



## INFORMATION SHEETS

### 1. 'ATLANTIKWALL EUROPE'

**ATLANTIKWALL Europe (AWE) is a European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 cooperation project supported by the European Commission's Culture programme 'Creative Europe' and by its four main partners.**

**The ATLANTIKWALL Europe project, funded by the European Union's Creative Europe European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 programme and active between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2020, strives for the first time in European post-war history, to establish a network linking museums, places of remembrance and all interested parties in common projects, preserving memory and implicating future generations, especially the young, in the common European heritage of World War II and its Atlantic Wall.**

The Atlantic Wall is a WWII Atlantic and North Sea defense system (with 'bunkers' and other fortifications) reaching from the border with Spain to the Arctic Circle. It gives testimony to a painful but collective memory, and represents a unique translation of Europe's cultural heritage and values and is a relevant witness of totalitarian times and the democracies that vanquished them.



**AWE has members all Atlantic Wall countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the Channel Islands. The network shows to all generations the Atlantic Wall's WWII heritage and its relevance for Europe's future.** ATLANTIKWALL Europe seeks, through an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to enhance diversity and dialogue through access to this heritage, and to foster a sense of identity based on European values and collective memory and mutual understanding between people.

**The project involves all Atlantic Wall museums, sites and associations in a single post-2020 network agenda and cooperation,** based on future research, events, art, education and culture, publications, training, funding alternatives, defense of all common interests and linkage to fortification and other partners. This can only be efficiently sought and developed together on a European scale.

**The goal of the Cooperation project ATLANTIKWALL Europe is to create the largest possible grouping of Atlantic Wall related sites. During this AWE project period (1 July 2018- 30 June 2020), all interested can join and participate by simple message (see coordinates underneath). Together, in these two years, they can then participate in AWE's actions, like European Bunker Day (around June 2019 and around June 2018), and reflect about their post-2020 Atlantic Wall cooperation agenda.**

AWE therefore organizes yearly, in the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 and until 2020, a European-wide open door day for Atlantic Wall heritage, named **'European Bunker Day' (EBD)**: the opening of all sites to the public in or around June each year, with a connected activity referring to the history of the Atlantic Wall, to this AWE network, and its relevance today. **EBD is the main platform for the communication and actions about this 'difficult' heritage.** AWE combines remembrance with art exchange projects in creative arts and education, and a series of workshops addressing new themes on how to cooperate between Atlantic Wall sites post-2020. AWE also wants to make the unique European-wide heritage relevant to the next generations and is supporting the French UNESCO bid for its D-Day beaches. EBD partners receive a toolkit, digital flyer, mention on a dedicated website

#europeanbunkerday and an AWE and an EBD flag. In the future, AWE wants to work, among other possible initiatives, on an ethical charter for Atlantic Wall heritage, on establishing a common European Heritage Label for its sites, and on an Atlantic Wall knowledge system.

*#Atlantikwalleurope*

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*#europeforculture*

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*Twitter : @AtlantikwallE*

*Soon : website atlantikwalleurope*

*#europeanbunkerday*

*European Bunker Day : [www.europeanbunkerday.eu](http://www.europeanbunkerday.eu)*

*All communications relating to ATLANTIKWALL Europe (AWE): content manager and network coordinator Rafaël Deroo :  
rafderoo@gmail.com*

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### 2. 'ATLANTIKWALL EUROPE' PARTNERS

The EU Creative Europe cooperation '**Atlantikwall Europe**', funded by the European Commission, has four categories of partners **establishing the AWE Network** :

#### **4 main AWE partners :**

- Province of West-Vlaanderen (Belgium, Atlantic Wall Museum Raversyde) as *AWE project leader*
- La Fabrique de Patrimoines (englobing Normandy, France Atlantic Wall museums and supporting, with the French government, the UNESCO bid of the Invasion Beaches)
- Stichting Europees Erfgoed Atlantikwall (Netherlands, organizer of Dutch 'Bunkerdag')
- Flemish Region (Belgium, by the Vlaamse Landmaatschappij (VLM) and its prisoner of war camp project 'Vloetenveld')

#### **7 associate partners and active in the co-organisation of AWE's actions are:**

- Stiftelsen Museum Vest (Norway)
- Museumscenter Hanstholm (Denmark)
- Nordjyllands Kystmuseum (Denmark)

-Vendyssel, Historiske Museum (Denmark)

-Bunkermuseum Emden (Germany)

