

FACADE

Museum of Communist Bulgaria

One past. Different stories.

For 45 years, Bulgaria lived under communist rule (1944–1989).

Some remember stability, security, and ordinary lives. Others remember censorship, repression, forced assimilation, and fear.

Personal memories show how people experienced and sometimes normalized life under communism. **They do not always explain the forces that shaped those experiences.**

For the next generation, the challenge is to understand both: the choices people made, and the brutal system that constrained them.



“

As someone who didn't live through that period, it's incredibly important for me to **piece together the fragments of history like a puzzle.**

Simona

Participant in one of the Foundation's historical tours



Freedom is rarely lost all at once

Communist Bulgaria promised security, equality, and a better future. That promise was a façade.

The reality was a system that violently crushed dissent, concentrated power, controlled information, punished arbitrarily, and gradually limited individual choice.

The world today is different. But every generation faces similar questions:

Why do simple promises become attractive in uncertain times?

Under what circumstances do people accept limits on their freedom?

What makes people believe nothing depends on them?



TSVETANA DZHERMANOVA

“

The Communist party was above the state. The party did not respect fundamental principles that are protected by law today – your freedom, the freedom of speech. Instead, it dictated: you will think and speak as the Party orders; you will follow the Party’s directives.

”

— Tsvetana Dzhermanova,
the last female survivor
of the Belene labour camp



Information alone does not create understanding

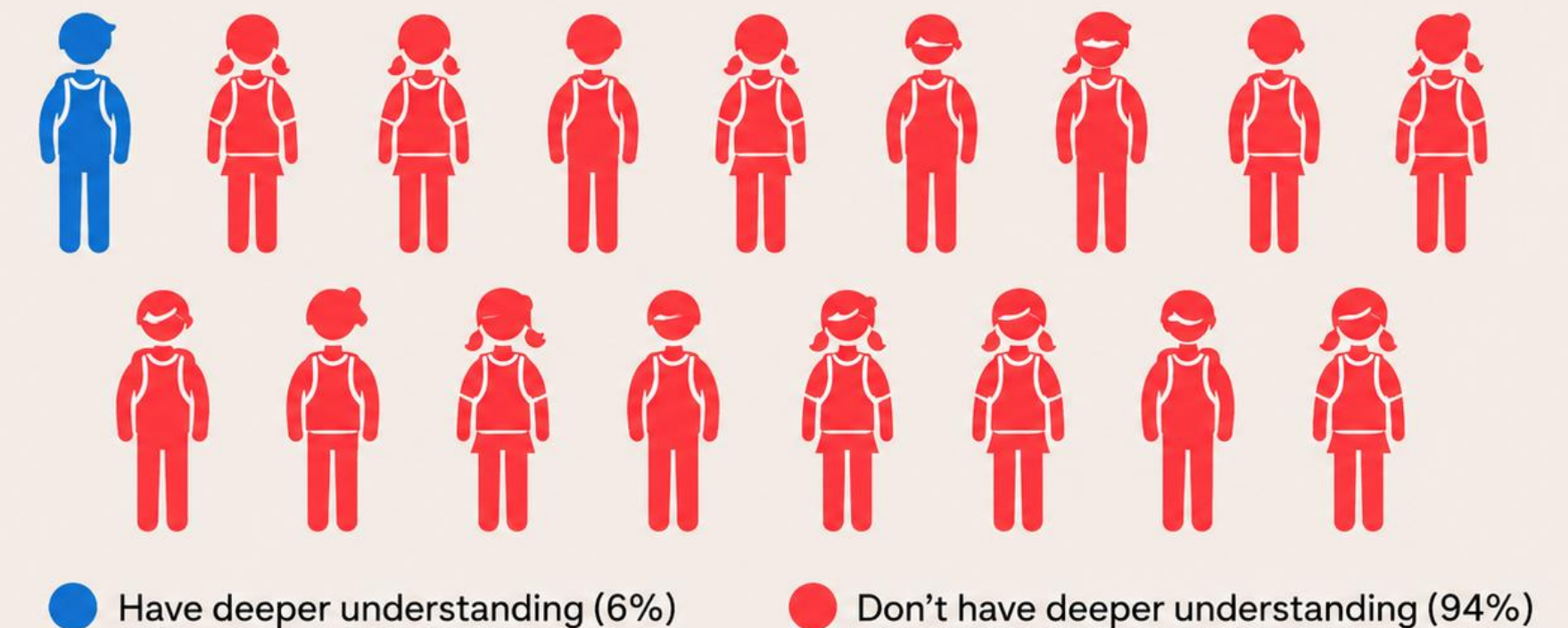
Today's young Bulgarians are the first generation without personal memory of communist rule.

