As Mass Murder Began: Identifying and Remembering the Killing Sites of Summer–Fall 1941

Multi-Year Work Plan on Killing Sites

April 2017
As Mass Murder Began: Identifying and Remembering the Killing Sites of Summer–Fall 1941
Multi-Year Work Plan on Killing Sites

Based on the proceedings of the conference “As Mass Murder Began: Identifying and Remembering the Killing Sites of Summer–Fall 1941” held at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum (VGSJM) in Vilnius, Lithuania on 22–23 March 2017

The MYWP Steering Committee
Dr Piotr Trojański (interim chair)
Dr David Silberklang
Dr Thomas Lutz
Dr Juliane Wetzel (chair)
Adrian Cioflâncă
Dr Kamilė Rupeikaitė

Report written and compiled by
Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė
About the IHRA

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) unites governments and experts to strengthen, advance, and promote Holocaust education, remembrance and research worldwide and to uphold the commitments of the 2000 Stockholm Declaration.

The IHRA (formerly the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, or ITF) was initiated in 1998 by former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson. Persson decided to establish an international organization that would expand Holocaust education worldwide, and asked then President Bill Clinton and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair to join him in this effort. Persson also developed the idea of an international forum of governments interested in discussing Holocaust education, which took place in Stockholm between 27-29 January 2000. The Forum was attended by the representatives of 46 governments including; 23 Heads of State or Prime Ministers and 14 Deputy Prime Ministers or Ministers. The Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust was the outcome of the Forum’s deliberations and is the foundation of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

The IHRA currently has 31 member countries, ten observer countries and seven Permanent International Partners. Members must be committed to the Stockholm Declaration and to the implementation of national policies and programs in support of Holocaust education, remembrance, and research. The national government of each member country appoints and sends a delegation to IHRA meetings that is composed of both government representatives and national experts, providing a unique link between the two levels.

In addition to the Academic, Education, Memorials and Museums, and Communication Working Groups, specialized committees have been established to address antisemitism and Holocaust denial, the genocide of the Roma, and comparative approaches to genocide studies. The IHRA is also in the process of implementing a Multi-Year Work Plan that focuses on killing sites, access to archives, educational research, and Holocaust Memorial Days.

One of the IHRA’s key roles is to contribute to the funding of relevant projects through its grant strategy. The purpose of the Grant Programme is to foster international dialogue and the exchange of expertise, increase government involvement in program creation, and target projects with strong multilateral elements in order to create sustainable structures for Holocaust education, remembrance, and research.

The IHRA’s project on killing sites is dedicated to research, commemoration and preservation of places where mass shootings took place. The project aims to raise awareness of this centrally important aspect of the Holocaust and to facilitate bringing together the organizations and individuals dealing with the subject.
Table of Contents

Conference Background ........................................ 1
Historical Context and Regional Perspectives ............... 3
Lectures by Keynote Speakers ................................ 9
Panel Presentations by Experts ............................... 12
Workshops ......................................................... 18
Marketplace: Sharing Projects and Ideas ..................... 27
Site Visits ......................................................... 28
General Conclusions of the Conference and
Recommendations for the Future ............................. 30
Remembrance of the Holocaust often focuses on those who have suffered and perished in concentration camps, ghettos or on death marches. But the killing sites where mass shootings took place are still relatively unknown. The conference on killing sites “As Mass Murder Began: Identifying and Remembering the Killing Sites of Summer–Fall 1941” took place at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum (VGSJM) in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 22–23 March 2017. The event was a follow-up conference to a gathering in Krakow (2014), entitled “Killing Sites. Research and Remembrance”, and was dedicated to the location of killing sites, their preservation and commemoration. A major part of the conference was in the form of workshops, with the aim of providing a forum for those active in the field of mass killing sites in the Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine, and Romania to exchange views, share issues, problems, solutions, and best practices.

This was the first international conference organized by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in Lithuania, (a Member Country of the IHRA since 2003). The two-day conference was attended by around 80 invited speakers, participants and guests from 18 countries, including IHRA experts, researchers, representatives of governmental institutions and NGOs from Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Latvia, Luxembourg, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United States as well as Lithuania. One of the objectives of the Vilnius conference was to follow-up on the conference on killing sites held in Krakow in 2014. This second conference showed the continued importance the IHRA places on efforts to maintain and strengthen the network of individuals, governmental organizations and NGOs work-
ing in the field. Conference participants not only exchanged contacts and ideas for possible further cooperation, but also learned about the scope of the work carried out by IHRA experts and the IHRA’s role in encouraging and supporting this work. This is especially important for experts and NGOs from countries which are not IHRA Member Countries, such as Belarus and Ukraine.

The conference was divided into four sections, in addition to site visits:

1. Lectures by keynote speakers
2. Panel presentations by experts
3. Workshops
4. Marketplace of projects and ideas
5. Site visits
Historical Context and Regional Perspectives

With the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June, 1941, political commissars of the Red Army were executed from the very first day of the invasion. Mass killings of Jews started two days later in Lithuania and Western Ukraine. Aimed first at the Jewish intelligentsia, mass shootings were soon directed against all Jewish men between the ages of 16 and 45. From August–September 1941, mass killings of all Jews, including women and children, were carried out. The further East, the more complete the destruction was in the newly occupied territories. All in all, the Nazis and local collaborators shot some 2.2 million Jews in Europe, in Jewish cemeteries, forests or open fields located in the vicinity of their own homes.

