

Belgium WWII: a virtual platform on Belgium and its inhabitants during the Second World War

The platform Belgium WWII has been online since 27 September! (www.belgiumwwii.be)

At a time when information is often anything but reliable, and the Internet is frequently addressed to find quick answers, this new platform represents an interactive tool for those who wish to dispose of concise and correct historical information on various themes related to the Second World War in Belgium.

The platform was funded by the Federal Science Policy in the context of a BRAIN project (Belgian Research Action through Interdisciplinary Networks), and exists in Dutch and French (and partly in German). Belgium WWII addresses everyone. With this platform, CegeSoma wants to pass on historical knowledge to a large public. The platform uses different kinds of knowledge transfer so that the public (among whom students, teachers, the general public, journalists, historians,?) may better understand the conflict.

Over time, the platform will be gradually developed. At this moment, it proposes two themes that are still subject to controversies and myths: the collaboration and the repression, and justice in times of war. With the participation of numerous researchers, these themes are addressed using different approaches:

- Destinies of war: how did the war disrupt the lives of millions of unknown, and also better known persons? In this section, individual experiences are evoked. Photographs, letters and audiovisual sources illustrate these trajectories. This individualized approach takes us directly to the heart of daily life in occupied Belgium.

- Five key questions. For each theme, direct questions bring us to the heart of the subject. Who were the collaborators? Why did they choose to help the Germans? What is the role of justice in a society under occupation? Find the answers to all your questions on collaboration and justice during the Second World War in Belgium.

- Virtual exhibitions. These virtual exhibitions bring you to the heart of occupied Belgium. These digital trajectories, illustrated with photographs, archival documents, video's and explanatory texts explore certain themes in more detail. Discover the history of the internment camp of Verviers, learn more about the Belgian artists who exhibited their work in Germany or follow certain wartime court cases.

- A virtual encyclopedia. This encyclopedia constitutes the key part of Belgium WWII, and contains contributions by experts on the history of the Second World War. These contributions deepen the knowledge on Belgium's wartime past and try to better explain the different concepts. They are accompanied by archival documents, interviews with authors, photographs, graphs, diagrams, bibliographical orientations and links to other websites.

The project brings together researchers of all universities and the different communities.

New themes such as the resistance, daily life in times of war, the persecutions, etc. will shortly be developed. Pedagogical trajectories for teachers will also be available soon.

The launch of Belgium WWII was also the opportunity for an interesting debate, animated by Bruno De Wever (Ghent University). Four journalists specialized in historical topics exchanged views: Christian Laporte for La Libre Belgique, Pierre Havaux for le Vif, Walter Pauli for Knack and Marc Reynebeau for De Standaard. They discussed the value of a website such as Belgium WWII and talked about the present challenges of the history of the Second World War.

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Discover a presentation clip of the website