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„Przeszłość buduje przyszłość – Sąsiedzi równych praw”
„The past builds the Future – Neighbours of equal rights”

REPORT

summarizing
study visit in Częstochowa

within the project

The past builds the future – Neighbours of equal rights

Częstochowa, January 30th, 2023



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INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project “The past builds the future – Neighbours of equal rights” aims to raise awareness among young Europeans from Poland, Latvia and Lithuania of common history, culture and cultural heritage, as well as honor the victims of crimes in totalitarian regimes. The implementation of the project will allow to commemorate the events in the contemporary history of Europe, including the causes and effects of authoritarian regimes and totalitarianism. This will help to raise awareness of the common history, culture, heritage and values among European citizens, thereby increase their understanding of the European Union, its origins, purpose, diversity and achievements, as well as to highlight the importance of mutual understanding and tolerance. The project is implemented by a partnership consisting of:

- City of Częstochowa - Leader
- Adam Mickiewicz High School in Częstochowa,
- Primary School No. 21 in Częstochowa,
- Schools’ Complex No. 28 in Częstochowa,
- Junior High School in Rezekne,
- Junior High School of st. John Paul II in Vilnius.

Implementation period: 01/04/2022 - 31/03/2024.

Activities envisaged in the project:

1. Opening conference - a conference inaugurating the project, presenting the state of knowledge about the Holocaust,
2. Closing seminar – a seminar summarizing the project, youth debate on anti-Semitism,
3. A series of workshops / lessons in schools participating in the project - workshops / history lessons in all schools participating in the project in the form of discussions or lectures, with the use of artistic and musical expression, incl. performances,
4. Exhibition "The fate of children during the war" - the exhibition will be prepared in 5 languages - Hebrew, Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish and English,
5. Study visit in Częstochowa,
6. Study visit in Rezekne,
7. Study visit in Vilnius.



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STUDY VISIT IN CZĘSTOCHOWA

Introduction

After the opening conference of the project "The past builds the future - Neighbors of equal rights", that took place on September 26, 2022 in Częstochowa, the project entered the active phase of implementation and the consortium proceeded to the next stage, which is study visit in Częstochowa. It was an opportunity to exchanges of children and youth from schools participating in the project.

The program of the visit covered the days of December 5th – 8th. It was aimed to achieve the goals set in the project application, like identifying authentic memorial sites for educational purposes, transferring knowledge to students participating in the project, creating lasting changes in the participants' attitudes towards European history, its values and culture. Substantive points were interspersed with joint workshops and history lessons in the form of discussions, lectures, using forms of artistic expression, such as performances focused on multicultural relations: Polish-Lithuanian-Latvian-Jewish.

Pupils from the Polish State Junior High School in Rezekne (Latvia) and from the Junior High School of st. John Paul II in Vilnius (Lithuania) together with friends from Częstochowa schools: Primary School No. 21, Special School Complex No. 28 and Adam Mickiewicz High School in Częstochowa, during 4 days filled with various educational activities, had the opportunity to learn more about the history of nations inhabiting Central Europe, including the history of the Jewish diaspora living within the countries participating in the project. In addition, the meeting was an opportunity to get to know each other better and establish relationships between young people, as well as to exchange knowledge and experience between teachers.



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Description of the event and activities

Places of memory in Częstochowa¹

The Jews of Częstochowa have been part of our world for centuries. Częstochowa is where they came from, where they lived, worked and celebrated. Identifying themselves with their hometown, they worked for it, making a significant contribution to the development of the economy, education and culture. Participating in historical events that were important for the city, they often manifested attachment to their roots in accordance with the idea of local patriotism. Faithfulness to religion and cultivating traditions did not prevent them from coexisting in the spirit of ecumenism with neighbours of other religions in Częstochowa – one of the world's most famous centres of Marian worship.

Today, only traces of Jews' former activity remain in the city of Częstochowa. They recall the times of the greatest activity of the Jewish people, but also the most painful events in the history of the 20th century. In addition to museum collections, historic tenement houses, plaques commemorating the activities of Jewish institutions, or Jews from Częstochowa who were distinguished not only for the local community, Jewish graves and plaques commemorating the victims of the genocidal policy of the occupiers can be found in the city. All these traces documenting the fate of the Jews of Częstochowa are an extraordinary source of knowledge about the history of Jews and the history of the city. It is worth setting off on a journey in the footsteps of Częstochowa Judaica to learn about their and our past.

