



Trans-European Exchange Platform on History and Remembrance

**9th annual Memory Lab study trip/workshop
Albania, 22-28/29 September, 2019:**

***“Unbunkering the past:
How is Albania dealing with its (communist) history?”***

Organized by

Crossborder factory, Youth Initiative for Human Rights Bosnia and Herzegovina,
Franco-German Youth Office, Forum ZFD Bosnia and Herzegovina,
History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation with:
Cultural Heritage Without Borders Albania, Regional Youth Cooperation Office,
Institute for Democracy, Media and Culture, House of Leaves – Museum of Secret
Surveillance, Justice & Peace Association, Center for Historical and Anthropological
Research, National Museum for Contemporary History of Slovenia

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**9th Annual study trip/workshop, Albania, 22-28/29 September, 2019:
“Unbunkering the past: How is Albania dealing with its (communist) history?”**

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1. General Information:

Memory Lab - Trans-European Exchange Platform on History and Remembrance brings together organizations, institutions and persons from Southeast Europe and from Western/Central Europe, which are working on memory sites and remembrance education related to difficult pasts (wars, mass crimes, dictatorships).¹ The aims of this initiative are to deepen mutual knowledge, exchange experiences, build capacities, facilitate contacts and realize common projects. Its general purpose is to strengthen constructive approaches of dealing with the past as part of civic education and democracy-building, and to contribute to cooperation and understanding processes in South Eastern Europe and in Europe in general, as well as to the integration of the Western Balkans into a common European civil society and memory space. The project was launched, under the name “Dealing with difficult pasts in the Western Balkans and Western Europe” in 2010 with a first gathering in Sarajevo; since then, seven more annual workshops/study trips have taken place, in Prijedor, Jasenovac and Vukovar (2011), Paris, Péronne and Oradour (2012), Berlin, Frankfurt/Oder and Ravensbrück (2013), Pristina, Skopje and Tetovo (2014), Brussels, Dinant and Ypres (2015), Belgrade, Novi Sad and Kragujevac (2016), and Madrid, Barcelona, La Jonquera and Rivesaltes (2017). More than 70 bilateral and multilateral activities have been developed in this time by partner organizations which met through the *Memory Lab* platform.

In 2019, the annual study trip/workshop will take place in Albania and will be dedicated to the exploration and discussion of the history of Albania in the 20th century, and especially to the period of the Communist dictatorship established by Enver Hoxha and the dealing with its legacies. Albania has been chosen for the annual study trip/workshop mainly for two reasons:

- 1) Albania belongs to the Western Balkans, but since it is not part of the post-Yugoslav area, it has so far been less in the focus of actors of international memory work. This also applies to *Memory Lab*, which has so far concentrated its work on the post-Yugoslav space with regard to South Eastern Europe. The program in Albania will allow to actors from different parts of Europe to discover and explore Albania’s history and culture of remembrance, and also to include actors from Albania in the *Memory Lab*-platform and in the development of future joint activities.
- 2) An examination of Albania's recent history and current culture of remembrance appears particularly interesting for two reasons: On the one hand because of Albania’s particular communist history within Southeastern and Eastern Europe, which raises the question of its

¹ For more information see our website : www.memorylab-europe.eu

specificity or non-specificity compared to other communist regimes. On the other hand because after the transition to democracy the communist past was for a long time not critically dealt with, while in recent years several initiatives have developed to change this situation, in order to critically examine the communist past, and to tackle dominating attitudes of silence, nostalgia, or minimization of committed crimes. Who are actors in this field of dealing with the communist past, and what challenges are they facing? What should happen with sites that have become symbols of the communist time? How to work with young people on this past? In reference to the hundreds of thousands of bunkers which had been built throughout Albania during the Communist period and which have become one of its symbols, one may ask: in which ways and under which circumstances is it possible to unbunker the past?

The program of the 9th *Memory Lab* study visit/workshop will combine visits to memory sites, presentations by and discussions with experts and time witnesses, and working sessions within the group. Tirana will be the main location, with trips to other towns during the program. The first day of the program will mainly be dedicated to the general introduction into Albanian history in the 20th century, the second to the dealing with the communist period, and on the third we will visit two places outside of Tirana connected to the communist past: the former prison in Spac, now an abandoned site, and memory sites in Shkodra, the main city in Northern Albania. On the fourth day we will work on the question what to do with the former prison in Spac, and will have the opportunity to think about future joint activities among Memory Lab-members. In the afternoon we will visit the town Kruja near Tirana, where we will explore the role of Skanderbeg as national Albanian hero in the communist time and today. On the last day we will put into larger context what we have seen in the previous days: What are similarities and differences between the communist period in Albania and other communist regimes in Europe on the one hand, and in the ways to deal with this history in Europe on the other hand? Finally we will present and discuss, in a public event, the main findings, conclusions and questions from the study trip/workshop.