German historian Dr Dieter Pohl states that “although many executions were undertaken at the same place at different times, for all of the relevant regions in Poland, in the Former Soviet Union and Former Yugoslavia, it seems reasonable to give an estimate of between 5,000 and 10,000 Killing Sites in these countries, and several hundred in other parts of Europe”.

Lithuania

In the period of June–December 1941, approximately 124,000 Jews were exterminated at 220 mass killings sites situated in 48 localities in Lithuania alone. By the beginning of July 1944, a total of 196,000 Jews had been killed in Lithuania. The mass killings of Jews organized by the German SD and German Security Police and conducted by Special Extermination Squads, local police, and local collaborators, continued from late June 1941 until July 1944. The persecution and extermination of Jews in Lithuania was carried out in several stages:

1. End of June to early July 1941. Jews were arrested and shot on the pretext of being Communists, Soviet officials and supporters of Soviet Communism. Mainly males were targeted. Very often during this period mass killings took place in Jewish cemeteries, forests or open fields located in the vicinity of their own homes.

“...the Nazis and local collaborators shot some 2.2 million Jews in Europe, in Jewish cemeteries, forests or open fields located in the vicinity of their own homes.”

cemeteries. In the majority of cases, those carrying out the killings were local volunteers and local police.

2. Second half of July to November 1941. Jews were arrested and murdered without the pretext of political motivation, but rather based solely on their ethnicity. Initially temporary places of detention or small ghettos (very often it was just one house or synagogue) were set up. Almost all Jews in rural locations in Lithuania were murdered during this period. The most intensive mass killings took place during August and September. Frequently mass murder operations were carried out no more than a few kilometers from place of detention or ghetto, usually at a pre-prepared location in a forest or field. The key actors in the mass murder of Lithuania’s rural Jews were Einsatzkommando Tilsit, Rollkommando Hamann, the Special Squad (Ypatingasis būrys; also called the Lithuanian equivalent of Sonderkommando) based in Vilnius, the National Labour Service Battalion (TDA) (Tautinio darbo apsaugos batalionas) based in Kaunas and later taken over by the Nazi officials and reorganized into the Lithuanian Auxiliary Police Battalions (Lithuanian equivalent of Schutzmannschaft; the TDA eventually became the 12th and the 13th Police Battalions. These two units took an active role in mass killings of the Jews in the IV, VII and IX forts in Kaunas and Kaunas district of Lithuania and in Belarus. Based on the SS-Standartenführer Karl Jäger report on 1 December 1941 members of the TDA murdered about 26,000 Jews between July and December 1941), local administration, police and volunteers.

3. December 1941 to March 1943. This was the so-called stabilization period when mass murder operations were no longer as intensive. During this period, around 45,000 Jews were kept in the ghettos in Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai and several more ghettos in the Vilnius District. They were used for forced labor.

4. April 1943 to July 1944. The timing of the liquidation of ghettos and forced labour camps for Jews in the Vilnius District was connected to the partisan resistance. Labour camps and ghettos were first liquidated in spring 1943. The Vilnius Ghetto was liquidated on 23 September 1943. The ghettos in Kaunas and Šiauliai continued to exist throughout the fall of 1943 and were turned into concentration camps under the authority of the SS. The liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto lasted from 8 to 12 July, and the liquidation of the Šiauliai Ghetto began on 15 July 1944.

The biggest mass killing site of Jews in Lithuania is in Paneriai (Ponary) forest. A former recreational area for residents of Vilnius, during the first Soviet occupation the site became a liquid fuel tank base for military aviation. Due to the Nazi occupation the base was never completed. Around twelve different pits and ditches were dug

Guided tour at the Paneriai mass killing site, led by Head of the History Research Department at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum and acting head of the Memorial Museum of Paneriai, Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė, and museum guide, Mantas Šikšnianas
for fuel tanks to be set in. The Nazis used these for mass extermination. According to the report of SS-Standartenführer Karl Jäger, at least 21,000 Jews were killed there from July until the end of 1941. By summer 1944, between 50,000 and 70,000 people had been shot at the Paneriai mass killing site. Most of the victims were Jews. Other victims included members of the Polish resistance, soldiers of the Lithuanian local squad, Soviet POWs, Roma, and locals who failed to obey the Nazis. The Special Squad, which was subordinate to the Nazi Security Police, actively participated in the mass killings in Paneriai. The majority of the members were Lithuanians, several were Russians and Poles.

**Latvia**

The murder of the Jews in Latvia started the day after the German invasion. Systematic mass exterminations of Jews began a few weeks later. The key role in the annihilation of Jews was assigned to Einsatzgruppe (EG) A, with the participation of the local administration, the so-called Latvian self-defense and special Latvian SD units and volunteers. By mid-August, most of the Jewish population of provincial Latvia had been killed. The extermination of the Latvian Jews took place in two phases:

1. **From July until the end of August 1941.** The so-called Einsatzgruppen period when murders were led, organized and at least partially carried out by Einsatzgruppen and the commanders of their sub-units. During this period, several thousand Jews were killed in Biķernieki forest near Riga and practically the entire Jewish population in the province was annihilated. The total number of victims in this period was approximately 30,000. However, in Liepāja, Daugavpils and Aizpute the killing of Jews continued in September and October.