Museum of Częstochowa Jews

The permanent exhibition "Jews of Częstochowa" shows the old, multicultural Częstochowa through photos, documents and posters. The photographs gathered at the exhibition were largely sent by families of former Częstochowa citizens of Jewish origin. The exhibits also include copies of original legal acts from the 19th century, defining the legal principles under which the Jewish community functioned in the city during the partitions, as well as posters from the interwar period and the Nazi occupation, and a three-dimensional model of the former synagogue, destroyed by the Germans during the war.

¹ The information in the chapter comes from the website <https://www.czestochowa.pl/zydowskie-slady>, access 17.01.2023



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Over 30,000 Częstochowa Jews lived in pre-war Częstochowa. They formed a very strong community and at the same time intensively participated in the life of the city. During World War II, the Nazis murdered them in a barbaric way in death camps. The exhibition Jews of Częstochowa is devoted to them².

Jewish cemetery at Złota Street

It was founded at the beginning of the 19th century by the Jewish community. It is the fourth largest necropolis of this type in Poland, with the number of matzevot and graves reaching 5,000. The oldest surviving tombstone dates from the beginning of the 19th century. Some of the tombstones still have traces of the original polychromes. The local ohel of Tzadik Pinkus Mendel Justman, who died in 1920, is visited annually by Hasidim from all over the world. During World War II, the area of the cemetery was the site of executions of Częstochowa Jews – their remains were placed in mass graves. At that time, the necropolis was seriously damaged. Many matzevot and monuments were torn out by the occupation authorities and used as raw material for construction works. After the war, the District Jewish Committee rebuilt the demolished wall and gravestones of people murdered by the Germans were made. In 1986, the cemetery was entered into the register of monuments.

New Synagogue

The idea to build the New Synagogue was born in the 1890s among the Jewish community striving to assimilate with Polish culture and society. Construction began in 1899, on the corner of Spadek and Aleksandrowska Streets (currently Wilsona Street).

The building was erected on a rectangular plan, in the neoclassical style. The vestibule of the synagogue was covered with a dome. The façade was decorated with a portico with four columns, crowned with a triangular tympanum with the Hebrew inscription "Open the gates, let the just nation that keeps faith enter!" Above the inscription, the tablets of the Decalogue and the Star of David were placed.

A school of cantors, whose graduates gained fame in many European countries and the United States, was established at the synagogue, as well as a Judaic Institute, which was aimed at educating young people.

In September 1939, the Germans robbed the New Synagogue of valuables, and on December 25th of the same year they set the building on fire. The burnt walls survived until the mid-1950s, when the construction of the municipal philharmonic began in this place.

² <https://zydzi.muzeumczestochowa.pl/> access 04.01.2023



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The building of the Częstochowa Philharmonic – 16, Wilson Street

The building was erected in the 1960s thanks to the generosity of the society, on the foundations of the synagogue burnt down by the Germans. On the wall of the building there is a commemorative plaque dedicated to Bronisław Huberman – a citizen of Częstochowa of Jewish descent – a world-renowned virtuoso and great humanist.

Monument to the Remembrance of Częstochowa Jews – 19, Strażacka Street

It commemorates the 40,000 Częstochowa Jews murdered in the Treblinka camp. It is located on the premises of the Warta freight stop, from where on September 22, 1942, the Germans began deporting Jews from the ghetto. In 2006, during the congress of the members of the World Association of Częstochowa Jews and their Descendants, it was decided to commemorate these historical facts with a monument, which was unveiled on October 20, 2009. The initiator and founder of the monument is Zygmunt Rolat, President of the World Association of Częstochowa Jews and their Descendants.

Next to the monument, designed by the sculptor Samuel Willenberg, there is a glass panel with an order to transport 6 transports of Częstochowa Jews to the extermination camp in Treblinka.