Since 2018, the period has been part of the school curriculum. While more material is available online than ever before, access to information has not closed the knowledge gap.

Facts alone cannot explain how a system shaped people's choices and everyday lives. That requires context, personal stories, time to reflect, and a place where young people can ask questions and form their own judgment.

Only 1 in 17 young people

have a deeper understanding of political repression during communism.*



*Public attitudes toward communism and sites of memory in Bulgaria, Alpha Research, 2022

Over a decade of learning what works

For more than a decade, Sofia Platform has experimented with ways to help young people engage with Bulgaria's **communist past** – from digital formats reaching tens of thousands to in-person experiences that create deeper reflection.

What stays with them are the moments when history becomes concrete: **a real place, a personal story, a difficult choice**. These experiences lead to questions about freedom, society, and their own responsibility today.



“ The seminar gave me an experience I could not get anywhere else. Certainly not in school. The knowledge changed my worldview and motivated me to be more active – otherwise what is the point of this knowledge?

— Student participant in a Sofia Platform seminar

From temporary experiences to a permanent place

FACADE turns this educational approach into a **permanent public space** that welcomes reflection, learning, and dialogue.

A place where young visitors:

- **encounter the people** behind historical events;
- **explore the gap between the promises of the regime and the reality** it created;
- **experience how systems shape choices**;
- **reflect on what freedom means in their own lives today.**



A museum experienced through different lives

At the beginning of the journey, **every visitor steps into the shoes of a person from communist Bulgaria.**

A worker. An artist. A farmer. A party member. A dissident. A member of a minority community, etc.

The historical facts remain the same. The human experiences differ.

Visitors experience:

- the promises and realities of the system;
- moments of adaptation, compromise, and resistance;
- the choices people faced and the choices they did not have.

At the end, different experiences meet in dialogue.



Ф А С А Д А

МУЗЕЙ
НА КОМУНИЗМА
В БЪЛГАРИЯ

**The museum is designed to be revisited –
because changing the perspective changes the
story.**



HOW IT WORKS

Your story starts here.

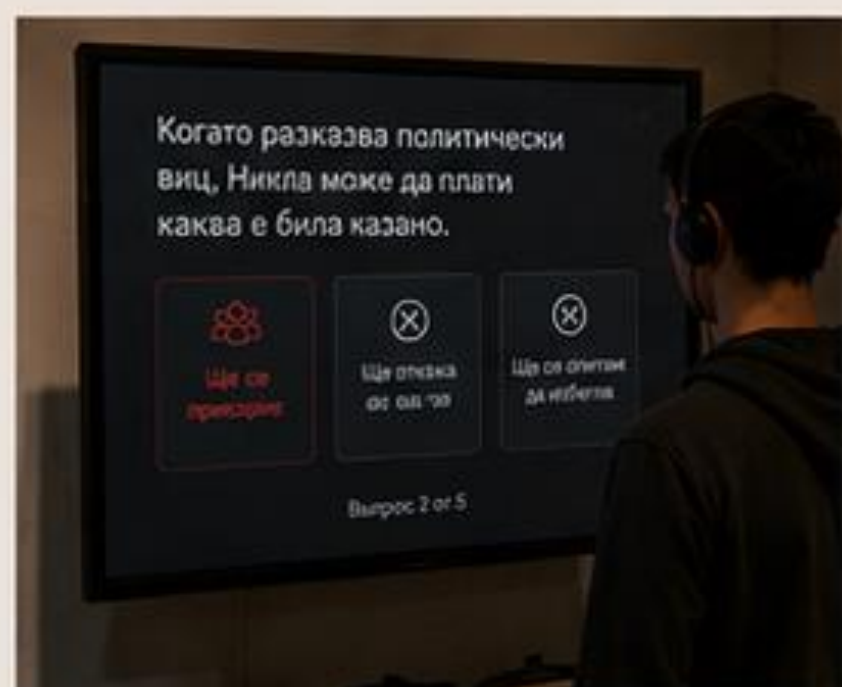
Every life was different.
Every choice had consequences.

