

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Project name and acronym:	Rescue Memory - Activism, Arts and Public Remembrance – ReActMem
Participant:	FUNDACJA ZAPOMNIANE (FZ)
PIC number:	890506464

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	WP 2
Event name:	Conference on Memory Activism
Type:	seminar, conference
In situ/online:	in-situ
Location:	Poland, Warsaw
Date(s):	1.12.2025, 6-7.12.2025
Website(s) (if any):	https://reactmem.difficultheritage.eu/blog/event/konferencja-poswiecona-aktywizmowi-pamieciowemu/ https://reactmem.difficultheritage.eu/en/blog/event/conference-on-memory-activism/
Participants	
Female:	71
Male:	31
Non-binary:	1
From country 1 [Poland]:	99
From country 2 [Czechia]:	2
From country 3 [Germany]:	1
From country 4 [Denmark]:	1
Total number of participants:	103
From total number of countries:	4
Description	
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>	

The Conference on Memory Activism was organized in Warsaw as a multi day event series bringing together memory activists, heritage professionals, researchers, educators, artists, and representatives of non governmental and civic society organizations from several European countries. The conference was conceived as a platform for presenting research results, exchanging experiences from local and international contexts, and jointly reflecting on how memory activism can be supported in a more effective and systemic way. Activities were conducted in Polish and English and were addressed both to invited stakeholders and to the wider public. It was divided into two parts organized around two focal points linked to two groups of important memory work actors: local activists and Jewish artists. Both groups have proven to be crucial as leaders of change in local memory cultures throughout the ReActMem project, which is confirmed by the project consortium experience. Grass-root work and the use of arts in commemorative activities have been key factors in developing new approaches to remembrance in the project and beyond. Both memory activists and artists - that can be understood as key multiplayers - are currently under growing pressure because of the rise of antisemitism and shifting political and social climate. Therefore, the series was focused on how representatives of both groups, their work can be supported, how their resilience can be strengthened, and how key stakeholders in the field can contribute to amplifying their impact.

Both parts of the conference took place at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews - an institution that was a partner of the event. The first part was organized by Fundacja Zapomniane in cooperation with the POLIN Museum, the Jewish Historical Institute Association in Poland, and Forum for Dialogue and focused on memory activism in Poland and beyond. The conference created a rare opportunity for direct exchange between people working locally in towns and villages and representatives of institutions and organizations supporting remembrance, education, and civic engagement. The discussions addressed the changing social and political realities in which memory activists operate, the risks and challenges connected with local commemorative work, and the need for long term institutional frameworks that could offer practical, legal, and symbolic support. A central element of the meeting was the presentation of research results of a study on memory activism in Poland carried out by the Engaged Memory Consortium, contextualized by other data shared by event partners: results of regular surveys conducted among Forum for Dialogue network members as well as a study on contemporary antisemitism carried out by the POLIN Museum. This was combined with sharing of concrete experiences from the field, including testimonies of both successful commemorative initiatives as well as situations of conflict, hostility, and violence surrounding acts of remembrance. The meeting also facilitated the establishment of new connections and collaborations related to the commemoration of neglected burial sites, the protection of endangered memory places, and work with historical sources documenting Jewish life and destruction in local contexts.

The second part of the Conference on Memory Activism was organized within the framework of the regular gatherings of the Kultur-Lige - Network of Jewish Artists in Poland. This part expanded the perspective to an international and interdisciplinary level, and brought together artists, curators, cultural organizers, and educators working with Jewish culture, language, and memory in contemporary artistic and educational practices. Through artistic presentations, performative and participatory formats, guided exhibition visits, lectures, and moderated discussions, the event explored the role of art and culture as forms of memory activism and critical reflection. Particular attention was given to the ways Jewish perspectives and representations function in contemporary culture, memory and public discourse and what agency Jewish artists have in the face of dominant narratives represented in mainstream culture and memory work.

Apart from carefully curated sessions, the event consisted of a guided tour at the exhibition "The Power of Words. On Jewish Languages" at the POLIN Museum, curated by Tamara Sztyma and featuring works by three contemporary Jewish artists present at the event: Monika Krajewska, Maria Ka and Helena Czernek. The exhibition visit was complemented by a public presentation and discussion on representations of Jews in popular culture and media, which opened a broader conversation about shifting cultural codes, stereotypes, and responsibilities of cultural producers. Participatory discussion formats, including World Café style sessions and collective reflection, allowed participants to share perspectives across national, professional, and generational boundaries. Ritual and community based moments, such as Shabbat dinner and Havdalah, were integrated into the program as meaningful elements of shared reflection and relationship building. The series concluded with a concert by Maria Ka, held within the exhibition space, which symbolically linked artistic expression with the themes of language, memory, and cultural continuity.

Throughout the entire series, the conference addressed a broad and diverse target group, including grassroots memory activists, heritage and museum professionals, academics and scholars, educators, artists, representatives of non governmental and civic society organizations, community leaders, and unaffiliated activists. By intentionally bringing together people operating in different fields and institutional positions, the Conference on Memory Activism created a space for dialogue between research, artistic practice, and civic engagement. The event strengthened existing networks, initiated new forms of cooperation, and highlighted the urgent need for sustained, coordinated support structures for memory activism in Poland and across Europe.

Both parts of the conference were organized on the invite-only basis to provide safe space for those taking part in them and pictures from the events were not shared on social media, following the principle of care and the creation of a third space - an intimate, in-between environment where participants could meet outside institutional and public pressures and engage on their own terms.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2024	Initial version (new MFF).
2.0	19.02.2025	Change the delivery date from May 31, 2025 to November 30, 2025
3.0	07.11.2025	Change the delivery day for 31 December 2025, and a change in the format from a single-day event to a series of events.