In the Shadow of the Ghetto

As a result of the anti-Semitic policy of the Nazis, the Częstochowa Jewish community was separated from the rest of the city. On April 9, 1941, by the decision of the German starost Richard Wendler, Heinrich Himmler's brother-in-law, a "Jewish residential district" was established.

The Częstochowa ghetto was the fourth largest in Poland after Warsaw, Kraków and Łódź. However, it was not walled off. There were Jewish police stations on the exit streets of the ghetto.

After the liquidation of the ghetto and the deportations of 40,000 Jews to the extermination camp in Treblinka, the Germans set up a forced labor camp for the survivors, the so-called a small ghetto in which more than 5,000 people were imprisoned. As early as June 25, 1943, the Germans began to liquidate the camp, and placed people able to work in the Pelcery plant and the steelworks in Raków, where the ammunition factories of the Hasag concern were established. The remaining people, mainly the elderly, women and children, were shot at the Jewish cemetery.



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The premises of the Jewish community before the war – Aleja Najświętszej Maryi Panny 10

The premises occupied 6 rooms and a kitchen, housing an office, the office of the secretary of the board, meeting rooms, the registry office and the office of the chairman.

Commemorative plaque – 28, Olsztyńska Street

It commemorates the victims of "Bloody Monday" - Poles and Jews shot on September 4th, 1939 in the city by Wehrmacht soldiers.

Places related to the fate of Jews in Częstochowa were presented to the participants of the project by Mr. Grzegorz Basiński, a history teacher in Częstochowa schools: primary, junior high and high school. Author of numerous publications, radio and Internet broadcasts about the history of Częstochowa.

Lelów

Not only Częstochowa itself, but also its surroundings are directly connected with the fate of Jews. The commune of Lelów is located 43 km south-east of Częstochowa. Jews appeared in the area of Lelów and its surroundings in the Middle Ages. Obtaining city rights by Lelów in the 14th century contributed to the intensification of trade exchanges and the emergence of Jewish merchants. The number of Jews settled in Lelów grew over time. At the end of the 18th century, they constituted about 20% of the local population and were an integral part of the urban community. The high percentage of the Jewish population remained until the 1930s.

After the outbreak of World War II, the Germans entered Lelów on September 3, 1939. In the first days of the war, most of the town's inhabitants suffered, regardless of the faith. In September 1942, the Germans deported the Jews. Most of them were murdered in the Treblinka camp.

Today, no Jewish community has survived in Lelów, however, the town remains a place of pilgrimage for Hasidic Jews from all over the world due to the grave of Tzaddik Dawid Biderman, who lived in the years 1746-1814. He was the first tzaddik of the Hasidic Lelów dynasty, one of the most famous tzaddiks in Poland at that time, and his thoughts are still quoted by Hasidim all over the world. His



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ohel (grave) is a place of annual Jewish pilgrimages on the anniversary of the tzaddik's death, at the turn of January and February.

A visit to Lelów at the grave (ohel) of Tzadik Biderman brought the participants of the project closer to the history of Polish Jews. The young people also listened with great interest to the narrator at the movable nativity scene located in the Lelów Culture Centre. He talked about Jewish holidays. The nativity scene made by a Krakow artist is another element reminding of the former inhabitants of the Częstochowa region.

On the way back from Lelów to Częstochowa, the group stopped at the manor of Zygmunt Krasieński in Złoty Potok and the castle of Casimir the Great in Olsztyn, where they had the opportunity to learn about the history of the surroundings of Częstochowa.

The history of Lelów and the vicinity of Częstochowa was presented to the project participants by Mr. Marek Fiszer, a history teacher at the Technical School Complex in Częstochowa.

POLIN Museum

Bearing in mind the subject of the project, as well as the assumptions of the December study visit, the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw was a must-see.

The museum contains exhibitions dedicated to a millennium of history and brings back the memory of their rich culture and heritage. The location of the Museum is symbolic – it is situated in a pre-war district inhabited mainly by Jews, and during the war transformed by the Germans into a ghetto.