2. **From 30 November to 8 December 1941.** Around 24,000 Jewish residents of Riga and 1,000 Jews transferred from Germany were killed in the Rumbula massacre. Only about 6,000 Jewish residents of Latvia survived Rumbula and were used for forced labour.

3. **From February 1942 until summer 1944.** During this period, many able-bodied Jews between 16 and 32 years of age, whose lives had been spared for forced labor, were herded into what remained of the Small Ghetto in Riga and later transferred to several concentration camps from where they were deported to the Nazi concentration camps in Germany as of late summer 1944. Simultaneously, with the murder of Riga’s Jews in Rumbula, trainloads of Jews from the Reich started arriving in occupied Latvia to be killed there. The majority of deportees were murdered in Biķernieki right away, without them being transferred to the ghetto. A group of the deportees were taken to the Auschwitz II-Birkenau death camp and killed there in November 1943. The total number of victims may thus amount to 90,000 (70,000 of whom were Latvian Jews).

**Estonia**

As the war between the Soviet Union and Germany began, about 3,000 Jews fled from Estonia to the Soviet interior.

1. **From summer until winter 1941.** The remaining 1,000 Jews were arrested and executed by the end of 1941 and Estonia was declared to be Judenfrei.
2. From autumn 1942 until the end of summer 1944. During this period about 12,500 Jews were transported to Estonia. In September 1942, approximately 1,000 Jews from the Terezín (Theresienstadt) Ghetto in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia arrived by train at Raasiku station in the vicinity of Tallinn. Shortly after, almost the same number of Jewish deportees arrived from Frankfurt am Main and Berlin. 400–500 younger deportees from both transports were selected and taken to the Jägala camp near Tallinn. The rest, about 1,600 people, were shot by the German and Estonian camp staff on the very day of their arrival at the Kalevi-Liiva polygon located close to Raasiku. In June 1944 about 300 men from the Drancy transit camp in France (the so-called 73rd convoy) were transported to Tallinn. Most of them were killed. KL Vaivara consisted of more than 20 labor camps. From August 1943 to September 1944, around 10,000 Jews deported from the ghettos in Lithuania and Latvia in 1943 and also from Hungary in 1944 were imprisoned there. Nearly one-third of the inmates of KL Vaivara died in Estonia as a result of the severe conditions or because they were deemed unfit for work and were sent to extermination camps outside Estonia. Another third were murdered as the camps were liquidated in 1944. All in all, in the period from 1942 to 1944, nearly 7,000 Jews perished in Estonia who had been deported from Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, France and Hungary. Thus, the total number of Jews who died or were murdered in Estonia during the war reached 8,000.

Belarus

In June 1941, there were approximately 670,000 Jews on the Soviet-occupied Polish side and 405,000 Jews on the Soviet side of Belarus. On 8 July, 1941, SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich gave the order for all male Jews between the ages of 15 and 45 in the occupied territory to be shot on sight as Soviet partisans. By August, the victims targeted in the shootings included women, children and the elderly. German police battalions, as well as the Einsatzgruppen, carried out the first wave of killings. The role of the Belarusian Auxiliary Police, established on 7 July, 1941, was crucial in ensuring the totality of the proceedings, as only they – wrote Martin Dean – knew the identity of the Jews. The local police took part in the ghettoization of Jews. There Jews were controlled and brutalized before mass executions. After a while the auxiliary police not only led the Jews out of the ghettos to places of mass murder but also took an active role in the shootings. Such tactics were successful (without much exertion of force) in places where the killing of Jews were carried out in early September and throughout October and November 1941. The role of the Belarusian police in the killings became particularly noticeable during the second wave of the ghetto liquidations, starting in February/March 1942.

At least 800,000 Jews were murdered by shooting in the territory of modern-day Belarus. Most of them were shot by Einsatzgruppen, Sicherheitsdienst, Orpo battalions aided by Schutzmannschaften and local collaborators.
**Romania**

Romania participated fully in the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Within days of the invasion, Romanian authorities staged a pogrom against the Jewish population in the city of Iaşi, the regional capital of Moldavia. Romanian police and military shot hundreds of Jews in the courtyard of the police headquarters. Hundreds more were killed on the streets or in their homes. All in all, at least 14,000 Jews were murdered in Iaşi during the pogrom. Thousands more were arrested and deported by train to Calarasi and Podulloaiei. Many of them died on the way from starvation or dehydration.

Following the invasion of the Soviet Union, Romania re-annexed Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, which had been seized by the Soviets a year earlier. After the conquest of Ukraine by German and Romanian troops in July and August 1941, Romania was given the territory between the Dniester and the Bug rivers, including Odessa. Romanian authorities established a military administration and named the region Transnistria.

Both in support of the German SS and police units and on their own initiative, Romanian army and gendarmerie (police) personnel massacred thousands of Jews in Bessarabia, northern Bukovina, and Transnistria. Romanian and German units began the systematic shooting of the Jewish residents of Kishinev, the capital of Bessarabia, shortly after occupying the city in July 1941. About 11,000 people who survived massacres were moved into a ghetto, used for forced labor or, in the case of hundreds of them, executed. In October, those left alive were deported to camps and ghettos in Transnistria, as were most of the surviving Jews in Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. Many Jews died of exposure, starvation or disease during the deportations to Transnistria or after arrival. Others were murdered by Romanian or German units, either in Transnistria or after being driven across the Bug river into German-occupied Ukraine.

