

ANNUAL REPORT 2005



Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland

FOUNDATION FOR
THE PRESERVATION
OF JEWISH HERITAGE
IN POLAND



FUNDACJA
OCHRONY
DZIEDZICTWA
ŻYDOWSKIEGO

www.fodz.pl



Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland

The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland was established in 2002 by the World Jewish Restitution Organization and the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland.

The Foundation operates in those areas of Poland which are located far from existing Jewish communities and lack the necessary manpower and resources to care for local Jewish heritage monuments. The Foundation operates in the following former voivodeships: białostockie, bydgoskie, chełmskie, ciechanowskie, elbląskie, gorzowskie, jeleniogórskie, koszalińskie, krośnieńskie, leszczyńskie, lubelskie, łomżyńskie, olsztyńskie, opolskie, ostrołęckie, płockie, przemyskie, radomskie, rzeszowskie, skierniewickie, słupskie, suwalskie, tarnobrzeskie, toruńskie, wałbrzyskie, zamojskie and zielonogórskie. A complete list of the locations under the Foundation's care is available at our website: www.FODZ.PL.

Our activities are developed in cooperation with the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland. When religious matters are involved, we benefit from advisory of the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Rabbi Michael Schudrich.

Aims:

- ▶ Protecting Jewish heritage properties bearing special religious or historical significance;
- ▶ Reclaiming the properties which before WWII were the property of Jewish Religious Communities and other Jewish legal entities (based on the Law on the Relationship between the State and the Union of Jewish Religious Communities of 1997), and providing legal services for the regulatory procedure;
- ▶ Managing returned properties.

LEGAL ASPECTS OF RESTITUTION

The relationship between the Republic of Poland and Jewish community proceeds according to the Law on the Relationship between the State and the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland, approved on February 27, 1997.

The Law aims to harmonize bilateral relations in the evolving Polish political landscape. One of its elements is clarifying property ownership issues. The law applies to the properties of religious purpose (synagogues, houses of prayer, funeral houses, mikvaot) and to the properties owned by Jewish communities to provide charitable and educational activity (schools, hospitals, orphanages, social care houses, kehila's offices).



- ▶ Article 31.1 of the referred law describes the possible methods of fulfilling the claims submitted in regulation procedure relating to the real estates located within the territories of the pre-war Poland that, on September 1, 1939, were owned by the Jewish communities or other Jewish entities.
- ▶ The regulation may have the form of:
 1. transferring the ownership of the property/real estate or some part of it;
 2. awarding an equivalent property, when transferring the ownership of the original property faces serious impediments;
 3. awarding the compensation calculated on the basis of the law on the real estate expropriation, in case of impossibility of using the first or second method described above.
- ▶ On the basis of article 31.2 of the referred law, the regulation procedure concerning the cemeteries and other properties located at the territories of the so-called Western and Northern Lands (territories that were incorporated to Poland after WWII, formerly German) may consist only of transferring the real estate or some part of it. When such a transfer is impossible, regulation procedure is discontinued.
- ▶ It should be emphasized that similar legal regulations concerning real estates ownership are described in specific laws referring to the internal relations between the State and other religious entities and churches. The Jewish Communities are in a group of 15 religious associations entitled to reclaim properties.

Activities in 2005

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS, REGENERATION

We believe Jewish heritage to be an integral part of the cultural heritage of Poland. Jewish monuments are a significant testament to the centuries of Polish-Jewish history. We aim to save them for future generations.

We want properties owned by the pre-war Jewish communities to become a factor of local development, acquiring new functions which respond to the present needs of the local communities. Since sustainable and authentic regeneration proceeds from strong local partnerships with local authorities and NGOs, it is the focal point in our strategy. We believe local partnerships will benefit fully from the multicultural heritage of Poland. Our approach meets the priorities of the European Union's regional policy.

► **The Zamość Synagogue Regeneration.** We are restoring the Zamość synagogue – a premier example of Renaissance architecture north of the Alps and one of the most splendid monuments of the Jewish heritage in Poland. In 1992 the Zamość synagogue, together with the historical urban complex of the city, was declared by the UNESCO to be a World Heritage Site. Together with local authorities, NGOs and the Zamość Jews from all over the world we aim to establish in the synagogue a centre for local NGOs devoted to culture and education. We plan to establish a multimedia Museum of Jews from Zamość and the Area within the synagogue, in cooperation with the Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Jewish Historical Institute.

