

Contribution to the Public Hearing “What do Young Europeans Know about Totalitarianisms?” from the Working group on the Platform of European Memory and Conscience

It is a sign of the insufficient coming to terms with Europe’s recent totalitarian past that the education systems in individual countries are not fulfilling their role in teaching the young generation the truth and facts about the European totalitarian dictatorships of the 20th century which violated all human rights. This is unfortunately particularly the case with the communist dictatorship.

With passing time and in view of the insufficient justice done after the fall of the communist dictatorship, we consider it an urgent necessity to record and publish the testimonies of witnesses of the totalitarian crimes and to involve the witnesses in teaching programs for the young generation.

Whereas informing young Europeans about Europe’s totalitarian history is one of its principal interests, the working group on the Platform on European Memory and Conscience

- requests Eurostat to carry out research in the next **Eurobarometer survey** which will establish the level of knowledge of Europeans, with particular emphasis on the young generation, about totalitarian regimes in recent European history. This survey will provide data to substantiate the need for a significant strengthening of efforts in awareness raising and education in the field in Europe,
- requests European institutions, in particular the European Commission, to consistently use the term “**Communism**” when referring to the period of totalitarian rule in Central and Eastern Europe in the 20th century, in the same way as the word “Nazism” is being used for Europe’s other devastating totalitarian dictatorship. The limitation to “Stalinism” narrows down the perspective to one part of the period of communist dictatorship, disrespecting and excluding the grave human rights violations and their victims in the years preceding and following Stalin’s rule,
- requests European institutions, in particular the EU Council and European Commission, to dedicate **more resources**, broadly advertise them and facilitate access to them, i.a. by minimizing the required own contribution for institutions and civil society organizations working with **contemporary witnesses** of the dictatorships, recording their oral history and creating education programs on the subject of Europe’s totalitarian history,
- requests European institutions, in particular the EU Council and the European Parliament, to pay increased attention to the situation of **archives** containing information on the crimes of European totalitarian regimes, to insist on their accessibility and intervene in cases where the archives are threatened, and finally,
- will prepare a publication and internet presentation called “**Memory of Totalitarianism in Europe**” which will contain life stories of witnesses of crimes of

Europe's totalitarian regimes. This publication will be conceived as a teaching aid to be used in schools anywhere in Europe.

Adopted by the Working group on the Platform of European Memory and Conscience

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