the Baltic Way Stories

Project dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the Baltic Way

Guidelines and suggestions for participation in the project

2014
The Baltic Way — Human Chain Linking Three States in Their Drive for Freedom

This year marks 25 years since the Baltic Way campaign — a unique and peaceful mass demonstration during which more than a million people joined hands to form a 600-km-long human chain through the three Baltic countries, thus uniting Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in their efforts towards freedom. This widely renowned protest campaign saw the most diverse people join hands: people of various professions, nationalities and political beliefs, men and women, the old and the young. The Baltic Way demonstrated to the world and the participants themselves the power of peaceful protest in a scope that had never been seen before.

In 2009 the most important documents regarding the organisation of the Baltic Way were inscribed in the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register with the nomination “The Baltic Way — Human Chain Linking Three States in Their Drive for Freedom” prepared jointly by Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The documentary heritage of the Baltic Way consists of an archive of valuable documents related to this historical event.
Project dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the Baltic Way

THE BALTIC WAY STORIES

What is The Baltic Way Stories?
The Baltic Way Stories is a project of the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO which marks the 25th anniversary of the Baltic Way and is implemented in cooperation with partners from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The aim of the project is to collect people’s memories in order to preserve them for the next generations regardless of their location and make them available both in the virtual environment and in museum and library collections. The project invites everyone to document their Baltic Way experience no matter how they experienced it: participating or not participating, or participating in any of the supporting campaigns elsewhere in the world.

How to participate in The Baltic Way Stories?
Until 30 October 2014, submit an interesting story concerning you, your relative, friend, acquaintance or someone else, using the story form available on the webpage www.thebalticway.eu. If possible, add digitalised photographs or videos from that time.

How will the Baltic Way stories be used?
All stories collected during the project will be compiled in a collection dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the Baltic Way which, in Latvia, will be passed on for storing at the National History Museum of Latvia and the Museum of the Popular Front as a significant part of the heritage. The digitalised photographs will be added to the archives of the National Library of Latvia and the digital library Europeana. In Lithuania the stories will be passed on to the National Archive of Lithuania, and in Estonia — the Museum of Occupations. The visual material added to the story and the information provided will be displayed in the virtual environment, used for research objectives or included in materials popularising historical testimony in summarised form or, in separate cases, as quotations.

The 25 most striking stories in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia will be compiled in a special publication devoted to the 25th anniversary of the Baltic Way and will be available to the public in electronic format.

Who can participate in The Baltic Way Stories?
Anyone who is interested, including representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations, partners of national commissions for UNESCO in the Baltic states, as well as social network users are welcome to participate. Especially welcome are educational institutions, libraries, museums, archives and collection keepers, organisations cooperating with diasporas and any individual who is interested.
Why participate in *The Baltic Way Stories*?

The Baltic Way unites more than a million people in memories and emotions about the events that took place in the Baltic States 25 years ago. The UNESCO International Memory of the World Register includes the most significant documents from the documentary heritage of the Baltic Way reflecting the organisation and course of this unique and peaceful mass demonstration. It is important to comprehensively document this significant event and include the individual experiences of the people, thus strengthening the joint social memory of the inhabitants of the Baltic States and passing it on to the next generations.

How to support the collection of the Baltic Way stories?

Every inhabitant is invited to not only share their own story but also encourage others to share their stories, by helping to submit their story on the webpage www.thebalticway.eu. Inform your friends, relatives, colleagues, institution visitors and other interested persons about the idea behind the project! Until the end of 2014 all interested organisations are encouraged to organise various types of activities devoted to the 25th anniversary of the Baltic Way and the project *The Baltic Way Stories*. Become an organiser of an event of this kind and inform us about it by writing to info@thebalticway.eu!

Memory institutions

We invite memory institutions to not only participate in the collection and documenting process of the stories but also inform about the testimonies regarding the Baltic Way and its organisation available in their collection. For instance, set up an exhibition of objects, photographs and documents. If for some reason this is difficult, it is also possible to use travelling exhibitions about the events of the Awakening prepared by other museums.