Answer a few questions
and step into the shoes of
someone who lived in
communist Bulgaria.



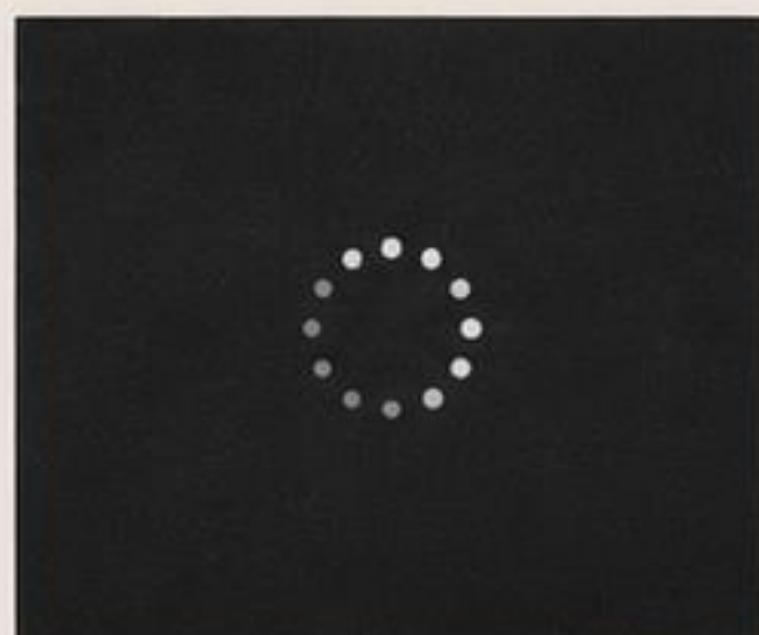
1 YOU ANSWER

A series of real-life dilemmas
based on historical situations.



2 WE MATCH YOU

Your answers reveal the path
that fits your choices and
circumstances.



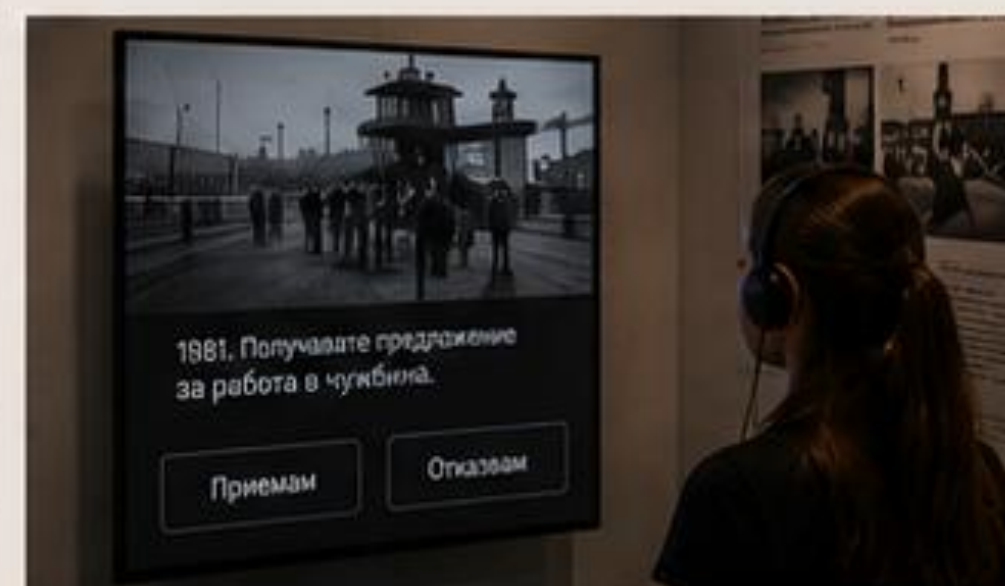
3 YOU BECOME SOMEONE

You are introduced to a real
person and their story.



4 YOU EXPERIENCE THEIR WORLD

Make choices, face consequences,
and see how the system shaped
their possibilities.



5 DIFFERENT STORIES MEET IN DIALOGUE

At the end, different experiences
come together. Compare, reflect,
discuss.



REVISIT. SEE DIFFERENTLY. Change your choices. Change your perspective. Change the story.

History doesn't change.
But changing the perspective changes what we understand.

