



Working Package 6

Transnational Exchange German/Austrian/Polish Police

As part of the project "Police and the Holocaust," funded by the European Commission, there was a transnational exchange in POLIN Museum in Warsaw.

Participants from Germany, Poland, Austria, Croatia and Lithuania met for one day to learn about the history of the Second World War and German occupation of Central Europe. The day focused on the role of the German and Austrian members of the Order Police in the holocaust. After a guided tour through the POLIN museum, the group did a walking tour through the streets of the former Warsaw ghetto. The group met at a seminar room in POLIN museum to be welcomed and greeted by all three partners of the project consortium and the representatives of the hosting institution the POLIN museum.

During the first hour the facilitating team created an atmosphere and offered creative ways of getting acquainted as participants from different countries and getting into exchange as police officers. Later, the group was split into two halves. Both subgroups had a guided tour through the exhibition of the POLIN museum. One tour was offered in English, the other was offered in German. The tour guides had a strong focus on those rooms of the exhibition where the history of the Second World War, the occupation of Poland and the holocaust are at display.

At 11.00, the event took place outdoors. Again, the group was split according to the language preferences to either English or German. The second guided tour included a Warsaw Ghetto Walking Tour. For example, it showed the site from where the deportation trains were sent to Treblinka, the site where the underground archive of the Jewish ghetto inhabitants, of the group Oneg Shabat, was found, and the memorial on the bunker of the resistance fighters of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Coming back to the museum, there was a lunch break at the museum's restaurant.

The participants were then invited to reflect on everything they've heard in the morning.

The police officers reflected the provided historical information both individually and in small groups. The afternoon agenda included discussions and interactive methods, aiming to foster mutual understanding among the international participants.

The police officers exchanged their thoughts on the history of the holocaust and its meaning for today's society and their service in the police institutions.

In small transnational groups they explained each other the national perspectives on the history of the holocaust and how this topic is touched upon (or not) in their respective police academies and trainings. The Polish-German-Austrian-Lithuanian police officers discovered both similarities and differences. It was obvious that there are major differences depending on being a member of a perpetrator's society like Germany and Austria or being Polish and Lithuanian, both former occupied countries by the German Reich during the Second World War.

These exchanges were very fruitful according to the feedback given by the participants afterwards. More than half stated the importance and rareness of such international exchanges on topics such as history and its meaning for their work today. In the closing session participants emphasized the importance of exchange and multi-perspectivity while looking at



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history. The police officers agreed that they would appreciate more opportunities to have transnational exchanges.

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