



Working Package 9

Transnational Conference

From September 17 to 19, 2025, memorial site employees, academics, and police officers from eight European countries and the US gathered at Villa ten Hompel to participate in the final part of the educational EU funded project “Police and the Holocaust.” Organized by Villa ten Hompel, what matters gGmbH, and the World Jewish Congress (WJC), the meeting provided a space for intensive exchange, critical reflection, and lasting networking.

Funded by the European Commission, the project is dedicated to historical reappraisal and the significance of this history for today's police work. The conference marked the conclusion of the project, which had previously been carried out in workshops in Münster, Westerbork, Vienna, and several sites in Poland. The participants embarked on a historical search for clues and discussed the significance of this history for their self-image and their current actions as police officers, as Andreas Kahrs emphasized in his presentation of the project.

Objectives of the final meeting

Building on the previous project phases, the concluding conference at Villa ten Hompel pursued four closely linked objectives. Participants, both police officers and educator,

- learned about the educational work and training approaches of the police in another member state;
- reflected on the previous findings of the project and on the progress made throughout its different stages;
- discussed, across three member states, key dimensions of contemporary police work and its implications for democratic policing today; and
- explored differences in collective memory by bringing together police officers from societies shaped by both perpetrator and victim perspectives, and considered how these perspectives influence professional practice.

The conference, which was accompanied by Viktorija Juse and Frank Fischer on behalf of the WJC, was attended by around 30 people from seven EU member states who work with police groups at Holocaust memorial sites and museums, or who work in training and further education in a European police force, or who participated in the educational project itself as police officers.

Historical culture from different perspectives

The conference began with tours of the Villa ten Hompel historical site and Münster's historic old town. Led by Thomas Köhler, Naomi Roth, Peter Römer, and Hannah Voß, participants were taken on an intensive journey into the past. The exhibition at the villa was viewed from two different perspectives: on the one hand, from the point of view of the curators, who explained the concept and historical context of the exhibition, and on the other hand, from the perspective of the educators, who discussed the special didactic design and the challenges of teaching remembrance culture, especially to police officers. This dual approach enabled participants to understand both the depth of content and the methodological considerations, but also the weaknesses behind the exhibition. In addition, the city tour offered the opportunity to better understand the significance of Villa ten Hompel in relation to Nazi history and historical culture within the city.



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Scientific perspectives on police training

The exchange was framed by scientific presentations that highlighted, among other things, the learning potential of historical and political education for the police. The focus was on the evaluation of Greta Lüking's project, who explained in her lecture whether and how educational formats at historical sites can be specifically tailored to the professional practice of police officers in order to initiate sustainable reflection and learning processes. The scientific findings are based on qualitative analyses of interviews with police officers who participated in educational trips to Poland, Westerbork, Münster, and Vienna as part of the project. The analysis shows how these experiences at historical sites and crime scenes not only raise awareness of one's own responsibility, but also promote sensitivity to democratic values and constitutional principles.

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