

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Project name and acronym:	[Negotiating Difficult Pasts] — [NeDiPa]
Participant:	[Stowarzyszenie FestivALT] (FestivALT)
PIC number:	895375767

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	[WP17]
Event name:	RAISING AWARENESS THROUGH ARTS: CHEVRA TEHILIM SITE
Type:	raising awareness through arts
In situ/online:	in situ
Location:	Krakow, Poland
Date(s):	8.11.2023, 16.03.2024
Website(s) (if any):	https://nedipa.eu/en/blog/event/raising-awareness-through-arts-chevra-tehilim/ https://nedipa.eu/en/blog/event/meiselsa-festival-1st-edition/
Participants	
Female:	99
Male:	81
Non-binary:	1
From country 1 [Romania]:	1
From country 2 [Belgium]:	5
From country 3 [Germany]:	4
From country 4 [Netherlands]:	2
From country 5 [Bulgaria]:	1
From country 6 [Slovenia]:	1
From country 7 [Slovakia]:	3
From country 8 [Poland]	164
Total number of participants:	181
From total number of countries:	8

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

A subject of this work package concerned the destiny of the esteemed former Beit Midrash Hevra Tehilim at 18 Meiselsa Street, Krakow. Steeped in history and cultural significance, the Beit Midrash stands as a testament to the vibrant Jewish heritage of the region.

Constructed in 1896 under the visionary design of renowned architect Nachman Kapald, the Beit Midrash was a beacon of spiritual solace and communal gathering. Its grandeur, with halls capable of accommodating hundreds, mirrored the fervent devotion of its patrons. However, the ravages of war left scars on this architectural gem, its sanctity shattered by destruction.

Restored to the Jewish Religious Community in Krakow in 2001, the Beit Midrash underwent a series of transformations, from housing the Krakowiacy ensemble to serving as a gastronomic and entertainment venue. Despite its designation as a historic monument, commercial pursuits overshadowed its sacred past, triggering concerns of cultural appropriation and trivialization.

Since 2015, concerted efforts have been underway to revive awareness of the Beit Midrash's historical, cultural, and religious significance. From solemn psalm readings to public discussions, the community has rallied to reclaim the narrative of this venerable space. Artistic interventions, such as the poignant reconstruction of a destroyed wall fragment, have ignited conversations and stirred emotions, prompting reflection on the building's profound legacy.

This two part effort was designed to gather ideas and group knowledge connected with raising awareness internationally and brainstorming advocacy actions that could be undertaken to protect the heritage site and raising awareness locally about the heritage site.

8.11.2023

In November 2023 we held an international consultative meeting to chart the course for the Beit Midrash's future. With stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, both local and international, we sought to honor the heritage of Chevra Tehilim, while embracing its potential as a catalyst for cultural dialogue and renewal. Together, we envisioned various paths that respect the sanctity of the past while embracing the dynamism of the present. We imagined remembrance, reconciliation, and revitalization going hand-in-hand, ensuring that the spirit of the Beit Midrash Hevra Tehilim endures for generations to come.

16.3.2024

An idea that emerged from the conversation was to hold a street festival on Meiselsa street, to draw attention to the incredible heritage of that street - the only two remaining Beit Midrashim in Krakow, while not stirring the controversy too much - which we understood people of Krakow are not ready for.

Instead the aim of the Meisels Festival was to popularize knowledge about Dov Ber Meisels (1798-1870) – the chief rabbi of Krakow and later Warsaw, an entrepreneur, politician, advocate for granting full citizenship rights to Jews, and a patriot fervently supporting Polish national liberation aspirations – as well as the integration of the local community.

We wanted to bring closer to the residents of Krakow, as well as to tourists visiting the city, an unknown, honorable chapter of Polish-Jewish coexistence through the prism of a different historical period than the dominant one in the mnemonic panorama of Krakow (and the entire country) – the Holocaust. Meanwhile also shining a spotlight on the unknown gem of Polish-Jewish heritage - namely the Chevra Tehilim Building.

The event was received very well with multiple people interested in the future editions, which we hope we will be able to bring to fruition.

The event will have an advocacy follow up, aiming to increase the awareness of Rabbi Meisels and his contribution to Polish history on the very street.


The presenters of the events included:


 Lena Rubinfeld is an experienced project manager, social entrepreneur, and cultural activist. Initiator and


board member of various Jewish startups, Lena is particularly passionate about social change and the intersection of learning and the arts. She also deals with the issues of Jewish memory, Polish-Jewish dialogue, informal Jewish education and community engagement.


In 2017 she co-founded and became artistic director of FestivALT, a multidisciplinary cultural organisation, utilizing critically-engaged contemporary art, performance and activism as tools for examining the complexities of Jewish Poland today.

Lena currently works as Limmud Europe Programming Coordinator. In 2022 she completed her second MS degree – in Organizational Leadership and Innovation at HUC's Zelikow School of Jewish Nonprofit Management. She is a member of the 7th Cohort of Schusterman Fellows.

 Paweł Szapiro - Holocaust historian, educator, author, and journalist. A specialist in Polish-Jewish relations and underground press in Poland. Author of numerous publications, including the groundbreaking "Jewish-German War," which describes the Polish society's attitude towards Jews and the uprising in the ghetto, based on an analysis of Polish underground work. Reviews of his books have appeared, among others, in the literary supplement to "Times" magazine. Curator, art collector, and expert in art history. Initiator of the "Unpainted Jew" project and president of the Foundation. Longtime curator of the "Unpainted Jew" exhibition, which he has realized in almost 70 editions in Poland and around the world. Specialist in 19th-century illustrated press.