The facility began operating in its new premises in April 2013, and the permanent exhibition was opened in October 2014. The idea of the museum was born in the Jewish Historical Institute Association. The beginnings of work on the opening date back to 1995. The initiative gained support both in Poland and abroad. The POLIN Museum is an institution jointly created and run by the government, local government (Capital City of Warsaw) and a non-governmental organization (Jewish Historical Institute Association) as part of a public-private partnership (the first institution of this type in Poland).

The museum combines two functions: in addition to the traditional museum, where the permanent exhibition is presented, as well as thematic temporary exhibitions, there is a cultural and educational centre. The museum implements an extensive educational program addressed to various target groups: families with children, schools and kindergartens (students and teachers), students and adults, including seniors, as well as people with disabilities. Educational workshops, exhibition tours and guided city walks are conducted. Unlike Yad Vashem in Jerusalem or the United States Holocaust



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Memorial Museum in Washington, POLIN does not focus its message solely on World War II and the Holocaust. The contribution of Jews to the development of Polish culture, science and economy is presented, as well as the history of the arrival of the first Jewish merchants to Poland in about 960 and the beginnings of Jewish settlement in the area of the former First Polish Republic (i.e. also in the present territory of Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and western part of Russia) to the recent history of the Jewish community in the Third Polish Republic. The permanent exhibition shows the connections between the history of Poland and the history of the Jewish nation. The aim of the facility is to show visitors how Jews lived and what they did in Poland.

The POLIN Museum *“is also a place of meetings and dialogue for all those who want to get to know the past and contemporary Jewish culture better, who want to draw conclusions for the future from Polish-Jewish history, who want to face stereotypes and face contemporary threats such as xenophobia and nationalist prejudice. By serving the ideas of openness, tolerance and truth, POLIN Museum contributes to mutual understanding and respect among Poles and Jews.”*³

A visit to the POLIN Museum was an opportunity for young people participating in the project to learn more about the history of Jews, and the extremely attractive, innovative form in which the Museum presents its resources was a factor that guaranteed the preservation of the information obtained, which makes it possible to use it in the future and pass on knowledge to other people.

Workshop meetings

As part of the December visit, a series of workshops was held. Workshops were attended by 30 students and their teachers from Vilnius and Rezekne, as well as students from Częstochowa schools that are partners of the project. Workshops and history lessons were organized, using various forms of artistic expression, focused on multicultural relations: Polish-Lithuanian-Latvian-Jewish.

As part of the visit, the Częstochowa schools participating in the project organized for guests from Lithuania and Latvia following events:

- December, 5th: Workshops on Jewish culture organized by the 8 in Częstochowa (*venue: Special Schools Complex 28, ul. św. Barbara 9/11*)

Workshops, attended by 50 people, were held in Special Schools Complex 28. The historical workshop was led by Mr. Witold Paszkowski, an employee of the Museum of Jews in Częstochowa. During the meeting, the young people got acquainted with holidays in Jewish culture and traditional Jewish cuisine. Participants had the opportunity to prepare and taste Jewish snacks such as: mace, hummus, challah and popular ones in our region, not only in Jewish cuisine, carrot cake and typical Hamantaschen cookies.

³ <https://www.polin.pl/pl/o-muzeum>, access 4.01.2023



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- December, 6th: Music and dance performance by students of A. Mickiewicz High School
(venue: *Municipal House of Culture in Częstochowa, ul. Łukasieńskiego 50/68*)

On December 6th, on the stage of the Municipal House of Culture in Częstochowa at Łukasieński Street, an artistic performance prepared by students and teachers of A. Mickiewicz High School as part of the project was presented. The performance combined various forms of artistic expression: recitation, dance, music, singing. The performance is the voice of a generation that remembers the past and wants a better future, where there is no consent to evil, and love and tolerance prevail. The event was attended by about 300 people.

- December, 7th: Presentation of a film created as part of the project by Primary School No. 21 in Częstochowa (venue: *OKF Iluzja Study Cinema, Aleja Najświętszej Maryi Panny 64*).

On December 7th, as part of the study visit and workshops of the project, the film "Multicultural Częstochowa" prepared by pupils of the Primary School No. 21 in Częstochowa, was screened. The movie has been watched by project's participants, teachers and students of other schools from Częstochowa and invited guests, a total of about 100 people.