To encourage inhabitants to participate in the collecting process of the Baltic Way stories, organise events which will bring back memories of the Baltic Way period to its participants and inform young people who have not experienced this period about it. For example, organise a meet-up with the activists of the Popular Front of Latvia divisions. Use the collections of your institution to stimulate conversation and ask the invited participants and visitors what their experience of the Baltic Way was like. Invite other visitors to participate as well and inform about the opportunity to participate in the project *The Baltic Way Stories*.

Give the generation who did not experience the Baltic Way opportunities to find out more about it. Create a museum pedagogic lesson about the Baltic Way using the objects in your own collection or the travelling exhibition offers. The lesson will help understand the historical circumstances in which the Baltic Way took place. For young people who have grown up in an independent country it may not be self-evident. At the end of the lesson inform the participants about *The Baltic Way Stories* and encourage them to participate in the collection of the stories!
Libraries

We invite libraries to encourage local inhabitants to share their stories. Organise a series of **story evenings** with the participation of several invited speakers, giving all the visitors an opportunity to express their thoughts. To recall the time of the Baltic Way, create an **exhibition of books and periodical publications** about the events of the Awakening. A conversation starter could be a **demonstration of a documentary** or a memory video.

We invite the library staff to participate in the collection and documentation process of the Baltic Way stories as much as possible, as well as share their own Baltic Way stories.

Educational institutions

We invite educational institutions to organise educational events, as well as encourage students to interview their parents, grandparents, friends and acquaintances. For instance, organise a **lesson** about the Baltic Way. Use the supporting materials developed by the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO to inform not only about the course of the Baltic Way but also about its historical meaning and international recognition. A class meeting might be an appropriate time to discuss the values that drove the inhabitants of the Baltic states to participate in the human chain and their topicality nowadays. Invite the students to document the stories of their relatives — it will not only help preserve historically significant information but also promote intergenerational dialogue in their families.

Organise a **meet-up with people who participated in the Baltic Way**! Use *The Baltic Way Stories* form to help your students prepare the questions. Such a meet-up can encourage students to find out more about the experiences of their relatives, or it can be organised as a final event after the students have participated in the documenting process of the Baltic Way stories. This will give them an opportunity to see the diversity of experiences and assess the unique value of each individual story.

Organise a **thematic week** at the school! Use this time to celebrate the Baltic Way together. Encourage students to think about and discuss the topicality of the Baltic Way values nowadays. Urge the students to include the experience gained while collecting stories in their opinion. When organising the Baltic Way week, use the resources of museums, libraries and archives.
What to document?

The aim of the project *The Baltic Way Stories* is to document the personal experience of the people who participated in the Baltic Way: their thoughts, feelings and what they saw. The story form containing the three main questions — about thoughts, feelings and the environment — is available on the project webpage.

Museums would like to add elaborate and detailed stories to their collections, but it must be taken into account that not all memory sharers will be able to provide such stories. The basic objective of the project *The Baltic Way Stories* is to find out answers to the three main questions.

**THOUGHTS** — the main question to the memory sharer is: “What were you thinking about during the days of the Baltic Way?” The questions in small print on the right side of the page are intended for starting or continuing the conversation in the case it has ceased or the memory sharer does not know how to respond to such a general question.

**FEELINGS** — the main question to the memory sharer is: “What kinds of emotions did the Baltic Way evoke then and evoke now?” First, ask an open question, and if the memory sharer gives a vague answer, try to get more detail by asking additional questions.

**ENVIRONMENT** — the main question to the memory sharer is: “How did you experience the Baltic Way?” The aim of this part is to find out how the memory sharer experienced the Baltic Way. Please pay special attention to the question regarding objects. If the memory sharer mentions that they or a relative or an acquaintance had a photo camera with them, ask if they still have some photographs. If the memory sharer mentions any objects that they had with them — posters, flags, belts, ribbons — ask if they still have these objects. Definitely specify this information in the textual transcript of the interview. The museums will contact the owners of photographs and objects to offer their inclusion in the museum collection in order to preserve them for the next generations and use them for research and educational purposes.

We also invite to document stories of people who did not participate in the Baltic Way for various reasons but have memories of that time.
How to document?

