

Conference

**12th European History Forum**

**When does contemporary history begin? The historical-scientific examination of the 1990s in Southeastern and Eastern Europe**

Tuesday, May 21, 2024, 10:00-21:30

Wednesday, May 22, 2024, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

There is hardly a historical narrative about the period between 1990 and 1995 whose content is not at the same time the subject of current political controversies - especially, but not only, in the post-socialist countries of South-Eastern and Eastern Europe. How did the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the founding of new independent states come about? What caused the break-up of Yugoslavia and how did the violent conflicts in the Western Balkans arise? What socio-economic fractures occurred, who were the winners and losers? How did states and societies change? Where was there democratic consolidation, where authoritarian stagnation or even regression?

Almost all current developments in Europe are the result of the upheavals of the 1990s; hardly any of the conflicts at the time appear to have been permanently resolved, which is why talking about the decade still triggers fierce daily political debates in the region's societies. A differentiated historicisation of the events on the basis of scientific research is therefore very difficult and encounters on the one hand the controversial memories of contemporary witnesses and those affected, and on the other hand the resistance of those who insist on their version of history for current political or propagandistic reasons.

Our 12th European History Forum would like to use selected topics and examples to explore the question of whether and how critical historiography and didactics can convey a differentiated, perspective-rich picture of the upheaval of the 1990s based on modern research that avoids the current political polarization and instrumentalisation. To what extent is a historical-academic examination of this eventful decade possible at all? How can critical research be conducted on this period given the social polarization and political instrumentalisation? What sources are accessible? Are there examples of successful supranational and multi-perspective approaches to the experience of war and far-reaching socio-economic change?

The "European History Forum" conference series, which has been organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation (hbs) since 2011, especially aims to offer young historians, museum staff, journalists and activists from non-governmental organizations with a focus on Eastern and South-Eastern Europe an opportunity for exchange. In this way, a pan-European discourse on memory cultures and history policy is to be promoted. At the same time, the Forum is aimed at all those who deal critically with the history of the 20th century and its communication in a professional, voluntary or private capacity.

The event will be held exclusively in English, with the exception of the literary lecture in the evening (German/English).

Information: Nina Happe, Department for Eastern and South Eastern Europe, Heinrich Böll Foundation, e-mail: [happe@boell.de](mailto:happe@boell.de), phone +49 (0)30 285 34 - 384

Please register via our calendar page. You will also find the program there.

## Agenda

**Tuesday, 21 May**

10:00

**Welcoming speech**

**Jan Phillip Albrecht**, Heinrich-Böll-Foundation (hbs), Berlin

10:15-11:15

Introductory talk

**When does contemporary history begin?  
On the (im)possibility of historicizing the 90s**

**Claudia Kraft**, University of Vienna

**Andrii Portnov**, Viadrina Centre of Polish and Ukrainian Studies, Frankfurt/O

Chair: **Walter Kaufmann**, hbs Berlin

11:15-11:45

Break

11:45-13:15

Fishbowl 1:

**What do we know and what do we not know? Research on the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of Yugoslavia**

**Giorgi Maisuradze**, Ilia State University

**Ivan Ejub Kostić**, Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, Belgrade

Dominant public/political narratives about the 90s?

What is in the focus, what is being forgotten or tabooed?

What kind of historical research on the 90?

What focus, what methodology?

Regional approach, comparisons?

**Corinna Kuhr-Korolev**, Center for Contemporary History Potsdam

Moderation: **Milan Bogdanović**, hbs Belgrade

13:15-14:30

Lunch

14:30-16:00

Fishbowl 2:

**Gender aspects of everyday life**

**Eli Krasniqi**, Independent Scholar, Prishtina

**How have gender relations transformed in the 90s in social and economic life?**

**Lenka Krátká**, Institute of Contemporary History, Prague

What were women's social and economic conditions under state socialism during the 1970s-1980s (e.g., policies of paid maternity leave, directives for women's equal participation in the labor market, material and institutional support for raising children, etc.)

How have they changed in 1990s?

How has this affected historiography? How women entered the field?

**Sona Baldryan**, Indep. Researcher, Yerevan

**Kateryna Kobchenko**, University of Munster

Moderation: **Kateryna Kvashnytska**, hbs Kyiv

16:00-16:30

Coffee break

16.30-18:00

Presentations: How historical education can be different  
**Teaching/Communicating the history of the 90s:**

Moderation:

**Nina Happe**, hbs Berlin & **Irina Ghulinyan-Gerz**, hbs Berlin

- 1) **Narek Manukyan**, [Paradigma Foundation](#), Yerevan
- 2) **Belgrade: [Museum of the 90s](#)** (concept stage), **Sanja Radović**, historian (pre-recorded video presentation) and additional input by **Aleksa Gačić**, 3rd year history student and volunteer in the "Labyrinth of the 90s" exhibition.
- 3) **[Project Transition Dialogue](#)**. **Nora Korte**, Austausch, Berlin
- 4) Youth Initiative for Human Rights: **Pristina initiative to establish the Children of War Museum - Bjeshka Guri**, YIHR Kosovo

18:00

Dinner

20:00

**Book reading and discussion:**  
**Nino Haratischwili: The lack of light**  
(Novel about the 90s in Georgia)

moderated by  
**Nino Lejava**, hbs Belgrade

German with simultaneous translation to English

**Wednesday, May 22**

10:00-12:00

**Fishbowl 3 Discussion**  
**The imagination of Europe in the 1990s:**  
**Ideas, spaces, politics**

**Florian Peters**, University of Jena, Polish Perspective

What role did the idea of Europe / European modernity play in the 1990s in the former Eastern Bloc?

**Nihad Krelševljeković**, MESS International Theatre Festival, Bosnian perspective

What hopes and disappointments were associated with the new experience of Europe? What is the legacy of Western European decision making and failed decisions/actions from a Bosnian perspective?

**Victor Jaeschke**, University of Munich, Western European Perspective

**Jan Philipp Albrecht**, hbs Berlin, Political expertise of a former MEP

How did the old EU-members conceptualize the Europeanisation process in the 1990s? Is European integration a cosmopolitan, liberal project?

Moderation: **Clara Frysztacka**, hbs Berlin