



Working Package 5

Field Trip Austrian/German Police to Holocaust Sites in Poland

As part of the project *"The Police and the Holocaust,"* funded by the European Commission, a group of police officers with participants from Germany and Austria traveled through Poland.

The journey began in the city of Zamość. In a guided city tour we discovered the traces of Jewish life before the German occupation and how the topography of the city changed from 1939 onwards. In the afternoon we continued to Józefów by bus. There, also, we looked at the former synagogue and talked about the Jewish culture and population before the war.

On 13 July 1942, German policemen executed some 1,500 Jews in a forest near of Józefów. We visited the former crime scene in the forest. This crime scene was used as an example for the fact that German law enforcement officers were directly responsible for murdering at least 600,000 Jews throughout Europe.

The next day, we went to Belzec and first did a walking tour around the town, stopped for instance at the former Kommandantur of the death camp, the local train station and the ruins of the Lokschuppen. At the end of this tour, finally, we visited the memorial site of the former death camp. The participants had time to see the exhibition and look at the memorial architecture.

On the next day, we went to Sobibor. With the help of recently discovered private photographs by a perpetrator called Johann Niemann, we focused on the perpetrator's perspective to discuss the possibility of the holocaust to happen. Also, we learned about the history of the site after 1945, the first formats of remembrance and the very recently inaugurated memorial. All participants had 1,5 hours to explore individually the place and the exhibition. From there we went to a nearby forest to a further execution site to discuss the difficulty of fleeing especially after the uprising on October 14, 1943.

On the last day, we went to the memorial of Majdanek. We briefly looked at the camp and clarified the differences to the death camps of the so-called "Aktion Reinhard". Our main focus was on the mass shooting in November 1943, which the Nazis called "Aktion Erntefest". About 40.000 Jewish men, women and children were killed at three places. Poniatowa, Trawniki and Majdanek.

In the afternoon we stayed in a seminar room in the hotel in Lublin. Each day of the field trip ended with a reflection session in the hotels.

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