The stories can be submitted on the webpage www.thebalticway.eu both by the person sharing the memory themselves and by the interviewer who afterwards enters the story in the respective field of the webpage. The interviewer’s task is to record the memory in a manner ensuring its use in historical research and interpretation, i.e. accurately and with the memory sharer’s informed consent.

Before the interview the memory sharer has to know:
1) the aim of the project;
2) that the information will be written down/recorded;
3) that after it is recorded the information will be stored as part of a museum or archive collection and will be available to researchers;
4) that the interview will be published on the internet.

After the interview, the interviewer has to agree with the memory sharer on what purposes the recorded memory will be used for.

1. Ask for the memory sharer’s consent to include their interview in the collection of the Latvian National Commission for the UNESCO project The Baltic Way Stories which will be passed on to museum collections and will be available to third parties.

2. Agree with the memory sharer that the visual material added to the story and the information provided will be displayed in the virtual environment, used for research objectives or included in materials popularising historical testimony in summarised form or, in separate cases, as quotations, mentioning the author.

3. Ask for confirmation that the provided information does not contain any intellectual or copyrighted material owned by other persons.

In the case that the memory sharer does not wish to publish their photographs or video recordings, it is their right to refuse it regardless of how big of a loss it would be to society. Do not attempt to record the interview in secret if the interviewee has objected under any circumstances.

Both audio and video recordings can be made during the interview — museums will gladly include them in their collections.

For a successful interview, please take the following recommendations into consideration:
- **Listen.** The aim of the interview is not exchanging opinions but recording the unique stories of eye-witnesses.
- **Show an interest.** Look at the person you are talking to, react to what they are saying with gestures and body language.
- **Let them think.** Silence during the interview is not an awkward pause, it is time to think.
- **Do not wear them out.** The optimal length of the interview is 1–2 hours.
- **Ask consecutive questions.** Ask one question at a time. If you ask several questions, the memory sharer will most likely answer only one – most often the first or the last one.
- **Leave the ending open.** Ask if there is anything else the memory sharer would like to mention.
How to participate in The Baltic Way Stories online?

Anyone can become a project participant or supporter online on The Baltic Way Stories webpage www.thebalticway.eu. Use the opportunities offered by the webpage:

PARTICIPATE!
- Share your story by submitting it on a special webpage. If possible, add photographs and/or a video.
- Join the Baltic Way by signing in with one of your social network accounts. Mark the exact location on the map and add your comment or goodwill wish.

FIND OUT MORE!
- Discover facts about the Baltic Way, view photographs from the historical Baltic Way and its supporting events.
- Find out how to collect the Baltic Way stories. The webpage provides information about the collection of historical testimonies. Here you can download the story form for printing which will help in recording the memories of others and later publish them on www.thebalticway.eu.
- Discover how UNESCO, other organisations and individuals celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Baltic Way.

SHARE!
- Inform about The Baltic Way Stories and the project’s webpage on the social networks: facebook.com, twitter.com.
- Follow the project’s activities on facebook.com and twitter.com!
- Add the Baltic Way’s 25th anniversary logo to your profile picture on social networks!

Follow The Baltic Way Stories activities!
On the portal: On Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/balticway2013
On Twitter: https://twitter.com/BalticWay
Guidelines for documenting **THE BALTIC WAY STORIES**
The printable version which will help in recording a structured Baltic Way story to be later submitted on the webpage [www.thebalticway.eu](http://www.thebalticway.eu).

Did you participate in the Baltic Way? If you did, which section of the Baltic Way were you at?

How old were you on 23 August 1989?

**Thoughts**

What were you thinking about during the days of the Baltic Way?

How did you find out about the organisation of the Baltic Way?

Who did you discuss the potential participation with?

Why did you decide to participate/not participate?

How did you prepare for participation in the Baltic Way?

How important to you were other people’s opinions about the Baltic Way?

Did the Baltic Way influence your opinion about the processes in society? How?

How do you evaluate the Baltic Way today?
Guidelines for documenting THE BALTIC WAY STORIES

Feelings
What kinds of emotions did the Baltic Way evoke then and evoke now?

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Environment
How did you experience the Baltic Way?

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