-Jersey Heritage (Channel Islands)

**AWE Network partners are:**

-Musée Radar Douvres-la-Délivrande, Normandy - France

-Département de la Manche (Musée de la Batterie d’Azeville, et site de l’île Tatihou), Normandy - France

-Musée de la batterie de Longues-sur-Mer, Normandy - France

-Rectorat de l’Académie de Caen, Normandy - France

-L’ESPE de l’Académie de Caen - École supérieure du professorat et de l’Éducation ; Université de Caen, Normandy - France

-L’ÉSAMC2 - École supérieure des Arts et Médias de Caen et Cherbourg, Normandy - France

-Institut national de recherches archéologique préventives (INRAP), Caen, Normandy - France

-Office de Tourisme Cotentin-nord (Cap de la Hague, Cherbourg, Val de Saire), Normandy - France

-Les Sentiers de la Mémoire au Cap de la Hague – France

-Municipalité de Leffrinckoucke, Nord-Pas de Calais - France

-City of Bergen-op-Zoom, Noord-Brabant - Netherlands

-City of Hellevoetsluis, Zeeland - Netherlands

-City of Vlissingen, Zeeland - Netherlands

-Groede Podium (Groede battery), Groede (Sluis) - Netherlands

-Zwinstreek Zonder Grenzen - Belgium / Netherlands

-For Freedom Museum, Ramskapelle (Knokke) - Belgium

-Atlantikwall Antwerps Bunkermuseum, Antwerp - Belgium

- Provincial Peace Institute, Antwerp - Belgium
- States of Guernsey - Channel Islands
- Bunker Valentin, Bremen – Germany



*AWE is supported by the European Federation of Fortified Sites and Defence Lines (EFFORTS), Europa Nostra, the International Fortress Council (IFC), by photographer and Atlantic Wall author Stephan Vanfleteren (Belgium and European AWE ambassador), Atlantic Wall authors Hans Sakkers (Netherlands) and Bernard Paich (France) and by Tom Vandenkendelaere (Belgium) and Lambert van Nistelrooij (Netherlands), Members of the European Parliament.*



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### 3. BECOME A PARTNER OF THE 'ATLANTIKWALL EUROPE' NETWORK

The goal of building the network between 2018 and 2020 is to reflect on and dress an execution agenda between Atlantic Wall sites and interested parties on common European projects post-2020. All Atlantic Wall sites and interested institutions can apply for partnership in the Atlantikwall Europe Network. This partnership is free.

All partners are invited to participate in all network activities, among which especially the yearly **European Bunker Day** (on a date around June). Possible costs for participation in AWE actions have to be carried by each participating site.

Partners are also invited to **propose actions and attract new sites** to the network, to share as much as possible AWE info on their participation in the network by posting information on their website and social media and their own publications: **#atlantikwalleurope #eych2018 #europeforculture #europeanbunkerday** and use the exact logos at their activities: 'AWE', 'EYCH2018', 'Creative Europe' and 'European Bunker Day' (see examples in this flyer). Check us out at, and share on, twitter and facebook. Important is to share and send reports on AWE actions and communications (copies of postings, use of logos, ...) to AWE.

From new partners we also need: name institution, contact name – mail address – postal address, website and social media addresses and a 5 photos +300 dpi and a 200 - 300 words presentation on the site and why it joins AWE. Send all to the mail address underneath. By doing so, partners allow AWE to use this info for its network activities.

*#Atlantikwalleurope*



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### 4. EUROPEAN BUNKERDAY

**‘European Bunker Day’ (BDE) is the central part throughout the EU Creative Europe project ‘Atlantikwall Europe’ (AWE). EBD will be a series of happenings and events organised by Atlantikwall Europe to start to promote simultaneously Atlantic Wall’s forgotten heritage and today relevance in Europe through a yearly framework event around June targeting to reach a youth audience and the general public.**

AWE therefore organizes yearly, starting in the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 a European-wide open door day for Atlantic Wall heritage, named **‘European Bunker Day’ (EBD)**: the opening of all sites to the public in or around June each year, with a connected cultural activity referring to the history of the Atlantic Wall, to this AWE network, and its relevance today. **EBD is the main platform for the communication and actions about this ‘difficult’ heritage that the Atlantic Wall is.**

Atlantikwall Europe, organizing European Bunker Day, combines remembrance with exchange projects in creative arts and education, and a series of workshops addressing new themes on how to cooperate between Atlantic Wall sites post-2020. AWE also wants to make the unique European-wide heritage relevant to the next generations and is supporting the French UNESCO bid for its D-Day beaches. EBD partners receive a toolkit, digital flyer, mention on a dedicated website #europeanbunkerday and an AWE and an EBD flag. In the future, AWE wants to work, among other initiatives, on an ethical charter for Atlantic Wall heritage, on establishing the European Heritage Label for its sites, and on an Atlantic Wall knowledge system.

