



Fourth Part of the “Police and the Holocaust” Project in Wien

As part of the project *"The Police and the Holocaust,"* funded by the European Commission, a group of German and Austrian police officers traveled to Vienna, Austria.

The fourth workshop focused on dimensions of persecution of Jews in Austria during 1938-1945.

The extent to which the Austrian police was involved in the persecution of Jews was unknown to many participants. The workshop began with a guided walking tour to historical sites of persecution of the Jews in Vienna. For instance, the seminar group went to the street where the iconic photograph was taken of Jewish women being forced to clean the street

The workshop aimed at enhancing participants' understanding of the historical context and the role of the police in local persecution. Especially a timeline method helped to achieve this goal. A long brown paper of 8 meters on the floor in the seminar room symbolized

the time Between 1933 and 1945. It was divided into events and processes which were necessary for the radicalization of the persecution of the Jews. Each event or process was visualized with a card or sheet of paper. Some of these were presented by the facilitators, others were read out loud by participants. On this timeline it was easy to see the simultaneous development of the war and the antisemitic policy of the Nazis and how the two effected each other. Using maps the seminar group learned about destinations of deportations which they will visit in the next workshops in May 2025 in East Poland.



One important aspect is the transfer of skills and knowledge on mass murder from the so-called “Euthanasia” murders to the “Aktion Reinhardt” camps. Not only the methods of murder but also the individual staff did travel from the sites in the German Reich to the East of the Generalgouvernement to be then applied in the murder of the European Jews.

Looking at this timeline in the middle of the circle of chair, there were many questions, moments of understanding new causal relations between historical events and much food for thought about the question, how the holocaust was possible.

Besides looking at the chronology of events and crimes, the facilitators handed out a graph explaining the organizational structure of the SS and German Police under the Nazis. To understand that the police became a part of the same organization as the SS and was headed by Heinrich Himmler, was an important milestone to reflect on the role of the police in the holocaust. An input by Thomas Köhler from the Villa ten Hompel cleared some confusion of how the police used to be like as an institution during the Nazi era.

The participants had the chance to mingle and exchange their thoughts and questions on the relevance of the history for being a police member themselves today and the project's relevance to current police work.



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