Romanian authorities established several *de facto* ghettos and concentration camps in Transnistria. Among the most notorious of these ghettos was Bogdanovka where thousands of Jews were interned. In December 1941, Romanian troops, together with Ukrainian auxiliaries, massacred almost all the Jews in the ghetto. The Romanians also massacred Jews in the Domanovka and Akhmetchetkha camps. Typhus-devastated Jews were crowded into the ghetto in Mogilev. Romanian authorities established concentration camps at Pechora and Vapniarka in Transnistria in the winter of 1941–1942. Vapniarka was reserved for Jewish political prisoners deported from Romania proper. Between 1941 and 1944, German and Romanian authorities murdered or caused the deaths of between 150,000 and 250,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews in Transnistria. At least 270,000 Romanian Jews were killed or died from mistreatment during the Holocaust.

**Ukraine**

Ukraine was one of the major sites of the implementation of the “Final Solution”. When Germany invaded the USSR in June 1941, the Ukrainian SSR, including the newly annexed territories of eastern Galicia, western Volhynia, northern Bukovina, and parts of Bessarabia, had a Jewish population of approximately 2.3
million. Two-thirds of these Jewish people – between 1.4 and 1.5 million men, women, and children – were murdered, most in the first eighteen months, most of them by the *Einsatzgruppen*, German police, Romanians, and local Nazi collaborators. *Einsatzgruppe C* was assigned to Northern and Central Ukraine and *Einsatzgruppe D* to Moldavia, Southern Ukraine, the Crimea, and during 1942 to the North Caucasus. The Nikolaev massacre of 16–30 September, 1941, was carried out in and around the city of Nikolaev (Mykolaiv) and resulted in the deaths of 35,782 people, the large majority of whom were Jews. The most well-known massacre of Jews in Ukraine was at the Babi Yar ravine where 33,771 Jews were killed in a single operation on 29–30 September, 1941, by men from the *Einsatzgruppe C* and Police Battalions 45 and 303, with the assistance of the German army and the newly installed Ukrainian Police. By summer 1943, between 50,000 and 70,000 people had been shot or gassed at Babi Yar: mostly Jews, Roma, and POWs.

**Locating the Mass Killing Sites**

While in Western Europe most of the identification and burial of the victims killed during the various massacres committed by the Nazis and their collaborators was done immediately after the liberation and the end of the war, the situation in Eastern Europe, especially regarding the mass graves of Jews. The Soviet Extraordinary Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes investigated the mass graves resulting from the Nazi massacres and collected a considerable amount of data. However, only a small number of the identified mass graves were protected (included in the list of Cultural Property as historically significant objects of World War II) or even marked. Until the end of 1948, marking was done under the initiative of Holocaust survivors. As of 1949, due to the Soviet Union’s antisemitic policy, the monuments erected through the efforts of the local Jewish communities were replaced with typical Soviet-style monuments where the victims were blandly identified as “innocent Soviet citizens” or “victims of Fascism”. As a result, a large number of the mass graves in Eastern Europe which were identified by various commissions were neglected and fell into oblivion until the fall of the Iron Curtain. Throughout the last 26 years, several initiatives regarding the issue of mass graves have been launched, but there is still a lack of information available about the numbers and locations of the mass graves, and most of it is scattered, including that on identification of the victims. One of the biggest issues relates to the naming of collaborators who participated in the mass killings. Massacres were committed all over Europe, leaving mass graves behind, yet there has been mainly regional and fragmentary work. There is still no global perspective. It should also be noted that the mass graves of Nazi victims are regularly discovered not only in Eastern Europe, but all over the European continent even though 72 years have passed since the end of World War II.
Lectures by Keynote Speakers

The conference included three keynote speakers who analyzed and gave an overview of the current state of research on the topic of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe (the Baltic countries with a special focus on Lithuania and Moldova) in various dimensions, starting with the planning and sequence of the killings, the perpetrators, victims, involvement of local community and the present-day topicalities related to the consequences of the mass killings, i.e. identification, marking, positioning, contextualizing, protection and commemoration of the killing sites. It is worth mentioning that there are still more questions than answers related to these issues, the reason being that there is no uniform state policy on Holocaust education and remembrance.

Dr Christoph Dieckmann from Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt am Main, a historian and leading expert on the Holocaust in Lithuania, spoke on the topic “Killing sites in 1941: history and memory”. He spoke of the peculiarities of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, in particular in Lithuania, emphasizing the impact of the economic situation on the course of the Holocaust, and underlined the important role of local collaborators in the extermination of Jews. He also spoke about the indifference of the local population in the face of the killings and possibilities they had for resistance. Dr Dieckmann made numerous substantiated theoretical assumptions and illustrated them with respective examples from his extensive research in some 30 different archives.