Based on Dutch 'Bunkerdag' event (and also organized in 2017 on a small scale in West-Flanders, Belgium, together with future AWE partner Raversyde), European Bunker Day is about opening Atlantic Wall sites for the larger public to promote Atlantic Wall heritage through cultural actions once a year around June. An Atlantic-wide European Bunker Day started in 2018 at each of the cooperation partners, but its will expand towards all AWE partners by 2019 and 2020. European Bunker Day will become a European-wide happening and will combine the opening of AW sites as part of a network, with actions on societal relevant issues and/ or art representations (**see the 2018 Raversyde / Vloethemveld Un/Settled exhibition and the 2019 Art work exhibition**).

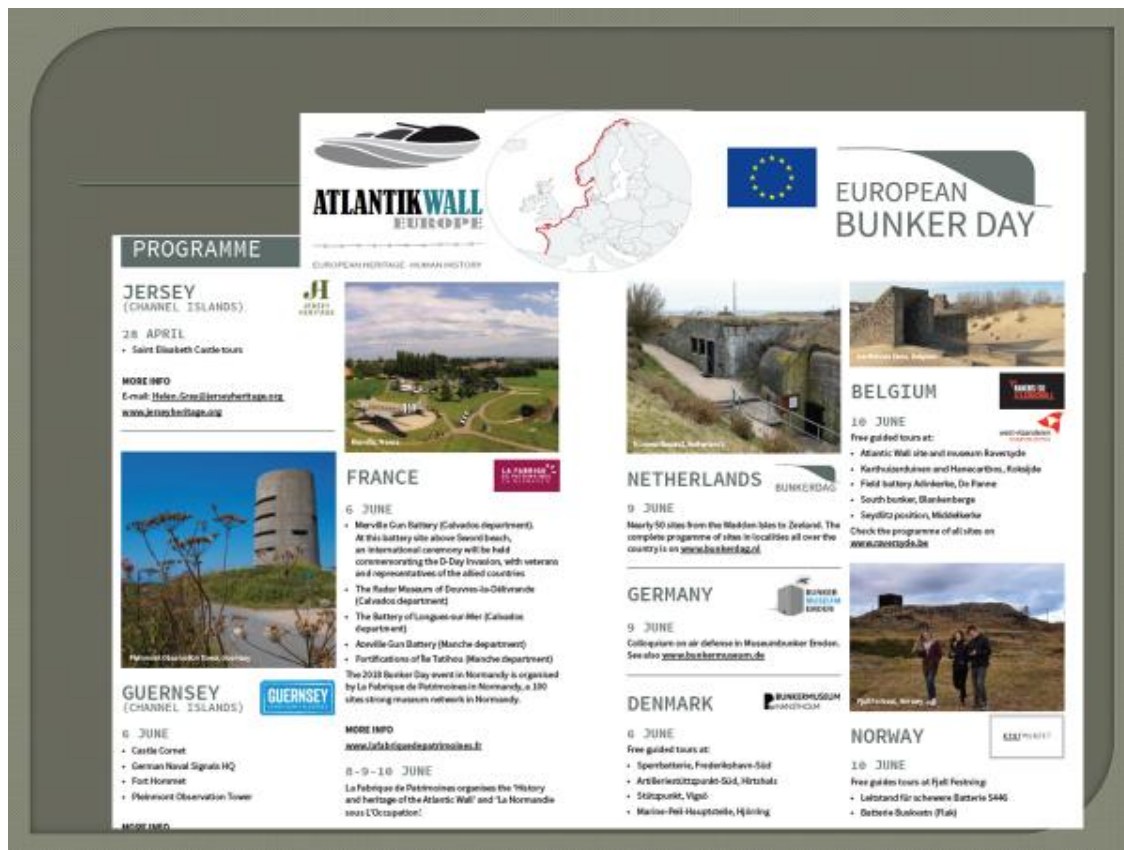
Besides the opening of the memorial sites and museums, supported by common communication material and own logo, website and banners, there are other **common EBD actions**:

- set-up of a best-practices multilingual starter **information and toolkit** for candidates respecting national particularities (operational by 2019)
- use of common **communication material** (website, flyer, flag)
- use of **European Bunker Day logo** (promoted with AWE and Creative Europe and EYCH2018 logos)

Each site is invited to combine its European Bunker Day action with a cultural action in order to underline the relevance of its heritage :

- organisation of **guided tours, cultural actions, conferences, ...**
- focus on grammar **school groups** and integrated activities (testimonies, arts)
- establish a **special entrance fee system** on one specific day around the Saturday closest to the 6/6 D-DAY (by 2019) – depending on national specificities (see further).

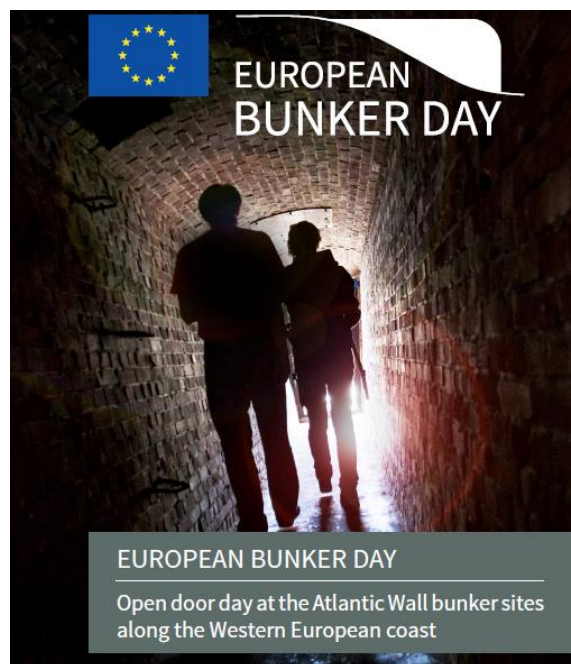
All European Bunker Day actions information is collected and communicated on [www.europeanbunkerday.eu](http://www.europeanbunkerday.eu).



The yearly organized European Bunker Day respects **national specificities** : Normandy for instance has June activities around D-Day and will do the larger part of Bunker Day Europe in May, promoting the D-Day activities the next month and entrance pricing may differ in different participating countries. Each partner can choose a date that agrees with its own local needs and specificity.

Partners are also invited to propose new European Bunker Day actions and attract new sites to the network and European Bunker Day, to share as much as possible European Bunker Day info on their participation in the network by posting information on their website and social media and their own publications: **#atlantikwalleurope #eych2018 #europeforculture #europeanbunkerday** and use, at their European Bunker Day activities, next to the 'European Bunker Day' logo, the other logo's: 'AWE', 'EYCH2018' and 'Creative Europe' (see examples in these texts). Partners are invited to share on twitter, facebook, instagram. Important is to share and send reports on European Bunker Day and AWE actions and communications (copies of postings, use of logos, ...) to AWE.





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2018   
EUROPEAN YEAR  
OF CULTURAL  
HERITAGE  
#EuropeForCulture

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### 5. DEFINING THE ATLANTIC WALL

It might appear that amongst historians and policy makers there is common conception of the Atlantikwall. There are however many interpretations. For this reason, an attempt has been made to approach the Atlantikwall not only as objectively but also functionally.

#### 1. The Atlantikwall in Historical Perspective

##### a) Phases

There are four discernible phases in the development of the German coastal defences:

Phase 1: Guarding the coastline, defending of key locations (harbours) and invasion preparations (1940-41);

Phase 2: Linear closed defence line against sea-based attacks (late 1941);

Phase 3: Comprehensive closed defence line against sea based and airborne attacks (late 1942-late 1943);

Phase 4: Proactive defence and layered defence lines (late 1943-1944);

##### b) Prelude (Phase 1)

Guarding of the coastline, defence of key locations (harbours) and invasion preparations (1940-41).

Early June 1940 saw the coastlines of Western Europe from the northern reaches of Norway to southern France in German hands. From then on this coast became the outer reaches of the third Reich. The Wehrmacht kept up, at this point only a primitive guard, as it was still on the advance. Any defences (occasionally bunkers) worth speaking of were placed at key points of strategic interest: ports and harbours on the West European Coast, the Channel Coast and the prestigious Channel Islands; for example. Following their losses at the Battle of Britain coupled with Hitler's expanding Eastern interest, the Wehrmacht gradually began to fill in the forgotten gaps and remote points between their initial strongholds, using radar and artillery positions, thereby slowly forming a series of fortifications along the whole coastline.

