



EUcom4U project

International workshop

„1990 - The German reunification“

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## FACT SHEET: THE GERMAN REUNIFICATION 1990

### Historical Background: WWII and the founding of two German states

In 1945, the Nazi Germany ended in defeat and Germany was divided into four occupation zones, under the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. The capital city of Berlin was similarly divided into four sectors.



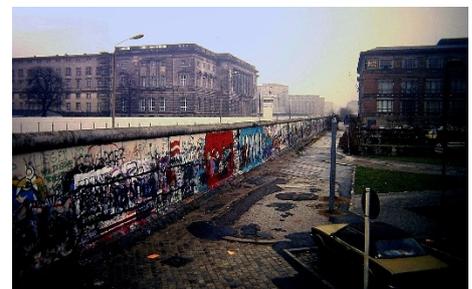
1949 the three zones of the western allies were merged, forming the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin, aligned with capitalist Europe (which later developed into the European Community). The Soviet zone became the German Democratic Republic with its capital in East Berlin, part of the communist Soviet Bloc. Cold war started



### From cold war to change in the east

For over forty years between 1949 and 1989/90, Germany was divided into two states: the Federal Republic of Germany in the West and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the East. In the East-West conflict they belonged to "blocs" hostile to each other. West and East Germans lived in fundamentally different political, social and economic systems.

This situation led to the installation of ever harder borders between the two states. In August 1961 the Berlin wall was built as well as walls and fences on the whole border between GDR and FRG.



The communist regime in the Soviet Union introduced reforms in the mid-1980s to address the poor economic situation and people's dissatisfaction. Other communist-ruled states in Eastern Europe followed. However, the SED regime in the GDR under party leader Erich Honecker rejected changes.

Opposition groups were founded demanding reforms and democratic freedoms. In May 1989, they uncovered falsifications of the local elections and gathered for Monday demonstrations. More and more people joined the protests. At the same time, out of discontent, many East Germans left the GDR for the West (via Hungary).

### The wall is falling

The SED regime reacted to this mass exodus and growing protest by replacing Honecker. Reforms and concessions were made by the GDR government such as granting freedom of travel. This led to the opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989.





The SED regime collapsed shortly thereafter and the new GDR government under Hans Modrow sought talks with the opposition at the "Round Table". Together they agreed to dissolve the „Staatssicherheit“ (Secret Service) and hold free elections to the Parliament. The majority of East Germans now demanded German unity (from „We are the People!“ to „We are ONE people/nation!“).

### International negotiations

In the West, Chancellor Helmut Kohl spoke out in favor of rapid reunification, while in the East, its proponents won the free elections to the Volkskammer in March 1990. The new government under Prime Minister Lothar de Maizière and the federal government negotiated with each other on German unification.



They also had to hold talks with the victorious powers of the Second World War, which since 1945 have had the right to decide on "Germany as a whole". The Two-plus-Four Treaty concluded in September regulated the foreign policy conditions of German unity.

### Momentous Reforms in mere months

With the Monetary, Economic and Social Union on July 1, 1990, the GDR took over the West German economic system and introduced the D-Mark as its currency.



The Unification Treaty, which came into force on October 3, 1990, completed the unification of Germany. Berlin became once again the capital of Germany. In 1991, the Bundestag decided to move all government bodies to Berlin, a move that was completed ten years later.



### Construction site German Unity

State unity was fundamentally changing Germany and posed great challenges.

The conversion of the East German economy to market economy conditions was difficult and expensive. The restructuring of the East German economy according to market economy principles was in the hands of the Treuhandanstalt between 1990 and 1994. It assumed responsibility for the state-owned enterprises with nearly four million employees. The Treuhand restructured and split up the large industrial combines, privatized some 6,000, and closed down 3,700 companies. The consequences are extensive deindustrialization and mass unemployment in East Germany.

Also the construction of a modern infrastructure, such as roads, railways and telephone networks, in the East was cost-intensive. To finance the unity costs, the federal government introduced a solidarity contribution in 1991.

In summary it can be stated, that this system change meant a break up in biographies of nearly all people living in Eastern Germany / not necessarily the same in the West