The second lecture focused on current comprehensive Holocaust research and commemoration opportunities in Lithuania. Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė, Head of the History Research Department at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum and acting head of the Memorial Museum of Paneriai, together with Saulius Sarcevičius, Head of
International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance  
Multi-Year Work Plan on Killing Sites

Urban Research Department at the Lithuanian Institute of History, discussed the current research on the Paneriai mass killing site. They also presented the plans to comprehensively re-arrange the memorial site of Paneriai, which will result in marking the mass killing sites that have remained unidentified until recently and in constructing a modern visitor center with an exhibition narrating the transformation of Paneriai into one of the largest mass killing sites in Lithuania. The presenters explained the timing and reasoning behind the planned reconstruction of the Paneriai mass killing site and introduced the latest comprehensive research results. Combining the results of recent archival research with state-of-the-art non-invasive archaeological research performed with the help of 3D scanners and geo-radar, allowed a broader picture of the site to be captured and the identification of the location of objects that are referred to in historical documents, but which had been erased during Soviet times and therefore remained invisible to visitors. The presenters indicated that the topography of the Paneriai mass killing site might change in the future, because there are killing pits and canals on the territory of the site that still remain unmarked. In addition, the presenters introduced the implementation plans covering the reconstruction of the Paneriai memorial as prepared by the joint commission consisting of representatives of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Culture, Vilnius City Municipality and the Lithuanian Jewish (Litvak) Community.

Paul Shapiro, Director of International Affairs and Director Emeritus of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, spoke on the second day of the conference on “The Kishinev Ghetto, 1941–1942”. His talk was based on rich archival documentation that had been obscured during decades of communist rule by denial and by policies that blocked access to wartime documentation. A case study on the little-known
historical events surrounding the creation, administration and liquidation of the Kishinev (Chisinau) Ghetto during the first months following the Axis attack on the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa) in late June 1941 was an attempt to answer the main question: how could the Holocaust happen and why? Mass killings during the Romanian–German push toward Kishinev in Bessarabia, after a year of Soviet rule in this Romanian border province, were followed by the shooting of thousands of Jews on the streets of the city during the first days of re-established Romanian administration. Later on, Jews were driven into ghettos, persecuted and liquidated.
Panel Presentations by Experts

Presentations of the three discussion groups were focused on fieldwork, research, archives, databases as well as highlighted preservation, legal and religious issues, and dealt with challenges of remembrance and education.

Presentations and Discussions on Identification

Moderator
Dr David Silberklang

Participants
Dr Mikhail Tyaglyy, Ukrainian Centre for Holocaust Studies, Kiev; Adrian Cioflâncă, Romanian Academy’s A.D. Xenopol Institute of History; Dr Arkady Zeltser, Dr Lea Prais, International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem; Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė, Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum; Alexandra Tcherkasski, Institute for Diaspora Research and Genocide Studies at Ruhr University Bochum; Dr Mikhail Tyaglyy and Dr Arkadi Zeltser addressed Holocaust memorial sites in Ukraine and Belarus.

They focused on the changes that had taken place in various countries from Soviet times and to the present day. In his presentation Adrian Cioflâncă explained and illustrated the work which is being done in Romania in terms of identification and marking of Holocaust sites. He emphasized that local government and local populations contribute to the process and
shared examples of successful and complex projects related to the marking of sites.

The presentation by Dr Lea Prais “Personal Voice and Overall Perspective” was based on a project which was launched in 2007 by Yad Vashem. The project “The Untold Stories – The Murder of the Jews in the Occupied Territories of the Former USSR” is a major online database devoted to killing sites. This project aims to present, for each location, the Jewish community who lived there and their fate during the war, including the locations where the members of the community were killed. Information about nearly 1,200 such places has already been uploaded.

In the presentation “Jungfernhof – Identification of a Mass Grave”, Alexandra Tcherkasski introduced her recent research findings. The presentation was based on the case study of the Jungfernhof concentration camp which was situated near the Skirotava railway station (3 km from Riga, but currently within the Riga city limits) and was operational from December 1941 to March 1942. The research was based not only on the study of archival documents, but also on field studies.

Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė’s presentation emphasized the numerous problems related to the identification, marking, legal status and state protection of Holocaust memorial sites in Lithuania. Even though much has been done in Lithuania in terms of identifying and marking the mass killing sites, there are still sites which require additional research and remain unmarked.

Presentations and discussions on Marking

Moderator
Dr Thomas Lutz

Participants
Diana and Michael Lazarus, Belarus Holocaust Memorial Project; Dr Diana Dumitru, Ion Creanga State University, Moldova; Diana Varnaitė, Director of the Department of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania; Karina Barkane, Centre for Judaic Studies, University of Latvia.

Diana and Michael Lazarus shared their experience with the project that they personally initiated in Belarus to mark the mass killing sites of Jews by involving local government and communities, including some specific details of commemorating the Holocaust in Belarus. Diana Varnaitė gave a presentation on the efforts of the
Department of Cultural Heritage of Lithuania to mark and protect Holocaust sites, rather than a general overview of the situation with the Holocaust sites in Lithuania. It can be concluded that identification-related research is not seen as a priority by the department and that Lithuania lacks a clear policy on Holocaust memorial sites, and identification and marking is left up to enthusiasts and private individuals.

Diana Dumitru from Ion Creanga State University made a presentation on the mass killing sites of Jews in Moldova and noted that the process of marking the sites is neither easy nor quick. The majority of the killing sites are not marked and awareness among the local population is still low. The author presented specific examples on how the situation had changed over time and highlighted the key problems.