#### **c) The Order of 14 December 1941: Die Neue Westwall / the New Westwall (Phase 2)**

Linear closed defence line against sea-based attacks (late 1941).

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1941, Hitler ordered the building of the *Neue Westwall* and with it came a better picture of the concept for the further expansion of existing strongholds into a sealed defence line “*von Eismeer bis zur Biscaya*”. This line would protect the important coastal locations, primarily the harbour areas, against enemy attacks from the sea and air, using of course “all available means”.

The defensive concept upon which the *Neue Westwall* was based, was the assumption that: the robust ability of the defences to take a prolonged pounding would provide sufficient opportunity to provide efficient reinforcements. A challenge, when considering the enormous lengths of coastline to be defended. On the one hand, these principles were dictated by the increased threat of the Allied invasion, and on the other hand by the demand for evermore troops at the Eastern Front. Besides, according to Hitler, the “*Neue Westwall*” was greatly symbolic and therefore also valuable propaganda. Its realisation turned out to be more challenging and this led to a change of plans.

#### **d) The Benefits of Experience: the Atlantikwall (Phase 3)**

Comprehensive closed defence line against sea based and airborne attacks (late 1942-late 1943)

In less than one week of the Atlantikwall-Conference of 13<sup>th</sup> August 1942 the ill-fated Allied raid on Dieppe took place. It encouraged Hitler's opinion that bomb proof bunkers, a so called *Ständige Bunker*, were called for to protect his field positions so vulnerable to air raids. This led to Order nr.14 being issued on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1942 by General Field-Marshal Gerd Von Rundsted, then Supreme Commander of all German troops on the Western front. It required an impenetrable fortress to be made of the Channel and Atlantic coastlines. This order meant a change of plans inevitable. To make the line impenetrable it needed protection from behind as well as up front.

The implications were the formation of a land-front corresponding to the sea-front, imperative to guarding the emplacements both from parachute attack behind lines and pincer attack movements. Tank traps were laid out with walls, dragons teeth , moats and canals were dug as water obstacles.

The expansion of the Sea-front with a land-front called for a further integration within and around the new and existing defences like the radar and airfield bases. This led to the creation of so-called *Stützpunktgruppen*. The defence concept required far reaching cooperation between three military services *Kriegsmarine*, *Heer* and *Luftwaffe*.

#### **e) Rommel (Phase 4)**

Proactive defence and layered defence lines (late 1943-1944).

Late 1943 field-marshal Erwin Rommel further changed matters as Hitler's inspector of the Atlantikwall. He was of the opinion that an invasion attack should be destroyed at sea and in extreme circumstances on the beaches and that the *Wehrmacht* was unable to defeat the enemy should they be able to make a bridgehead and break out. Rommel ordered in early 1944 that placement of submerged obstacles and huge numbers of pikes buried at an angle rigged with steel cables and tipped with mines.

He recognized from previous encounters at the front, the increasing risk of allied airborne landings. To counter this danger and protect the rear of the coastal defences, Rommel



ordered the existing *Landfront* and the hinterland expanded. Low lying areas were flooded, Rommel had additional minefields laid, earthworks and obstacles placed.

## 2. The Atlantikwall as phenomenon

The remains of the Atlantikwall are like war-scars. There are very few visible signs of the German occupation along our coastline. This realisation over the last few years has altered our appreciation of the Atlantikwall. The remains are protected cultural heritage sites. For current and future stewardship of the Atlantikwall it is therefore important to gain insight into the nature of the defence line, for making balanced interpretations about the significance of (elements of) the Atlantikwall. The Atlantikwall can be viewed in several different ways:

- a military defence **concept**, based on a line;
- a discernible, **physical infrastructure**, mostly near or along the coastline;
- a largely **standardized fortifications**;
- an **integrated defence system**;
- **propaganda** slogan.

### a) The Atlantikwall as defence concept

The Atlantikwall *Neue Westwall* built upon earlier German defence concepts based on lines, like the *Ostwall* and *Westwall*. The big difference to these lines is that Atlantikwall wasn't built from one set of blueprints, but under influences of dynamic warfare and military strategy decision making it evolved from 1941 into an integrated defence system encompassing any existing coastguard elements along the West European Coast.