► **The Rimanov Synagogue Renovation.** We have rebuilt the Rimanov Synagogue, together with the Rimanov Chassids. For the first time since WWII a synagogue in Poland was rebuilt for its religious purpose. The synagogue will serve pilgrims visiting the ohel of tzaddik Menachem Mendel. In May 2005 they had an opportunity to come for the first Yortzeit after the synagogue's restoration. This project is an example of a monument of Jewish material heritage that has regained its original religious function.

► **The Ziębice Synagogue Regeneration.** In cooperation with the “Ducatus” Friends of Ziębice Society we develop activities aimed not only at local cemetery upkeep but beyond – at engaging local community in multicultural heritage appreciation. In 2005 a summer camp for Polish, American and Israeli youth took place, organized by the Polish Union of Jewish Students. Thanks to the “Ducatus” Association and local authorities' engagement it was an enriching and effective event for participants as well as for the local community. We hope to further develop the local partnership, with a view toward enabling the Ziębice synagogue regeneration. At the end of 2005 the Foundation received a grant awarded by the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship Authorities (Dolnośląski Urząd Marszałkowski) for the most urgent renovation works at the 19th century synagogue in Ziębice. Restoration works will start in the spring 2006. We look forward to seeing the synagogue again serving for a public purpose.

► The “Borussia” Cultural Community has been taking care of the **“Bet Tahara” House in Olsztyn**, designed by Eric Mendelsohn, a world famous architect. “Borussia” organizes a variety of artistic and cultural events in order to share

JANUARY

► **Olsztyn** (January 12, 2005). “Erich Mendelsohn and the Jewish community of Olsztyn” seminar concerning the Olsztyn Prefuneral House and Jewish cemetery revitalization.

► **Warsaw** (January 25, 2005). In cooperation with the Jagiellonian University and the Literature Department of the Polish Academy of Science the Foundation has organized a seminar presenting the book “Why should we teach about the Holocaust”.

FEBRUARY

► **Warsaw** (Feb. 25-March 13, 2005). We are happy to announce that the Foundation’s logo by Mr. Dariusz Jażdżyk was presented among the best projects of the year 2004 at the Graphics Exhibition at the Institute of Design in Warsaw.

► **Zamość** (February 15, 2005). CEO of the Foundation together with the Chief Rabbi of Poland M. Schudrich met with the President of Zamość to discuss the Jewish cemeteries and future coopera-



tion in the field of the Zamość synagogue revitalization.

► **Warsaw** (February 18, 2005). The representatives of the Foundation met with the Ministry of Culture. The idea of the Zamość synagogue revitalization met his interest and appreciation.

MARCH

► **Lublin** (March 1, 2005). 11th Sijum HaShas was facilitated by the Foundation, Warsaw Jewish Community and other partners. More than 2000 Jews from all over the world took part in this event.

► **Warsaw** (March 8, 2005). Representatives of the Foundation led flowers by a plaque commemorating events of the March 1968.

► **Lublin** (March 2005). The Foundation took part in the “Letters to the Ghetto” educational project, by the Lublin Centre “Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN”

► **Strzegom** (March 2005). The Foundation cleaned up the Strzegom cemetery.



APRIL

► **Józefów Biłgorajski** (April 12, 2005). The Foundation signed an agreement with the local authorities, who declared to clean up the cemetery.

► **Warsaw** (April 19, 2005). On the 62nd Anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, hundreds of people – Poles and Jews – gathered together to commemorate those who in 1943 started a struggle for their human dignity.

► **Lesko** (April 20, 2005). The Foundation signed an agreement with the local authorities, who declared to clean up the cemetery.

► **Frampol** (April 2005). The Foundation started to raise funds for commemorating the mass grave of Holocaust victims in Frampol. Project is developed in cooperation with local authorities of Frampol.

► **Wysokie Mazowieckie** (April 2005). The Foundation initiated the cooperation with the town’s Mayor and local authorities who are willing to accomplish the project of restoring the Jewish cemetery.

MAY

► **Zamość** (May 2005). Beginning with May 2005 the Zamość synagogue is open for tourists.

► **Rimanov** (May 28, 2005). This year, for the first time in over 60 years, the chassids pilgriming to the grave of Menachem Mendel could pray not only at the ohel, but also in the Rimanov synagogue, which only two months earlier had been a ruin, but was rebuilt by the Foundation.

with Olsztyn inhabitants awareness of the pre-war Jewish presence in the city. One of the most spectacular elements of this activity is the project of **visualizing the borders** of an old Jewish cemetery in Olsztyn.