Karina Barkane discussed Holocaust sites and their remembrance in Latvia after World War II until today. In Latvia, just like in the rest of Eastern Europe, over the entire period of the Soviet occupation nobody spoke about the Holocaust. Although after the investigations of the Soviet Extraordinary Commission many mass killing sites were identified, the majority of them remained abandoned and did not receive proper care. Upon return to their homeland, the survivors of the Holocaust were the first to take care of these sites. The majority of the monuments devoted to the massacred Soviet citizens were erected at the end of the 1950s. However, at several killing sites monuments with reference to the murdered Jews with inscriptions in Russian, Latvian and Yiddish were erected. In rare cases monuments where the Jewish victims were referred to only in the inscriptions in Yiddish were erected. Karina Barkane pointed out that Latvia still faces an issue due to the fact that in Soviet times the victims were reburied in the process of erecting monuments at mass killing sites and the monuments were usually erected some distance from the actual killing sites. As a result, additional research is needed to identify the killing sites. The presenter spoke about the mass killing of Jews in Rumbula where over 25,000 Jews were murdered. It was only in 1964 that a monument with the inscription “To all the victims of Fascism” in Russian, Latvian and Yiddish was erected there. The inscription in Yiddish served as a clue that Jews had been killed there, too. Throughout Soviet times there was no uniform commemoration policy of the Jewish victims. In the majority of cases it all depended on the approach of the local government. Since Latvia regained independence, much has been done to commemorate the Holocaust. Upon the initiative of the Latvian Jewish Community, the majority of the mass killing sites were properly arranged and monuments were erected to mark them. International support played an important role in the process. The project “Holocaust
Memorial Places in Latvia” developed together with the Latvian Jewish Community, the museum “Jews in Latvia” and several international partners was referred to by the presenter as one of the most successful recent examples of commemoration of Holocaust sites in Latvia. The project is aimed at providing the ignorant local society living near the mass killing sites with knowledge about the Jews that were killed there.

Presentations and discussions on Commemoration

Moderator
Dr Piotr Trojański

Participants
Dr Karel Berkhoff, NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam; Prof Zoltán Tibori Szabó, Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies and Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj, Romania; Tamara Vershitskaja, Museum of Jewish Resistance in Novogrudok, Belarus; Ingrida Vilkienė, Secretariat of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania; Dr Ekaterina Makhotina, Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn; Dr Olev Liivik, Estonian History Museum.

Dr Karel Berkhoff presented the case of Ukraine, including some key problems such as black archaeology and vandalism at Holocaust sites, the promotion of a fragmented rather than consistent policy, and a lack of empathy for Holocaust sites.

Professor Zoltán Tibori Szabo introduced the Babeș-Bolyai University’s programmes on the Holocaust aimed at introducing undergraduate and graduate students to the importance of the topic. School pupils are also offered opportunities to visit the university and learn both about the history of the Holocaust and other related topics. Professor Szabo outlined on the particularities of the Holocaust in Romania with a focus on the early killings (1940-1941) and deportations, highlighted the challenges with the identification of the killing sites and spoke about the recent projects that the university had implemented in cooperation with researchers and scientists from various research fields. The university makes purposeful efforts to related research and education, because education is a key way to commemorate the Holocaust. One of the university’s projects on the identification of Holocaust victims is a clear proof of that.
Tamara Vershitskaja spoke about the relevance of the Holocaust and the context in which it is presented in Belarus. She referred to the Jewish Resistance Museum in Novogrudok, a subdivision of the National Museum of Belarus, as one of the most successful projects on the Holocaust. The museum aims to teach about the Holocaust, including remembrance, in cooperation with the local community. It is the only museum of its kind in Belarus and was established in 2007 with the support of the IHRA.

Ingrida Vilkienė made a presentation about what is being done on the topic of the Holocaust in the education system of Lithuania and how the Commission initiates various activities to involve teachers and students. The presenter spoke about numerous changes and initiatives, presented relevant examples and named the difficulties faced by educational establishments.

In her presentation “Commemoration in Lithuania” Dr Ekaterina Makhotina focused on fostering remembrance through museum and memorial activities. She chose the case study of the mass killing site of Jews in Paneriai, the post-war Jewish museum in Vilnius and the restored State Jewish Museum as the basis for her presentation.

Dr Olev Liivik made a presentation on the topic of “Holocaust Memorials and Commemoration in Estonia” devoted to the mass killing sites of Jews in Estonia, including their memorialization from the end of World War II until the present day. The presenter spoke about the changes in the approach towards the commemoration of Jewish victims during Soviet times, when the government did not officially support the idea, but also did not strictly object to private commemoration initiatives. As an example, Dr Liivik presented a case from 1973 when upon the initiative of the Jewish community of Estonia a monument was erected in
the Jewish cemetery in Tallinn with the main inscription saying “To all victims of the Holocaust”, which was followed by several more lines in Hebrew and Yiddish that read “We will never forget you”. The monument became unsuitable only after Estonia regained independence. The presenter referred to the identification and marking of the early mass killing sites of Estonian Jews as a problem. Even though in Estonia there are few early mass killing sites, some of them remain unmarked. According to Dr Liivik, one of the important accomplishments of the Estonian History Museum together with the Estonian Jewish community was the identification of all Estonian Jews that had been killed.
Workshops

The aim of the workshops was to share good practice and the newest research outcomes, including practical advice on adapting successful research results, and to introduce the most recent methodological approaches to the work performed on killing sites. Further focus was put on highlighting the most problematic aspects that often led to heated discussions, try to identify the underlying reasons, including general and local problems, and suggesting ways to solve these issues.