What success looks like

Every year, FACADE will:

- welcome 30,000+ visitors;
- engage thousands of students;
- support thousands of teachers across Bulgaria.

Success for us has always been more than the number of attendees. We want young Bulgarians to leave with a clearer sense of what freedom requires, how easily societies can lose it, and what responsibility they carry to protect it.

By helping create FACADE, you help them answer these essential questions for themselves.

“

One side of my family were convinced communists. The other side were people who suffered under the regime.

I wanted to form my own opinion.

I was grateful that at no point did I feel uncomfortable asking questions or sharing my thoughts while trying to build my own understanding.

”

— Sofia Platform's Belene Summer School participant

FACADE



MUSEUM OF
COMMUNIST
BULGARIA



The timeline



Why Sofia Platform is ready to build FACADE

10+ years of leading this work



10+ years

working at the intersection of history and civic education.

A unique track record

of connecting historical memory with democratic engagement in Bulgaria.

Deep work with young people and educators



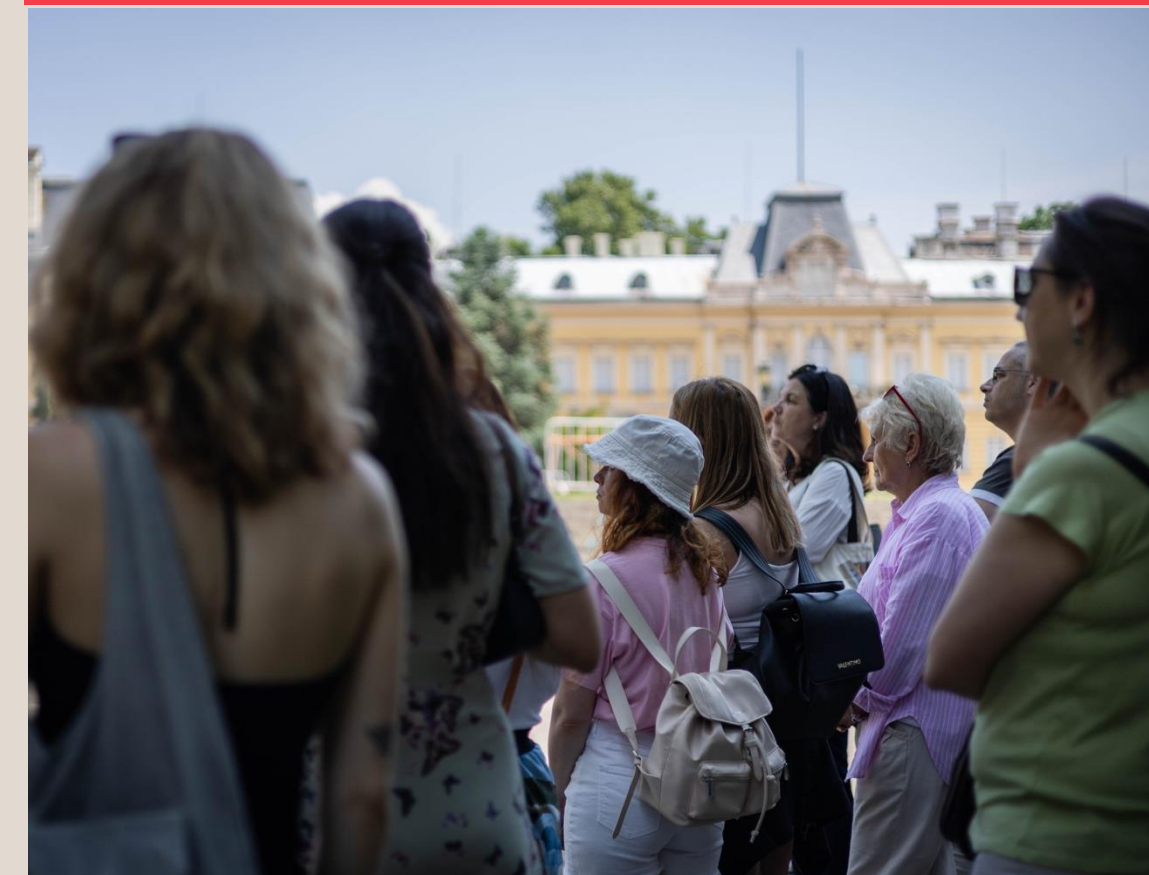
5,500+

students and teachers educated through direct programs.

