8. International Summer Camp in the Former Communist Prison of Spac



Responsible for the Summer Camp

- Museum of Spac
- Justice and Peace Commission of Albania
- Maximilian-Kolbe-Foundation

in Cooperation and financially supported by Renovabis and the German Foreign Ministry

---

Main information/ Background:

Even though thirty-three years have passed since the downfall of the communist regime in Albania, little has been done to address the issues related to the consequences of communist past in the present social, economic and political context.
The physical preservation of the places of sufferance – prisons, forced labour camps, deportation sites – is one of the most pressing issues.
It is fundamental to rehabilitate such places because they are important testimonies of the Albanian history of sufferance, persecution and resistance. Hence, they are indispensable to national memory.
Moreover, they play a crucial role in the process of correct transmission and interpretation of history to the future generations in order to prevent them from making similar mistakes.
In the recent years, civil society has undertaken serious efforts to turn the attention of the state structures towards the long-delayed process of dealing

with the communist past marked by confusion, resentment, senses of guilt and forgetfulness.
Under the pressure of the civil society, supported by the international factor in Albania, the government launched some projects in the framework of exposing some of the infrastructure reminiscent of the communist period, to use it for commemoration and education purposes.
For instance, we could mention “Bunk`Arts” and “The House of Leaves”.
According to our opinion which is in line with the general stance of civil society and the organizations of the former political persecuted, these places highlight the folly of the communist regime and the paranoid mindset of its perpetrators, but they are do not relate to the dimensions of persecution and sufferance of victims. Notorious places of sufferance such as the former prison and forced labour camp of Spaç; the former prison and forced labour camp of Qafe e Barit; the deportation camp of Tepelene; the former prison of Ballsh and many others, have been left abandoned to decay and crumble apart for almost three decades, with no consideration whatsoever for what they represent.
The association “The Museum of the Prison of Spaç” condones that the places of sufferance must be treated with top priority. They must serve to commemorate the victims properly and honour their sufferance. Moreover, such places are a great asset to convey history and disseminate learning not only in Albania but even in a broader international context.
All the societies of ex-communist countries in Europe share some very similar scars inherited from a very similar past with which they had to cope. The challenges that they have to overcome in order to implement the European values in their decision-making, economy and mindset are intimately linked to the process of healing the scars of the past.
If we are to contribute to the healing process, it is necessary to provide points of encounter and opportunities for these societies – especially the young people - to come together, share, learn from the experience of each-other and build solid bridges of collaboration in the future.

This is what this project is all about.

Through this project we intend to promote the former prison of Spaç as a destination of interest when it comes to reflecting about the violation of human dignity and the historical lessons taught by experience in the hard way. We will capitalize on the interest and energy of young people from 4 ex-communist countries to raise the awareness of the respective societies on dealing with the communist past and strengthen their capacities to cope with this delicate task.
We believe that the outcome is particularly important in the Albanian context.

Project Description/ Participants

In 2018, the Justice and Peace Commission of Albania, in cooperation with the German Foundation, Maximilian Kolbe, organized the first summer camp in the former Spaçi Prison, with the participation of 30 young people from 5 different European ex-communist countries. This project had a great echo, inside and outside of the country.

Considering the successful and useful the project we have decided to continue even this year.
The project will bring together 30 young people from Albania, Germany, Ukraine, Bulgaria and the other European Eastern countries, to learn, share and discuss about the issues of dealing with the communist past in each respective country.

The age group of the participants shall be from 22 to 35 years old.

The activities of the project will take place in Tirana and in the former communist prison of Spaç from **27th August to 01st September 2026.**

Main Goal of the Summer Camp:

By bringing together twenty-four young people from four different ex-communist European countries to participate in a four-day summer camp in the former communist prison of Spaç, we will:

- Contribute to the awareness of the Albanian society on the communist past.
- Promote experience exchange and networking among countries with similar background and challenges in order to increase their capacities for dealing with the violence burdened past in the interest of a better future.