Workshop on Identification

Moderators
Irinel Rotariu, Prosecutor’s Office of Romania; Alexandra Tcherkasski, Institute for Diaspora Research and Genocide.

Participants
Florin Codrut Mihalache, Prosecutor’s Office of Romania; Tim Fletcher, Geoscope Services Limited; Charlie Enright, Geoscope Services Limited; Michal Chojak, project “Yahad in Unum”; Nina Janz, University of Hamburg; Dr Paul Dostert, Ministère d’Etat, Luxembourg; Ayaka Takei, Gakushuin Women College, Tokyo; Dr Anne Knowles, History Department, University of Maine, USA; Maayan Armelin, Clark University, USA; Meylakh Sheykhet, UCSJ Director in Ukraine; Participants from the first day session on identification, other guests.

Six speakers presented their work and projects

During the three-hour workshop on identification, speakers were able to introduce their work and projects; each presentation was followed by discussion.

Irinel Rotariu started with a short introduction on the jurisdiction of every newly found mass grave in Romania. Then, he presented the Propricani Mass grave and showed how by means of opening the mass grave and forensic methods, the victims and the perpetrators could be identified. Meylakh Sheykhet, on a mission to preserve Jewish cemeteries and mass grave sites in Ukraine, talked about his project in Lviv, which involved using non-invasive methods for finding the mass graves. Meylakh presented his point of view on Jewish Law and insisted on the preservation of the victims’ dignity. Tim Fletcher and Charlie Enright explained the exact procedure of the radar scanning based on the example of the mass grave in Lviv. Anne Knowles provided an overview of the project “Holocaust Geographies”. The project is based on using GIS and other geographical methods to represent and analyze the Holocaust as it unfolded in space and time. The issues of the project are (1) the time and effort it takes to build large databases of historical information; and (2) how to represent people and their individual and group stories in maps and other graphics. During the presentation and the discussion Dr Knowles showed how this project can be used for educational purposes.

Michal Chojak talked about the project “Yahad in Unum”. The question of how to continue with the work, when witnesses have passed away, was discussed.

Maayan Armelin spoke about her project on the social and operational aspects of the *Einsatzgruppen* who perpetrated the Holocaust in Lithuania.

**Most Discussed Points**

Methods of localization of the mass graves. During the discussion of the two methods the participants of the workshop outlined the opportunities and limits of each method. The non-invasive method of radar scanning can indicate the location and size of the mass grave, and it preserves the dignity of the victims, but it does not give any information on the victims, the perpetrators or the dimensions of killing. The opening of the mass graves and work with forensic methods can provide information on the origin, number and age of victims, the murder weapons and the perpetrators. But the
forensic method does not preserve the dignity of the victims to the same high standard as the non-invasive methods do.

Conclusions
First, all available documents and testimonies regarding perpetrators, victims and bystanders, including aerial photography of 1940-1950, should be examined. They can provide information on the localization of the mass graves, including information about the victims, the perpetrators and the killing process. Then, based on the available information, if appropriate, further work should be decided upon.

Recommendations for the Future
Based on the conclusion of the workshop on identification, there should be an international commission established to elaborate on the approach for working on mass graves:
• Elaboration of possible methods which provide required information on the victims and perpetrators and which preserve the dignity of the victims to the highest standard.
• Advisory body or authority for working on new mass graves related to the Holocaust.

Workshop on Marking

Moderators
Agnieszka Nieradko, Research Coordinator of Rabbinical Commission for Jewish Cemeteries in Poland; Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė, Head of the History Research Department at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum and acting head of the Memorial Museum of Paneriai.

Participants
Rūta Vanagaitė, Public Institution “Vilko valia”; Guna Vainovska, Žanis Lipke Memorial; Iļja Ėenskis, Museum “Jews in Latvia”; Diana and Michael Lazarus, the Belarus Holocaust Memorial Project; Karina Barkane, Center for Judaic Studies, University of Latvia; Dr David Silberklang, Senior Historian, International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem; Dr Arkadi Zeltser, International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem; Paul Shapiro, Director of International Affairs and Director Emeritus of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Centre for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Participants from the first day sessions on identification, marking and commemoration, other guests.

Two speakers presented their work and projects

Guna Vainovska presented the activities of the Žanis Lipke Memorial Museum and talked about the museum’s new project entitled “Underground Riga” which was de-
International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
Multi-Year Work Plan on Killing Sites

Participants in the workshop on Marking

Developed with the support of partners and the Latvian Ministry of Culture. The idea of the online project is to mark the former hiding places of Jews in Riga and to share personal stories of both the rescued and those who were risking their lives to provide the persecuted with a safe hide-out. The project is based on historical and topographical methods.

Ilja Lenskis gave an overview of memorialization of the mass killing sites in Latvia from Soviet times to today. He also talked about the efforts of the Museum “Jews in Latvia” to identify and mark the mass killings sites in Latvia.

Most Discussed Points
First of all, the term marking was discussed in great detail. How do we understand marking? Is it a mere indication or does it also include commemoration? Are these two different things or are they interlinked? Yet another point discussed in great detail was related to what we actually mark. Do we mark the grave with the aim to protect it or do we mark the place of massacre? Issues related to the status of marking (temporary or permanent) including its function were discussed. Aren’t religious traditions being breached in the process of marking? Does marking open up further opportunities for commemoration or should marking only be done for the purpose of putting up a marker? Religious aspects of marking were also discussed. The issue of what is to be marked was deliberated upon. Should it be the place of the grave? Should the grave as such be preserved too on the condition that the place of the grave is known?