► In partnership with the “Borderland” Foundation, we have been working on **the Sejny synagogue regeneration**. We hope to develop a vivid activity there, concerning cultural and artistic projects for multicultural dialogue.

CEMETERIES

Cemeteries renovation and commemoration have always been for us an issue of particular importance. In turn, we cooperate regularly with the Rabbinic Commission in the field of cemeteries' upkeep. Upkeep and care for cemeteries are great challenges, both logistically and financially, as there are 1200 Jewish cemeteries in Poland. We are happy therefore to benefit from the cooperation with many partners and allies to realize our goals.

► As a result of our **cooperation with local organizations and private allies**, we have succeeded in restoring the cemeteries in Bodzanów, Kolno, Koszalin, Kozienice, Różan, Strzegowo and Zakopane. We continue to coordinate projects in Dubienka, Frampol, Iłża, Iwaniska, Kłodzko, Mszczonów, Narol, Przasnysz, Sochaczew, Świdnica, Zielona Góra and Ziębice.

► **Volunteers' engagement** in the cemeteries restoration and upkeep is a great contribution to our activity. Many people in Poland, both Jews and non-Jews, take care of local sites; members of the Polish Union of Jewish Students and other Jewish organizations actively support this process as well. The year 2005 saw many initiatives to restore the dignity of the Jewish cemeteries across the country. Among them there were projects conducted by the participants of the “Volunteers at Service of Monuments” Program, students participating in the Foundation's “To Bring Memory Back” educational program, and by many local associations and individual enthusiasts devoted to culture and heritage issues.



► **Iwaniska (May 2005)**. In cooperation with PJRCP we have completed a design of a new fence for the cemetery.

JUNE

► **Siemiatycze (June 15, 2005)**. The ceremony of unveiling a memorial plaque commemorating the Jewish community took place in Siemiatycze.

► **Mszczonów (June 21, 2005)**. The second stage of fencing the Mszczonów Jewish cemetery has started. Representatives of the Foundation visited Mszczonów and settled the details of the location of the fence and the gate.

► **Iłża (June 2005)**. Beginning of building a new fence of the cemetery; in cooperation with PJRCP.

► **Hajnówka (June 21, 2005)**. Beginning of clean-up works at the 19th century cemetery in Hajnówka. The works, supervised by the Foundation and the Rabbinical Commission, were conducted by prisoners from the Investigation Arrest in Hajnówka.

► **Warsaw (June 2005)**. The Foundation brought to the public a letter concerning the 3rd Report on Poland prepared by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance.

► **Zielona Góra (June-October 2005)**. Thanks to the contribution of the "DUKT" 9th Scout Team of Zielona Góra, in cooperation with the Foundation, the cemetery was cleaned up the matzevot were catalogued; scouts launched a website concerning cemetery, which is available at WWW.JUDENFRIEDHOF.WEBPARK.PL.



► **Warsaw (June 2005 – June 2006)**. „To Bring Memory Back” educational program started in June. The aim of the program is to encourage young people to explore the multicultural heritage of their neighborhood, to take care of the Jewish cemeteries and to take up public activities to bring their achievements to the public.

JULY

► **Rzeszów (July 7, 2005)**. On the 63rd Anniversary of the liquidation of the Rzeszów Ghetto, at the old Jewish cemetery a ceremony of unveiling a memorial obelisque took place.

► **Zamość (July 8-10, 2005)**. The Foundation participated in promoting the 3rd “Zamojskie Spotkania Kultur” – “Zamość Meetings of Cultures” festival, where several lectures, workshops, exhibitions and concerts related to the multicultural history of Zamość took place.

► **Koszalin (July 14, 2005)**. The Jewish cemetery in Koszalin was officially commemorated.

► **Kłodzko (July 18-25, 2005)**. The first stage of restoration works conducted on the initiative of the Foundation at the Kłodzko cemetery was completed. A group of 25 volunteers from the “Antyschematy” Project cleaned up the area of the cemetery.

AUGUST

► **Ziębice (August 5, 2005)**. On the initiative of the Foundation, an international camp for Jewish students began. It was co-organized by the Polish Union of Jewish Students, the World Union of Jewish Students and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

► **Opole (August 8, 2005)**. A representative of the Foundation attended a meeting “Jewish traces in Opole and Wrocław” which finalized a Polish-German-Israeli project aimed at encouraging young people from Poland, Germany and Israel to discover the history of the Silesian Jews. Youths participating in the project cleaned up the Jewish cemetery in Opole.

► **Dukla (August 2005)**. The cemetery was cleaned up by the Polish Union of Jewish Students, on the initiative of the Foundation.