100+ hours

of survivor testimony recorded and preserved.

Reaching people at scale



1M+

people reached annually through digital campaigns.

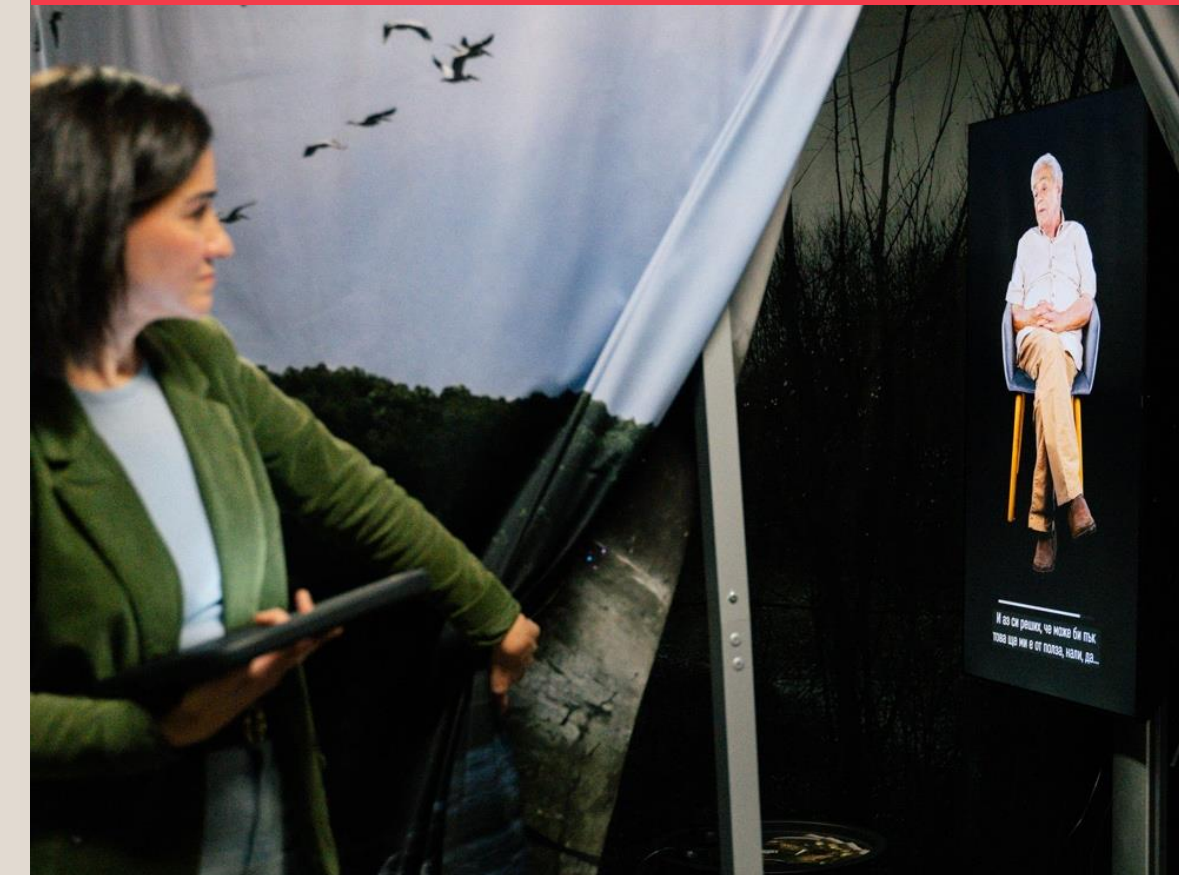
230K+

visits to belene.camp and grajdansko.bg.

1,000+

teachers actively using our resources.

Shaping public understanding



5+ exhibitions

in Bulgaria and internationally.

38 embassies

hosted in Belene over five years.

