



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Venice Office
Regional Bureau for Science
and Culture in Europe



Ministry of Civil Affairs
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Final report of the meeting

Holocaust education and intercultural understanding in South-East Europe: renewing the “Ex-Yugoslav” Pavilion in Auschwitz- Birkenau

Second meeting of the international steering group

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. 5 December 2012

A meeting organized within the initiative



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Introduction

This report presents the highlights of the discussions held during the meeting on “Holocaust education and intercultural understanding in South-East Europe: renewing the “Ex-Yugoslav” Pavilion in Auschwitz-Birkenau”, organized in Sarajevo on 5 December 2012 by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the support of the UNESCO Venice Office.

Participating experts were representing Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. International institutions participating were UNESCO, Mémorial de la Shoah (France), Topography of Terror (Germany). Were also invited high representatives from the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau (Poland), as well as from Austria (National Fund for Victims of National Socialism).

This meeting was organized to continue discussions on the renovation and transformation of the (former Yugoslav) block nr. 17, situated within the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau, Poland, and to the setting up of a joint exhibit (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) on the Holocaust.

The meeting was opened by Biljana Camur, Assistant Minister for Culture and Science (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Anthony Krause, Head of Culture Unit of the UNESCO Venice Office.

Common approaches

The meeting focused on 2 main agenda items: the renovation of Block 17, and the concept of the joint exhibit space.

a) The Renovation of the Pavilion

The meeting served to present and give an update on the necessary measures for the renovation of the building and the relevant follow-up actions, further to the completion of the static report, geotechnical report and report on material investigations, as well as of the concept for the securing of the structure and rehabilitation of Block 17, commissioned by the National



Fund for the Victims of National Socialism (Austria), completed in September 2012 and shared with the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau.

As stated in official conclusions of the meeting, successor States took note with appreciation that the National Fund for the Victims of National Socialism (Austria) was to take the financial

measures necessary for the works to be carried out under the provisions of the pertinent Austrian law (amendment to the National Fund Law, Federal Law Gazette I No. 128/2011).

The successor States also acknowledged that they would need to jointly cover costs for the renovation of the exhibition area on the first floor of Block 17, comprising in particular measures for electricity, heating, ventilation and safety systems, to be planned in close coordination with the National Fund for the Victims of National Socialism (Austria). A cost estimate will be prepared and shared at a later stage.

b) Concept design of the joint exhibit space

The meeting served to continue discussions on the definition of common approaches for the concept, themes, supporting documentation and design of the joint exhibit. During the discussions, the following issues were discussed.

Geographical scope

The focus of the exhibit should be the area of the former Yugoslav States before the occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941 by Germany, Italy and Bulgaria. Two or three maps would be necessary to explain the developments and evolutions during the War.

Thematic focus

- The preparation of the exhibit should bear in mind paragraph 1 of *General rules of establishing national exhibitions*: “National exhibitions shall show deportations from a particular country and their background. As for showing a particular nation at KL Auschwitz, an exhibition shall highlight well-known figures, for instance, outstanding artists and authors, politicians, who had been deported to KL Auschwitz, as well as individuals or groups active in the camp and include information about the number of deportees and victims”.
- It is confirmed that the joint exhibit should be structured around the four following themes: Time and Space; Victims; Perpetrators and Collaborators; Resistants.
- Central focus will be given to deportation mechanisms and groups of victims deported to Auschwitz from the territories of former Yugoslavia: this encompasses an analytical presentation on general background (persecution policy in former Yugoslavia, role and place of Auschwitz in persecution policies), presentations on the different groups and profiles of deportees (who is deported to Auschwitz, why and how), the numbers of deportees, a calendar of the deportations (chronological panel), a description of life and different treatments in Auschwitz (pictures, individual testimonies) as well as of the liberation and “return”. Information must also be provided on the deportation sites in the Balkan area (panel/map).
- In addition to the focus on Auschwitz, attention should be paid to the broader context of persecution policies in former Yugoslavia. For example, most Macedonian Jews were deported and killed in Treblinka. The same is valid for Montenegro.

- Exhibition should outline, as background to the deportation policy/mechanisms, how people faced occupation, collaboration, resistance, as well as help and assistance brought to those who were persecuted.

- Exhibition can bring the attention of the public to the aftermaths of the Holocaust (memorial sites, life of survivors), within the limits imposed by the Auschwitz museum's regulations.



- As a general rule, possible contentious/unsolved issues (number of victims, map borders, etc.) can be addressed within the exhibition itself in a consensual/factual way.

Design of exhibit

Decision on design and support tools of the exhibition should come only after a common narrative has been decided. Furthermore, the technological/multimedia support should be light, because of the very rapid evolving technologies, and to lower the maintenance costs involved.

Working Methods

The participants of the meeting agree that two working groups with delegates from every country should be established, with focus on the collection of information and elaboration of a shared database; the inventories of available documents in relevant archives.

It is agreed that the urgency is the following:

- **Historical Documentation:** working groups identify, collect and share all inventories from important archival material in all participating States. It will be then necessary to decide in a common working process which archives have to be researched in depth and which documents and photos are suitable to be presented for the exhibition.

- **Testimonies from Survivors:** working groups collect and shares all reports, testimonies and A/V-materials from victims of the Nazi-regime and its allies and other biographical material

which can be used to illustrate the history. Biographical material should focus in priority on individuals deported to Auschwitz.

This has 2 practical implications:

Expert group should start the **collection of data on former Auschwitz inmates still alive** in each county and prepare grounds for filming testimonies/interviews with them; register and scan



relevant 3-D objects, documents and other materials (both in public institutions and privately owned) with a view of the creation of a database of victims deported to Auschwitz which would be available for consultation within the future renovated exhibit space.

Expert groups should **map the existing documentation** (written, oral, photographic, and audiovisual) related to Jewish and other victims in the country. It is underlined that expert groups should rapidly establish direct contacts with **Auschwitz Archives** in this regard to assess and consult existing and available documentation.

It is agreed that the working group experts will discuss, meet and work also between the meetings of the international steering group.

Deadline Opening exhibit

Ideally, it is suggested to foresee the opening of the exhibit space in **2015**, to coincide with the 70th Liberation anniversary commemorations of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The Way forward

- Next meeting: **Skopje, March 2013** (exact dates to be confirmed)
- Working documents to be prepared and presented by working groups for the next meeting:
 - ✓ A **timeline/chronology** with the most important dates concerning the WW II in each country
 - ✓ A first consolidated data reference document on **deportees to Auschwitz**: list and numbers, and all possible information (when, why, how, what happened to them in Auschwitz)
 - ✓ A mapping of **existing (and missing) documentation, archives and materials that could be used for the exhibit**
 - ✓ A short statement/analysis on the role/status/importance of the deportations to Auschwitz in each country



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