For those who have registered for it an additional program will take place on the following day, the 28th September 2019, with a trip to Gjirokastra in Southern Albania, whose city center has been declared UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005 and where we will have the opportunity to explore the role of this city in Albanian history, including the Communist period.

The program of the trip has been prepared on the basis of an exploratory mission conducted from 29th October to 3rd November 2018 by several Memory Lab-members in Tirana (see <http://www.memorylab-europe.eu/upcomin/albania-and-it-s-place-in-international-memory-work>).

2. Target group

40 representatives of memorial centers, historical museums, NGOs and other organizations/initiatives from South Eastern Europe on the one hand, and from Western and Central Europe on the other hand, who are active in the field of dealing with difficult pasts (wars and dictatorships in Europe during the 20th century) in a practical way, especially around memory sites and in the educational field.

The participants were chosen through an Open Call which was launched in March 2019.

The selection of the participants occurred on the following basis:

a) General criteria for the constitution of the group:

- Practitioners who are dealing with history and memory work in Europe, especially in memorials, museums, and civil society organizations
- The group is constituted by approx. 2/3 of ‘old’ participants (who have already participated at one or several of former annual *Memory Lab* study trips/workshops) and of 1/3 of ‘new’ participants
- Diversity regarding represented countries, professional backgrounds (Museums, NGOs, ...) and gender

b) Individual criteria for the applicants:

- Concrete / practical link to memory work
- For ‘old’ participants: Own commitment to *Memory Lab* (for example organization of joint activities with other *Memory Lab* associates), and benefit for one’s own work
- For new participants: potential own commitment to *Memory Lab*, and potential benefit for own work

3. Aims of the study trip/ workshop in 2019 in Albania:

- To explore and discuss the history of Albania in the 20th century, and especially the communist period (1946-1991)
- To explore and discuss how the Albanian society is dealing with its communist past, from the transition to democracy in the 1990s until today, with a specific focus on memory sites and the educational field
- To compare and connect the experiences from Albania with the memory-politics and memory-work in other parts of Europe, and especially with the question how the Communist past is dealt with in different European societies
- To deepen contacts and cooperation and to provide a space to work concretely on topics of common interest and to develop future activities between the participants of the *Memory Lab* platform

4. Program

Sunday, 22 September, 2019:

Arrival of participants in Tirana

Accommodation (for persons who do not have accommodation in Tirana) and working venue: Hotel Tirana International, <https://www.tiranainternational.com/>

20h: Informal welcome dinner in Hotel Tirana International

Monday, 23 September, 2019

7h-8h45: Breakfast

9h-10h30: Introduction and making acquaintance among the participants/interactive exercise

10h30-10h45: Coffee break

10h45- 12h15: Info-market with the represented organizations

12h30: Lunch

14h-15h15: Overview of the history of Albania in the 20th century. Lecture followed by discussion, with Enriketa Pandelejmoni, historian / *Center for Historical and Anthropological Research*

15h45-17h45: Visit of the *Albanian National History Museum*, with Ledio Xhoxhi, historian and museologist, followed by discussion with Dorian Koci, director of the Museum

18h30: Informal walk through the city center to different memory sites

20h: Dinner in restaurant “Vila Ferdinand” (Rruga Nikolla Tupe nr 1)

Tuesday, 24 September, 2019:

7h-8h45: Breakfast

9h-9h30: Reflection about the previous day

10h-12h30: Visit of the *House of Leaves – Museum of Secret Surveillance*, followed by meeting with time-witness Uran Kostreci and discussion about educational activities of the Museum, with Etleva Demollari, director of the Museum

12h45: Lunch

14h15-15h45: Dealing with the communist past in Albania: The role of state actors, civil society and the international community. Panel discussion with and Ardiana Topi, Archives director of the *Authority for Information on Former State Security Documents*, Jonila Godole, director of *Institute for Democracy, Media and Culture*, and Claudia Vollmer, head of Democratization Department of the *OSCE Presence in Albania*.

15h45-16h: Coffee break

16h-17h15: Activities with young people about the communist past in Albania: Presentation by Matilda Karcanaj, program coordinator *IDMC*, and discussion.

17h20-18h: Reflection about the day

19h: Reception by the German and French Embassy in Albania, with Ambassador Peter Zingraf and Ambassador Christina Vasak, at the Residence of the German Ambassador (Rruga Skenderbej 8)

Wednesday, 25 September, 2019:

7h-7h45: Breakfast

8h: Travel by bus to Spac

10h30 – 12h30: Visit of the former communist prison in Spac, with Zenel Drangu, former political prisoner, followed by presentation of a memorialization proposal for Spac “Unlocking Dialogue & Action. A Concept for Spac Prison” from Mirian Bllaci (*Cultural Heritage without Borders Albania*).