25+ partnerships

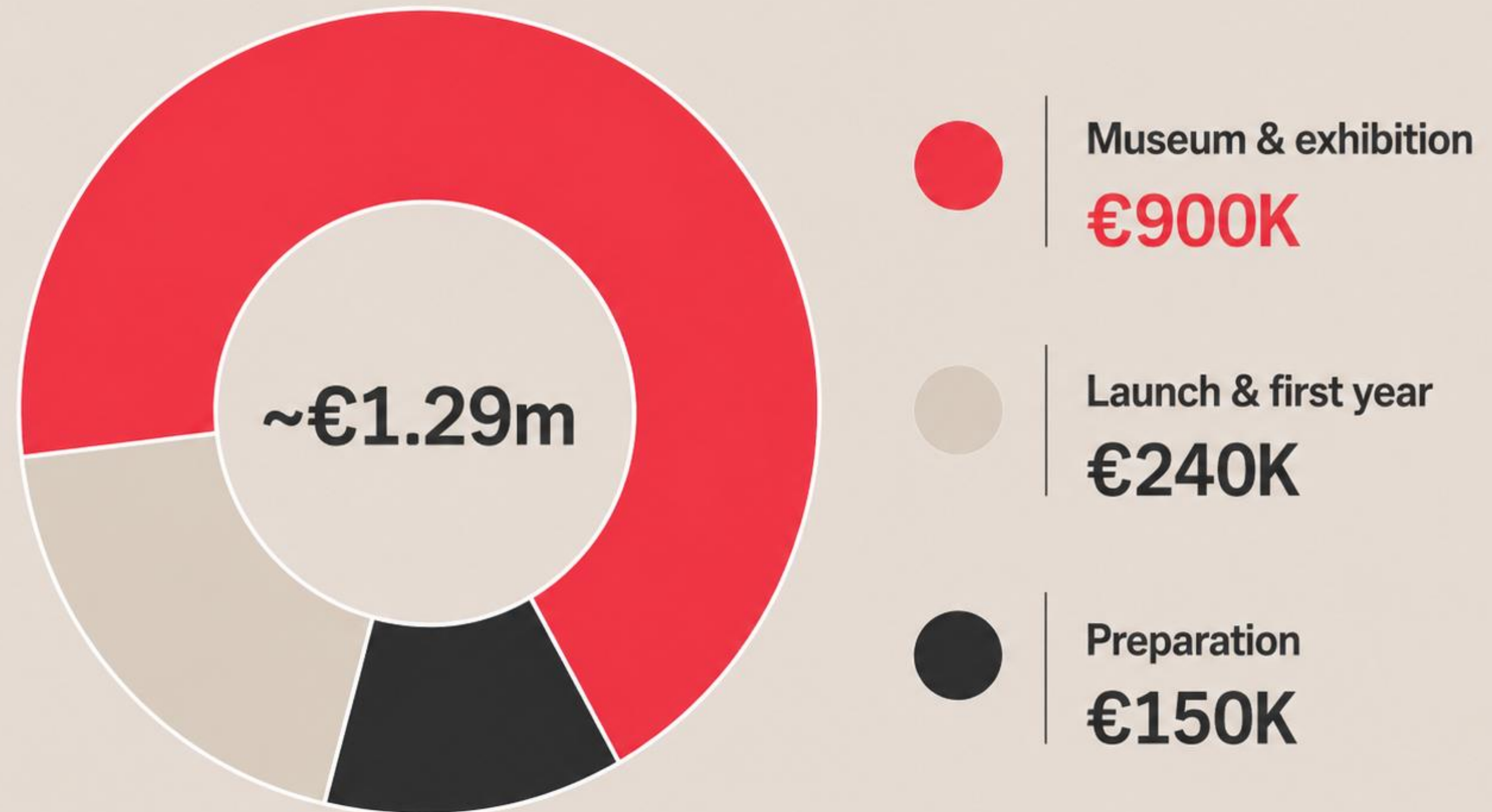
with universities, European organizations and embassies.

130+ campaigns

and 150+ media appearances.

A philanthropic investment of ~€1.29m

Indicative budget allocation



Museum & exhibition — €900k | c.70%

Venue renovation, mobile museum, exhibition design, interactive experiences, technology and content.

Launch & first year — €240k | c.19%

Audience development, educational programmes, public events and communications.

