

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Project name and acronym:	Rescue Memory - Activism, Arts and Public Remembrance – ReActMem
Participant:	[Fundacja Zapomniane] (FZ)
PIC number:	PIC 890506464

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	WP 34
Event name:	Seminar on Memory Cultures in Difficult Sites
Type:	seminar
In situ/online:	in-situ
Location:	Poland, Warsaw, Sobibór
Date(s):	16-17.10.2025, 22.10.2025
Website(s) (if any):	https://reactmem.difficultheritage.eu/blog/event/seminarium-poswiecone-kulturom-pamieci-w-miejscach-trudnego-dziedzictwa/ https://reactmem.difficultheritage.eu/en/blog/event/seminar-on-memory-cultures-in-difficult-sites/
Participants	
Female:	42
Male:	16
Non-binary:	0
From country 1 [Poland]:	53
From country 2 [Germany]:	4
From country 3 [Hungary]:	1
Total number of participants:	58
From total number of countries:	3
Description	
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>	
Seminar on Memory Cultures in Difficult Sites was planned and implemented as a two-part cycle of seminars combining academic reflection with field-based work at a site of memory.	
The first part of the event took place in Warsaw on 16–17 October 2025 and was organized in collaboration with a voluntary bottom-up group of Holocaust Researchers for Early and Mid-Career, gathering academics,	

memory activists, heritage professionals and representatives of NGOs. The group has been co-coordinated by the Zapomniane Foundation from its establishment. The meeting had the form of an academic, but practice-informed seminar and focused on contemporary memory cultures in difficult sites and their references to current social and political crises. The programme included presentations of concrete difficult sites, their remembrance strategies, contemporary research as well as social and institutional contexts. Each presentation was followed by a discussion and in the closing session - a summary debate was carried out.

Particular importance was given to a session devoted to Sobibór, led by the team of the Zapomniane Foundation: Aleksandra Janus, Agnieszka Nieradko-Pająk, and Aleksander Schwarz. During the session, the presenters introduced the research and commemoration project addressing the dispersal of victims' human remains within the former extermination camp, the challenges related to their protection and commemoration, as well as narrative issues present in existing forms of remembrance and planned future educational activities. Researchers participating in the discussion shared their observations and reflections on these challenges. The discussion accompanying this session became a starting point for further conversations continued later directly in the field during the second event from the series.

The second event took place on 22 October 2025 in Sobibór, on the grounds of the Sobibór Museum and Memorial Site and in its immediate surroundings. The meeting was organised by the Zapomniane Foundation and the Formy Wspólne Foundation, in cooperation with the Sobibór Museum and Memorial Site and the Sobibór Forestry Inspectorate. An important aspect of the seminar was the presence of local partners and representatives of local institutions and organisations, including the director and staff of the Sobibór Museum, representatives of the local Forestry Inspectorate, the county authorities and the municipal office, a local history teacher, representatives of the Regional Museum in Włodawa, as well as invited academic experts.

The seminar had an expert and field-based character, and its main objective was to initiate a discussion on a concrete case-study that the participants visited in the field as part of the seminar's programme. The case in question were two locations situated on the periphery of the former extermination camp, commonly referred to as the so-called "płuczki." The meeting began with a guided visit to the Sobibór Museum and Memorial Site, which allowed participants to re-anchor the discussion within a historical and museological context. The group then visited locations where human remains are deposited outside the museum grounds, enabling direct engagement with the scale and character of these sites and reflection on their status, visibility, and presence within the surrounding landscape.

In the subsequent part of the meeting, discussion was aimed at developing preliminary concepts for the future marking and commemoration of these locations, as well as outlining the current state of research and the historical context related to the functioning of the Sobibór extermination camp as well as the local and global memory cultures to which the site belongs. The central element of the meeting was a multi-hour discussion session involving invited guests, researchers, practitioners, and representatives of partner institutions. The discussions addressed, among other topics, the relationship between academic research and commemorative practice, ethical aspects of working with sites containing human remains, as well as possible forms of narrative, marking, and communication addressed to audiences with differing levels of knowledge and sensitivity. An important theme was also the role of the natural environment and land-managing institutions in processes of heritage protection and interpretation.

The seminar in Sobibór constituted a direct continuation and deepening of the reflections initiated during the Warsaw part of the event. Anchoring academic discussions in concrete sites enabled participants to confront theory with practice and facilitated the formulation of recommendations for how to develop and nurture contemporary memory cultures in these sites. The event contributed to strengthening cooperation between academic communities, non-governmental organisations, and memory institutions, and reaffirmed the importance of dialogue and shared reflection in processes of commemorating difficult and ambiguous sites connected with the history of the Holocaust.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2024	Initial version (new MFF).
2.0	19.02.2025	Changed the delivery date from January 2025 to December 2025.
3.0	1.07.2025	Changed the event name (from Seminar on Memory Cultures to Seminar on Memory Cultures in Difficult Sites), changed the location (from Wurzburg to Sobibór, Warsaw), changed the number of participants (from 26–50 to 51–75), changed the duration (from 1 to

		series), changed the description and language (from a seminar in Würzburg in German to a seminar in Sobibór and Warsaw in Polish and English), and changed the lead of WP (from JMU to FZ).
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