► **Lesko (August 2005)**. On the initiative of the Foundation, a group of students participating in the “Antyschematy” Project, cleaned up the Jewish cemetery in Lesko.

EDUCATION

Our activity in the field of the Jewish heritage sustainable protection cannot be limited to regeneration and commemoration projects – educational activity is an integral part of the Foundation’s mission.

► **In 2005 we started the “To Bring Memory Back” educational program.** It encourages young people to discover the multicultural history of their region and to bring their discoveries and knowledge to the larger public. Voluntary upkeep of the local cemeteries is an integral part of the project. We have been providing assistance to the students’ projects, preparing educational materials for students and teachers concerning Jewish culture and tradition, as well as educational project methodology. We published educational guide on the program for pupils of middle and secondary schools. Additional materials are available at our website.

“To Bring Memory Back” Program is supported by the Netherlands Embassy MATRA/KAP Program.

► **We are deeply engaged in the “Education for the Future” approach in Holocaust education.** We were therefore pleased to accept an invitation from the European Studies Faculty, Jagiellonian University, to organize a panel discussion regarding “Why should we teach about the Holocaust” publication, edited by Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs and Leszek Hońdo. The publication was sponsored by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

► **We also support valuable local educational activities in the field of multicultural and Holocaust education.** We have enabled a publication of CD with multimedia presentation concerning the Staszów Jews, prepared by students of the Staszów Secondary School. We find it not only a moving testament to young people’s engagement, but also an inspiring educational material.

► **We are pleased to take part in activities signalling the restoration of Jewish life in Poland.** In cooperation with the Warsaw Jewish Community, Mr. David Singer and the “Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN” Association from Lublin, we have organized the 11th Sijum HaShas ceremony, which closed the Daf Yomi day-by-day cycle of studying Talmud. Many honorable guests took part in the ceremony, among them rabbis from Israel, the USA and the UK; the Ambassador of Israel was the guest of honour of the ceremony. The ceremony took place at the Jeshivat Chachmej Lublin, established in 1923 by Rabbi Meir Shapiro.



SEPTEMBER

► **Szczebrzeszyn** (September 5-12, 2005). A group of Germans from the Society of Christian-Jewish Cooperation in Dresden started clean-up works at the Jewish cemetery in Szczebrzeszyn. It was a part of the Signs of Penitence Project – Service for Peace.

► **Ziębice** (September 17, 2005). Friends of Ziębice Society “Ducatus” together with students from neighbouring schools finished clean-up works at the Ziębice Jewish cemetery and synagogue.

► **Świdnica** (September 19, 2005). The Jewish cemetery in Świdnica was cleaned up. The works were organised by the Foundation and the town’s authorities. Students from one of Świdnica schools took part in the clean-up works.

► **Otwock** (September 29-30, 2005). A training for teachers from schools participating in the “To Bring Memory Back” educational program took place.

OCTOBER

► **Kłodzko** (October 2005). Volunteers participating in the “Volunteers Serve the Monuments” program completed clean-up works at the Jewish cemetery in Kłodzko.

NOVEMBER

► **Warsaw** (November 2005). Start of “The Chassidic Route” Project, supported by the EU Interreg III A Program.

► **Biłgoraj** (November 3, 2005). At the Jewish cemetery in Biłgoraj candles were lit to commemorate the victims of the liquidation of the Biłgoraj Ghetto.

► **Poniatowa** (November 4, 2005). An official ceremony commemorating the 62nd Anniversary of the liquidation of the Poniatowa Work Camp took place. The Foundation supported the ceremony organization.

► **Staszów** (November 8, 2005). At the High School in Staszów a ceremony of commemorating the 63rd Anniversary of the annihilation of the Staszów Jews took place. The Foundation supported the project by sponsoring a multimedia presentation about the Jews of Staszów, prepared by the students.

► **Warsaw** (November 8, 2005). A representative of the Foundation took part in the “ECRI Round Table Meeting”. The conference concerned four thematic spheres: (1) ECRI Report on Poland; (2) racism and xenophobia in public sphere; (3) fighting racism and discrimination on the Roma people (4) legal and organizational framework of fighting racism and racial discrimination in Poland.

► **Cracow** (November 17, 2005). Participating in the “Truths and lies in the common knowledge on the Holocaust” conference, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Jagiellonian University.

► **Kolno** (November 23, 2005) a ceremony of rededication of the cemetery in Kolno took place. The cemetery was fenced and cleaned up under the Foundation’s supervision, in cooperation with Rabbi Shlomo Besser and the International Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Memorial Sites.