Preparation — €150k | c.12%

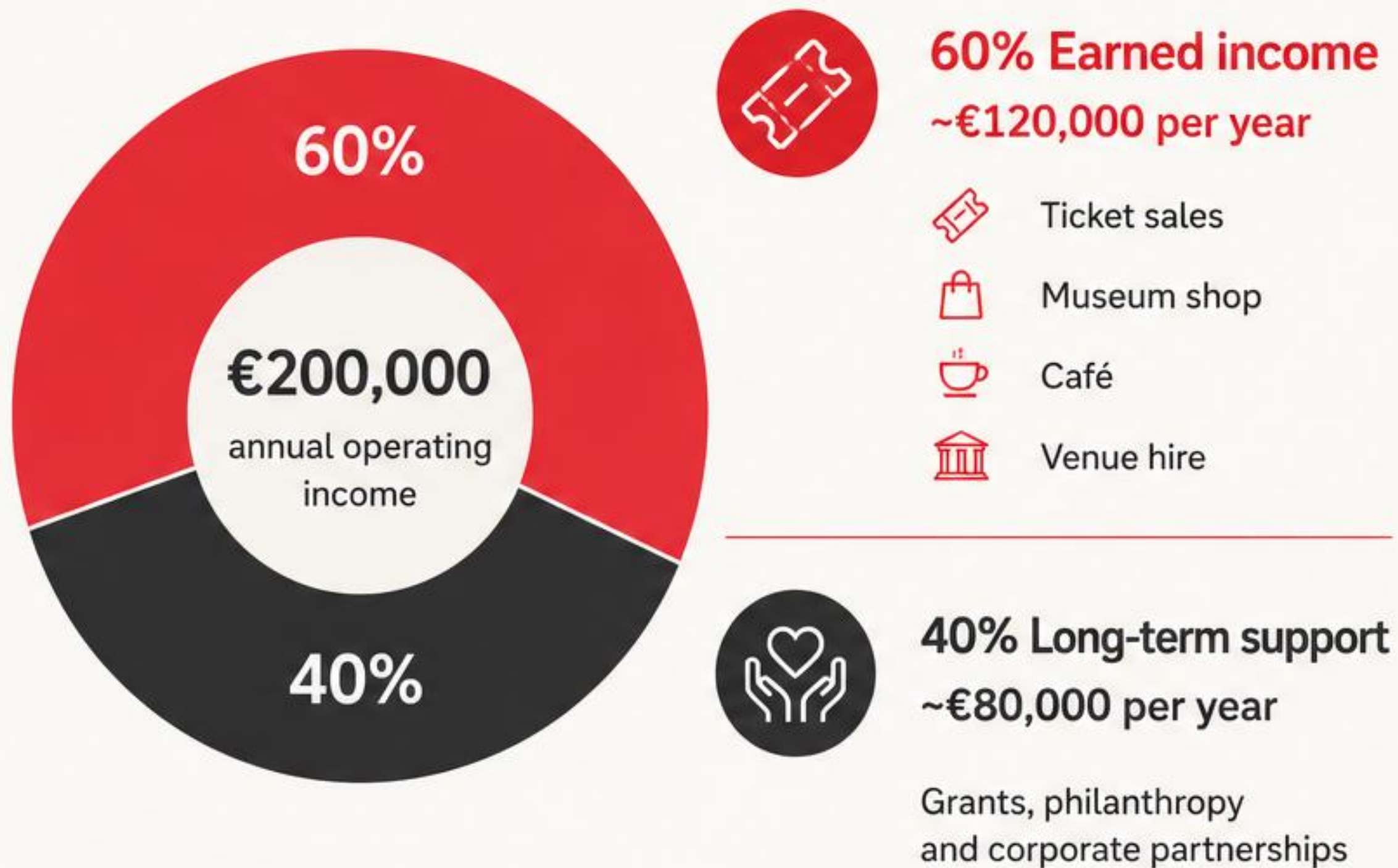
Museum concept, creative design, location and architectural planning.



Revenue model

Annual operating income target: ~€200,000

TARGET REVENUE MIX



TICKET ASSUMPTION

At an average ticket price of ~€10, the earned income target requires:

~10,200

paid admissions
per year

~850

paid admissions
per month

~42

paid admissions
per opening day*

*Assuming ~20 opening days per month.



ATTENDANCE TARGET

~30,000 visitors per year

Including paid visitors, students and school groups, free-entry visitors and public event participants.



A sustainable model combining diversified earned income with long-term support to ensure financial independence.

Once-in-a-generation opportunity

Some institutions remember the past.

Others help shape the future.

FACADE is designed to do both.

Help make FACADE possible.

For partnerships, contributions, or to discuss the project:

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Thank you for making FACADE possible.

