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## Second Part of the “Police and the Holocaust” Project in Westerbork

As part of the project *“The Police and the Holocaust,”* funded by the European Commission, there was a second workshop in the project centered on an international exchange: an excursion to the Westerbork Memorial brought together officers from the Netherlands (including representatives from the Dutch Police Academy and the Association of Jewish Police Officers in the Netherlands) with police officers from Germany and Austria. Under the guidance of the staff of the Westerbork Memorial, participants gained insights into the actions of Dutch police during the German occupation, which ranged from collaboration to instances of widespread resistance. The project coordinators led a discussion with the attendees on whether there is a core principle of policing that transcends historical periods and systems, sparking lively debates about “neutrality” in light of shifting and increasingly radicalized norms of discourse in all three countries.

The tour of the former transit camp at Westerbork also served as a bridge to the program scheduled for May 2025 in Poland. From Westerbork, 107,000 Dutch Jews were deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau and Sobibor camps. In May 2025, the project participants will visit Sobibor and other sites in southeastern Poland to further explore the role of the police in Nazi crimes and reflect on the responsibilities tied to these historical events.

After visiting Westerbork, the seminar group stopped at a significant location in Appelbergen, where they delved into German occupation crimes in a concrete and personal way. The group met Euwe de Jong, who shared the story of his father at a memorial stone near a remote pond in a marshland. In May 1943, Dutch workers went on strike to protest the conscription of former prisoners of war for forced labor in the Reich. In Appelbergen, local youths—including Euwe’s father, Foppe—blocked a road by placing a tree trunk across it, halting a police convoy. In retaliation, Johann Mechels, a Ordnungspolizei officer from Bremen, ordered the execution of 16 randomly arrested Dutch civilians without trial, including Euwe’s grandfather. Their bodies were buried in the marshes of the surrounding forest. While Johann Mechels continued his police career near the Dutch border after the war, Foppe de Jong only spoke of his involvement in the blockade shortly before his death, feeling responsible for the deaths, even though the accountability lay solely with Mechels. According to participants, their conversation with Euwe de Jong was profoundly impactful.

The workshop covered intense explorations of both the historical and contemporary dimensions of policing within just two days. The project is accompanied by an independent scientific evaluation. *“The Police and the Holocaust”* will continue in January 2025 with the meetings in Vienna. There, the workshops will focus on the role of the police in Austria and engage in in-depth discussions with Vienna’s Jewish community and the Ministry of the Interior about the significance of police efforts in safeguarding Jewish institutions today and in the future.

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