► **Warsaw** (November 24, 2005). A representative of the Foundation participated in the “Is the law able to fight



hate?” conference organized by the “Open Poland” Association.

DECEMBER

► **Warsaw** (December 6, 2005). Representatives of the Foundation met the Chief of the Police Office Department of Minorities and Human Rights. The meeting was an occasion to talk about deepening the cooperation and organising seminars for policemen concerning Jewish minority.

► **Świdnica** (December 2005). At the beginning of December 2005 restoration of the fence of the Jewish cemetery in Świdnica has been completed. The works were co-financed by the “Krzyżowa” Foundation and by the German Foundation “Memory, Responsibility, Future”.



MEMORY

We find the commemoration of historic Jewish communities in Poland our duty and responsibility. Symbolically it means including Jewish heritage monuments in a regional development process. We are very open as well to support local initiatives of the Jewish communities commemoration and try to actively engage in projects realized by local authorities, NGOs and individuals.

ANTI-SEMITISM

We cannot ignore any acts of anti-Semitism; consequently, we inform appropriate authorities about all the recognized anti-Semitic incidents (leaflets dissemination, public speeches, graffiti) or acts of vandalism directed against the Jewish heritage monuments. The list of incidents submitted is available at our website.

► **In Rzeszów** we participated in the unveiling of a memorial obelisque commemorating the 63rd Anniversary of the liquidation of the Rzeszów Ghetto. The ceremony took place at the old Jewish cemetery (today the Square of the Ghetto Victims). Project was realized by two local leaders, active in the field of culture in Rzeszów.

► **In Koszalin** we took part in the ceremony of commemoration of the Jewish cemetery. The cemetery was restored thanks to the contribution and personal engagement of the City Mayor, Catholic priest and local leaders.

► **In Siemiatycze** the ceremony of Jewish Community commemoration was organized by local authorities together with the Foundation. It is worth mentioning that, along with authorities and Jewish organizations' representatives, many young people took part in the ceremony.

► **We have submitted a report on anti-Semitism**, with reference to the ECRI report on Poland (our report is also to be found at our website). The European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance was established by the Council of Europe with a particular aim to fight racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism within Europe. One of ECRI's main activities is to complete reports on particular countries, together with an analysis of the current situation and recommendations for the future. In 2005 ECRI published the third report concerning Poland.

Plans for 2006

“THE CHASSIDIC ROUTE”

The aim of the project is to create in the Carpathian Euroregion an international heritage-focused tourist route, called „The Chassidic Route”, that will join the monuments of Jewish culture and religion in Poland and Ukraine.

At the first stage the route will cover 10 localities in Poland and 5 in Ukraine; afterwards it will spread to other localities and countries (Slovakia, Hungary, Romania). The main point of the tourist route is going to be the city of Zamość. In its renaissance synagogue, which is a part of an urban complex declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, there will be a professionally equipped center of tourist and cultural information focused on “The Chasidic Route”. We realize „The Chassidic Route” Project in partnership with the Carpathian Foundation and Ukrainian NGOs.

„The Chassidic Route” project is supported by the European Union Interreg III A Program for infrastructural projects preparation.

“JEWS IN POLAND” WEB PORTAL

Project aims to create a web portal presenting history of Jews in Poland. The portal content will include information on development of Jewish communities in particular towns and regions, on the Holocaust and on the Jewish material heritage monuments.

The project aims to establish a multimedia web portal presenting history of the Jewish communities of Poland. There will be c. 1200 locations (villages, towns and cities) presented at the portal, which is the number of pre-war cemeteries situated within the current borders of Poland. Together with text information there will be rich visual material provided: current as well as archival photographs, together with three-dimensional photo-panoramas of the monuments of particular importance. To enable easy navigation and clear search system, there will be a virtual map of Poland at the portal.

The web portal aims to be a source of knowledge about history, culture and Holocaust of the Jews in Poland for people from all over the world. This is why the notes on particular localities, completed by students and graduates of the Department of the Jewish Studies, Łódź University and other universities, will be provided in two language versions: Polish and English. In Poland, we would like the portal to be an attractive and reliable source of knowledge for teachers and pupils, as well as for all those interested in Jewish heritage issues. The project is estimated to be completed within a three-year period. The first stage of the project includes the completion of information on communities in two voivodeships of South-Eastern Poland: Podkarpackie and Lubelskie.

The project is supported by the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture.

Partners & Friends

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