from one another?

Dr. Nicolas Moll, Memory Lab, Sarajevo

Dr. Iryna Radchenko, Holocaust Remembrance Center, Dnipro

Dr. Maria Kaminska, Palmiry Muzeum Warszawa

Dr. Marius Pečiulis, Fort IX, Kaunas

Alla Stashevich, Belarusian Institute of Heritage, Warszawa

Moderator: **Robert Parzer**, Deutsch-Polnisches Haus, Berlin

11:30 am Departure (bus to Berlin)

The meeting will be simultaneously interpreted in German, English, and Polish.