The program of the four-day stay of the Lithuanian and Latvian partners included also, among others, an integration campfire, which was an opportunity to strengthen bonds between young people and teachers.

Summary

As part of the December visit, the objectives of the project were achieved in the form of an exchange of information, knowledge and views on the history and culture of Jews, with particular emphasis on the tragic events of World War II and the Holocaust.

The European Union recognizes the Holocaust as a key, decisive event in Europe's history and heritage. The values on which the European Union was built and which are common to all member states in key aspects refer directly to the experiences of Jewish communities in the period before, during and after the Second World War. The concept of the universality and inalienability of human rights becomes even clearer when we look back on the experience of the Holocaust and realize the need to speak up and be vigilant about human rights. This aspect is of key importance in the formal and non-formal education of young people as future generations responsible for the fate of the world.

The study visit and participation in the workshops allowed teachers and students from different countries to deepen their general cultural knowledge – by introducing them to the world of concepts in the field of history, literature, culture (multicultural aspect), they inspired them to independently search for sources of knowledge and allowed them to learn about the world and its diversity.



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Event participation statistics

The study visit was attended by 69 people:

- 15 participants from Lithuania,
- 15 participants from Latvia,
- 39 participants from Poland.

Taking into account information about all participants of the visit, the following data can be determined:

1. Sex:

- 48 women,
- 21 men,
- 0 non-binary people.

2. Age:

- 6 – 12 years old: 5 people,
- 13 – 15 years old: 6 people,
- 16 – 20 years old: 47 people,
- 21 – 40 years old: 0 people,
- Over 40 years old: 11 people.

3. 6 people with disabilities participated in the activities related to the visit.



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APPENDIX 1 – STAY PROGRAM OF THE PROJECT PARTNERS IN CZĘSTOCHOWA

Project „The past builds the Future – Neighbours of equal rights”

STUDY VISIT AND WORKSHOPS

Program of stay in Częstochowa of partners from Vilnius and Rezekne

December 5th – 8th, 2022

Monday, December 5th, 2022

13:00 Hotel accommodation, lunch

15:00 Culinary workshops - familiarization with Jewish cuisine
and regional cuisine

Special Schools Complex 28, ul. św. Barbary 9/11, Cz-wa

17:30 Integration firecamp – anniversary of the birth of Marshal J.
Piłsudski

Jura Park Biskupice

20:30 Return to the hotel

Monday, Tuesday 6th, 2022

08:00 Breakfast at the hotel

10:00 Music and dance performance by students of A. Mickiewicz
High School

Miejski Dom Kultury w Częstochowie, ul. Łukasieńskiego 50/68

12:00- 13:00 Participation in the meeting summarizing the project "Bridge
to the Future"

I LO im. Juliusza Słowackiego, Aleja Tadeusza Kościuszki 8,
Częstochowa

13:30 Lunch at the hotel

14:00 - 18:00 Excursion: visiting Lelów, Złoty Potok, the castle in Koniecpol

18:00 Dinner at the hotel

Wednesday, December 7th, 2022

08:00 Breakfast at the hotel

09:00 - 11:00 Visiting memorial sites in Częstochowa



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11:00 - 13:30	Free time
13:30	Lunch
15:00	Screening of the movie „Multicultural Częstochowa” Kino Studyjne OKF Iluzja, Aleja Najświętszej Maryi Panny 64
18:00	Dinner at the hotel
Thursday, December 8th, 2022	
08:00	Breakfast at the hotel Check-out from the hotel
9:30 - 15:00	Departure to Warsaw - Visiting the Polin Museum
15:00/16:00	return to Vilnius and Rezekne – lunch on the way back



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Contact Details:

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V Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. A. Mickiewicza w Częstochowie - <https://vmickiewicz.pl/>

Szkoła Podstawowa nr 21 w Częstochowie - <http://sp21czest.szkolnastrona.pl/>

Zespół Szkół Specjalnych nr 28 w Częstochowie - <http://zssnr28.info/>

Państwowe Polskie Gimnazjum w Rezekne - <http://www.rezpvs.lv/>

Gimnazjum im. Jana Pawła II w Wilnie - <https://www.jp2.lt/aktualnosci>