

03. June 2026

Europe/EDI

"Bike tour against forgetting" remembers the persecution during the National Socialist era

Cross-border cycle tour leads through historical sites in Aalten // Review of a moving event

On 31 May 2026, the "Bike tour against forgetting" took a total of 22 participants through historical sites in Aalten and recalled the fates of those persecuted during the National Socialist era. The event was organised by the Bocholt initiative "Preserving Bocholt's Values" together with the Nationaal Onderduikmuseum in Aalten. The project was sponsored and supported by EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt.

The focus was on the memory of the war years from 1940 to 1945, during which time around 2,500 people persecuted by the National Socialists found refuge in Aalten, a town of around 10,000 inhabitants at the time.

Cycle tour with historical insights

After travelling together from Bocholt, the participants were greeted by Dr Gerda Brethouwer and welcomed to the museum. They then set off on a 20-kilometre cycle tour through the region. The tour was led by Gerrit Nijman, who has been guiding groups to historical wartime sites for many years and providing valuable information at the stops.

During the tour, Nijman reported on committed people who helped the persecuted despite the great risks involved. Many hid refugees in their homes or on farms in and around Aalten and thus protected them from being discovered by the National Socialists. He also recalled a doctor who treated the wounded regardless of their origin or nationality and campaigned for better conditions in labour camps. He paid for his commitment with his life.

Among the particularly poignant stations were the descriptions of an SS raid during a service in a church in Aalten and the visit to the "De 46 van Rademakersbroek" memorial, which commemorates a massacre in which 46 people were murdered by German occupying troops.

A special gesture for the participants was the visit by Pastor Matthias Hembroek from the Bocholt parish of St George. In personal words, he emphasised the importance of remembering and working together for humanity, freedom and democracy.

Joint freedom meal at the end

After returning to the Nationaal Onderduikmuseum, the participants were welcomed with the traditional "Vrijheidssoep". The freedom soup, which is newly developed by Dutch chefs every year, is served around Dutch Liberation Day and symbolises freedom, cohesion and peace. It was accompanied by krenten and sultana bread and coffee.

About the EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt

EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt is part of the office of the Mayor and the Executive Board of the City of Bocholt and is the local contact point for questions relating to the European Union. Its task is to provide local citizens with information, advice, help and answers to questions about Europe. In addition, EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt aims to promote European involvement and provide information on current European political events.



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The participants of the cycle tour look back on an eventful day*