12h30: Travel to Shkodra (with lunch bags)

15h-17h: Shkodra during the communist period and in the transition: Visit of the Museum *Site of Witness and Memory*, followed by discussion with Pjerin Mirdita, director of the Museum, and Luig Milaj, president of *Peace & Justice Association*

17h-18h30: Parallel options:

- Memory Walk related to the communist past in the city center, with *Go2 – Sustainable Urban Planning Organization*

- Visit of the Rozafa Castle, with *Regional Directory of Cultural Heritage*

- Individual exploration of the city

19h: Diner in the restaurant “Zum Rappen” in Shkodra

21h: Travel back to Tirana

Thursday, 26 September, 2019:

7h-8h45: Breakfast

9h-9h30: Reflection about the previous day

9h30-10h45: What to do with the former Spac-prison? Discussion about the project “Unlocking Dialogue & Action. A Concept for Spac Prison” from *Cultural Heritage without Borders Albania*.

10h45-11h: Coffee break

11h-12h30: Discussion and work about possible future joint activities among Memory Lab-partners

12h45: Lunch

13h45: Travel to Kruja

15h-17h30: Visit of the *Skanderbeg Museum* in the fortress in Kruja, followed by presentation and discussion about the importance of Skanderbeg in Albanian historical narratives during the Communist period and today, with Armanda Kodra-Hysa, anthropologist / *Center for Historical and Anthropological Research*

18h: Return to Tirana / Free evening

Friday, 27 September, 2019:

7h-8h45: Breakfast

9h-9h30: Reflection about the previous day

9h30-10h30: Meeting and discussion with the Minister of Culture, Elva Margariti, about current and planned activities of the government in the field of memory politics in Albania

10h30-10h45: Coffee break

10h45-12h45: Group work

- An unique case? Similarities and differences of the communist period in Albania and in other European countries

- Nothing else but crimes? Dealing with the communist past in Albania in comparison with other European countries.

13h: Lunch

15h-16h30: Final event, open for the public: Presentation of findings, conclusions and questions at the end of the Memory Lab-study trip/workshop in Albania. Possible topics:

- What should be taken into consideration when developing joint activities dealing with communist history?

- Suggestions regarding the future of the former prison in Spac

- How to work about the communist past with young people?

16h30-17h15: Reception following the event

17h15-18h15: Evaluation of the 2019- Memory Lab - study trip/workshop

20h: Farewell dinner in restaurant "Villa Vechai" (Rr. Q. Srafa Nr. 262)

Saturday, 28 September, 2019:

Breakfast and departure of the participants who did not register for the optional trip to Gjirokastra

Additional program:

7h-7h30: Breakfast

7h45: Travel by bus to Gjirokastra

13h: Check in at the hotel in Gjirokastra and lunch

15h: Visit of the castle, the old bazaar, and the Skendulli house: exploration of the role of Gjirokastra in Albanian history, including the Communist period, followed by free time

20h: Common dinner in restaurant Kodra (Lagjia 11 Janari Rruga Zejtareve)

Accommodation : Hotel Lulishte (Rruga Rauf Fico) and Hotel Bleta (Rruga Rauf Fico),

<http://hotel-bleta.gjirokaster.hotels-al.com/en/>

Sunday, 29 September, 2019:

7h30: Travel back by bus from Gjirokastra to Tirana

12h/13h: Arrival at Tirana airport and then Tirana city center

5. Practical information

Arrival is foreseen for Sunday, 22 September 2019 in Tirana, and departure for Saturday, 28 September 2019 from Tirana, or on Sunday 29th September for those who will participate at

the optional day in Gjirokastra. An informal welcome dinner will take place at Hotel Tirana International on 22th September at 20h, the official program starts on 23rd September at 9h at the same venue.

The organizers will cover, for the length of the program, the costs for the accommodation, meals, program, translation, and transport during the study trip and the workshop.

The costs for the travel will be reimbursed after the program by the organizers on the basis of the cheapest possible travel prices, up to an amount of maximum 230 €, upon presentation of travel tickets/bills. For participants coming from Western/Central Europe, it is expected that their travel costs are covered by their institution; if the institution cannot cover travel costs, travel ticket will be reimbursed on request up to €300 maximum.

The accommodation is foreseen in double-rooms (or partially in single-rooms) in a Hotel Tirana International in Tirana (except for participants living in Tirana), and one night (from 28 to 29 September) in Gjirokastra for those who participate in the optional program.

Working languages during the program will be English and Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian, with simultaneous or consecutive translation. Some presentations might take place in Albanian, and will be translated into English and B/C/S/M.

The participation fee is 40 € for persons from the Western Balkans, and 80 € for persons from Western/Central Europe; the fee is to be paid during the program or via bank transfer before the program. For the persons participating to the additional trip to Gjirokastra there is an additional participation fee of 40 €.

For any question please contact the Memory Lab-team by sending an email to memorylab2018.2020@gmail.com