 Pamela Grajny Brzezińska - A certified art conservator, she is a graduate of the Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art at the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. Her master's thesis, supervised by Prof. Edward Kosakowski, received distinction in the Competition of the General Conservator of Monuments of the Republic of Poland and the Association of Monument Conservators for the best academic, scientific, and popularizing works concerning the protection of monuments and museology. She expanded her professional qualifications through participation in conservation internships, such as the museum-conservation internship at the National Museum in Gdańsk. With knowledge of historical, traditional techniques, and technologies for creating works of art, she is capable of creating technological replicas. In her professional career, she has undertaken numerous documentary, research, and conservation projects independently and as part of experienced conservation teams, working on many valuable historical objects in Poland, including the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist in Lublin, the Cathedral of St. Stanislaus and St. Wenceslaus in Świdnica, the Lubomirski and Potocki Castle in Łańcut, the Chewra Thilim Prayer House in Krakow, the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Lviv, and the Basilica of St. Margaret in Nowy Sącz.

 Karolina Jakoweńko - Co-founder of the "Cukerman's Gate Foundation," established in 2008. As a result of the foundation's efforts, the historic polychromes located in the former Jewish prayer house in Będzin were registered in the Silesian Voivodeship's heritage register and underwent renovation. From 2008 to 2010, the foundation created a tourist-educational trail of pre-war Jewish enterprises called the "Manufaktura Wholesale" in Będzin, Sosnowiec, and Dąbrowa Górnicza. Since 2009, she has been implementing the "Witnesses of History: Będzin" program, conducting interviews with elderly residents of the city who remember pre-war Jewish Będzin. She is a co-author of audio guides on Jewish heritage in 11 cities in the Silesian Voivodeship, titled "Tales of the Absent." Currently, she is also involved in the activities of the Memory of Górnśląskie Jews House (a branch of the Museum in Gliwice), where she serves as the head. She is the recipient of the Maria and Łukasz Hirsowicz Award (2014), the "Preserving Memory" award – given to Poles engaged in preserving Jewish heritage in Poland and Polish-Jewish dialogue (2013), and the Humanitas Award of the Zagłębie region (2014).

 Piotr Jakoweńko - Piotr Jakoweńko is a co-founder of the Cukerman's Gate Foundation, dedicated to preserving the memory of the Jewish community in Będzin. He is a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice, where he studied Graphic Design. Since 2006, he has been working as an independent graphic designer specializing in publishing graphics and exhibition projects. Since 2015, he has been a member of the architectural collective SENNA, where he is responsible for visual identity graphics and museum exhibitions, including:

- Permanent exhibition "History of Jews in Upper Silesia" for the Museum in Gliwice (2016-2018);
- Temporary exhibition "Strangers at Home: Around March '68" for the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews (2018);
- Permanent exhibition "Beit Almim" in the pavilion at the Jewish cemetery in Bródno for the Jewish Community in Warsaw (2018);
- Outdoor installation "Without a Shadow: Hiding Places of the Warsaw Ghetto" for the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews (2022);
- Typography for the "Oneg Shabbat" monument project at the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw (2022);
- Permanent exhibition "Look-Remember" at the Memory House in Płońsk (2021-2023);
- Temporary exhibition by Natalia Romik "Hiding Places – Architecture of Survival" (Warsaw-Szczecin-Frankfurt,

2022-2024).

 Michael Rubinfeld - Michael Rubinfeld is an artist and theater producer from Winnipeg, currently residing in Poland. He has been awarded multiple times as an actor and playwright and has worked on film sets and theater stages in Canada, the USA, and Europe. He appeared in the North American premiere of "Our Class" by Tadeusz Słobdzianek in Toronto and Philadelphia. Michael is currently the artistic director of the theater group Selfconscious Productions. Together with Sara Garton Stanley, he has realized four productions for Selfconscious, including "We Keep Coming Back," which explores the complexities of contemporary Polish-Jewish narratives. It premiered in 2016 at the Krakow Jewish Culture Festival and Theater Kana in Szczecin. It was shown again in 2017 during FestivALT and has since traveled throughout Poland, Europe, and Canada.

 Mojše Band is a group primarily representing Jewish musical tradition from Central and Eastern Europe. They have made a name for themselves on the European stage due to their innovative approach to the Jewish heritage from the regions of the former Hungary. The band has participated in many prestigious events and music projects worldwide, including the Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow, the Mazal Tov! Jewish Culture Festival in Kosice, the KlezMORE Festival in Vienna, the Tachana HaRishona Festival in Jerusalem, the Šamajim Jewish Culture Festival in Třebíč, the SIMCHA Jewish Culture Festival in Wrocław, the Pohoda Festival in Trenčín, the Sziget Festival in Budapest, the Czech Music Crossroads festival, and many more. They have also toured in Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and Israel. Mojše Band were finalists of the World Jewish Music Competition in Amsterdam in 2017 and recipients of the prestigious Youtube Award of this competition for the years 2018-2019. The band regularly explores the Jewish musical heritage from the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, publishing albums with titles inspired by the names of specific regions (such as "Zipserim – Oberzips" in 2018, and "Sárosi – Šarišský" in 2020) as part of this activity.

The deliverable was achieved as planned.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).
2.0	16.03.2024	The change the date of the event WP 17, D 17. 1 Raising awareness through art (Kraków) until the end of March 2024 and to change the event from one to two days.