### b) The Atlantikwall as physical infrastructure

The German coastal defences that were established in 1940 were primarily aimed at the prevention and repulsion of enemy air and sea attacks. Originally comprised of varying artillery batteries located around harbours and along the coast. Around all these points and at spots in between, they built *U-Boot Bunkers* (Unterseeboot, Underwater boat / submarine), and *S-Boot-Bunkers* (Schnellboot, Speedboat / motor torpedo boat), anti-aircraft positions and radar installations were built. These objects and complexes lay within the

same are of the defence line we now call the Atlantikwall, whereas they were never formally a part of it. Their presence born of tactical considerations meant they were simply included in the defences as much for their own protection as the added bonus they leant the Atlantikwall itself.

*Résumé: The Atlantikwall exists as physical coastal defence structures consisting of individual objects and ensembles into which military objects have been integrated regardless of their own function. These objects continue to be seen as part of the Atlantikwall, even if strictly speaking this is not the case.*

### **c) The Atlantikwall as defence system**

The coastal defence could not function without the headquarters inland, in command and responsible for logistic support, communication and supply routes, etc. The so called fall-back emplacements, inundation zones and other barriers further inland are all part of the system. They give the depth and strength to the Atlantikwall.

*Résumé: The evolving German coastal defence concept determined the eventual shape and size of the physical infrastructure of the Atlantikwall. The dedicated organisation, management and support made the Atlantikwall the functioning defence system it was.*

### **d) The standardized fortification concept**

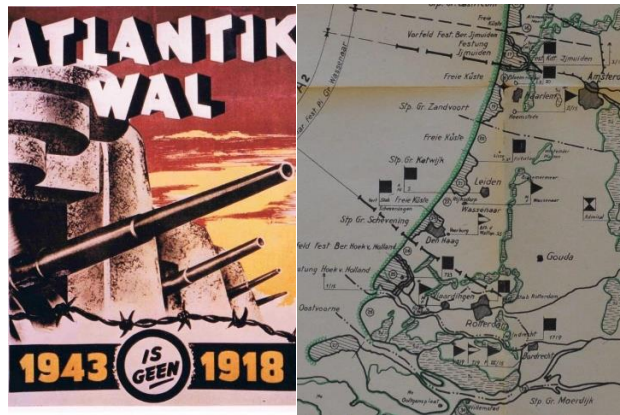
The standardized fortification concept can be found in:

- the central management building the Atlantikwall and hierarchy within defence bases according to category: *Widerstandsnest, Stützpunkt, Stützpunktgruppe* and *Verteidigungsbereich (Festung)*;
- the standardisation of bunkers and objects: *Ständiger Bau, Küver, Verstärkt Feldmässig, Sonderkonstruktionen, etc.*;

In German sources the line was also referred to as “*Perlen am Perlenschnur*” describing the strongholds as pearls with in between the “*freie Küste*” the coastline as the necklace.

### **e) The Atlantikwall as propaganda slogan.**

The war reports, newspapers and magazines created an image of the Atlantikwall as an impervious wall making “*Festung Europa*” impregnable. This propaganda message would put the German people at ease, keep the soldiers' moral high, suppress the occupied territory whilst discourage and demoralise the enemy.



#### 4. Defining the Atlantikwall

Based on the previous analysis it possible to define, depending on the chosen perspective, what the scope is of the Atlantikwall, and which objects and defensive works can be included.

##### a.) The physical borders of the Atlantikwall comprise:

- The outer borders of the fortifications and bunker complexes (*Widerstandsnest*, *Stützpunkt*), or combination of bunker complexes (*Stützpunktgruppe*, *Verteidigungsbereich*, *Festung*) both Seafront and *Landfront* as established by the Wehrmacht as coastguard;
- The stretches of coast between the various *Stützpunktgruppen* and *Vertriebungsbereiche* (*Festung*) with a variable depth of several kilometers land inwards.

##### b) Defence system

The elements that make up the Atlantikwall defence system also include all the hinterland units, positions and headquarters of the coastal defence forces. The length of the Atlantikwall stretches some 6200 kilometers, measured straight along the coast ignoring

coves and fjords from the Norwegian-Russian frontier to the Franco-Spanish border, including the Channel Islands.

Kees Neisingh, Stichting Menno van Coehoorn, International Fortress Council

Gert-Jan Mellink, Stichting Europees Erfgoed Atlantikwall



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