It was generally concluded that marking provides opportunities to further research a historic event and that it is a tool to draw the attention of the local community to the place of mass killings that was previously left unmarked and forgotten. All participants of the workshop admitted that the moment a killing site is marked it can be easily identified (i.e. found). Therefore, it is very important that it becomes part of the previously indifferent community. A marker is a kind of appeal to history which makes it impossible to deny the fact that the marked event happened. Historical facts and testimonies of witnesses serve as sufficient argument for the place to be put on the list of objects protected by the state and entitled to state protection. The issue of who should install the marker was discussed, too. It was concluded that local communities should be involved in the process of marking, because in many cases the preservation of the place depends solely on them. The most ardent discussions focussed on the naming of victims and especially the naming of the perpetrators of the killings. It was noted that often a monument is put up, including the arrangement of the territory on the site of killings, but the victims are left aside. Therefore, in the process of marking
mass killing sites it is extremely important to ensure an objective balance between the marking of the event, the victims and the perpetrators, i.e. the time of the killings, the victims and the perpetrators must be indicated on a marker. Still, if the marker is a monument marking the grave of victims, there should be no mention of the names of the collaborators at all. All the space available on the marker should then be devoted to the victims otherwise it would become an advertising space for the perpetrators. The latter issue was discussed in great detail and caused much deliberation on whether the names of the perpetrators should or should not be indicated on monuments or markers. If they are not to be indicated on the monument, then where should any reference be made to the perpetrators and how should the story of a particular killing site be told? Should the said information be published on virtual websites and databases or should visitors be referred to local museums or cultural centres for more information? It must be noted that no other issue caused such highly heated discussions as that on the naming of perpetrators.

**Recommendations for the Future**

Based on the conclusion of the Workshop on Marking, a joint database for all mass killing sites should be established.

An advisory board or authority for working on the marking of the newly discovered graves of the Holocaust should be established. Naming perpetrators as well as victims have to be a must, with the purpose to understand not only the Nazi goals, but also the contribution of local collaborators to the Holocaust.

**Workshop on Commemoration**

**Moderators**

Milda Jakulytė, curator of the project “Lost Shtetl” at Šeduva Jewish Memorial Fund; Ray Brandon, project coordinator of the foundation “Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe”.

**Participants**

François Wisard, Head of Swiss Delegation to IHRA; Dr Paul Dostert, Ministère d’État, former Chair of the AWG and former Head of Luxembourg Delegation to IHRA, Jean Claude Muller, Premier Conseiller de Gouvernement, Luxembourg; Dr
Thomas Lutz, head of the Memorial Museums Department, Topography of Terror Foundation, Berlin; Dr Florence Isenberg-Luxemberg, Zefat Academic College; Dr Ann Hansen, Zefat Academic College; Alti Rodal, Ukrainian Jewish Encounter, Berel Rodal, Ukrainian Jewish Encounter, Meylakh Sheykhet, UCSJ Director in Ukraine; Karina Datashvili, Shamir Project Manager, Dr Efraim Zuroff, Simon Wiesenthal Center- Israel Office; Lolita Tomsonė, Žanis Lipke Memorial Museum; Hanna Liever, Bundeszentrale für politische BildungFachbereich Print / FBD; Audronė Vyšniauskienė, Department of Cultural Heritage; Rita Kuncevičienė, Department of Cultural Heritage; Vytautas Jurkus, Marius Pečiulis, Vytautas Petrikėnas, Kaunas 9th Fort Museum; Participants from the first day session on Commemoration, other guests.

Ray Brandon presented the project “Protecting Memory” by “Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe”. Its goal is preserving and memorializing mass killing sites in Ukraine. It began as a pilot project with several more organizations in Germany and Ukraine. The project is financed by the German Foreign Office. During the pilot phase, five mass graves in Western Ukraine, one in Galicia and four in Volynia, were preserved and memorialized. Ten more sites in Zhitomir in the Vinnysia Oblast are waiting to be taken care of. Ray Brandon noted that the commemoration of victims is ensured in several ways: non-invasive research performed under close monitoring by the Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Europe, with the aim of ensuring the observance of halacha (Jewish religious tradition) and protection of graves. This includes erection of monuments with inscriptions in three languages, information stands about the pre-war life and annihilation of the local Jewish community, remembrance events held at mass killing sites and attended by government officials, pre-war emigrants, their family members, and society at large. Educational activities are extremely important, too. Therefore, pedagogical programs to help teachers teach the topic of the Holocaust are offered together with the Ukrainian Centre for Holocaust Studies. In addition, efforts are made to name the perpetrators. The international nature of the project and cooperation with the local government and community were mentioned among the preconditions for project success.

Milda Jakulytė-Vasil presented the developments in Holocaust remembrance in Lithuania by pointing out two different types of commemoration, that is, the personal efforts of the survivors and their family members aimed at paying tribute to the victims, and public efforts supported by small groups. In addition, she briefly introduced the efforts of the post-war Lithuanian Jewish community to promote remembrance
of Holocaust victims during Soviet times, and presented the changes that took place after Lithuania regained its independence. Currently Lithuania has three official dates devoted to the remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust. In 1990, the National Memorial Day for the Genocide Victims of the Lithuanian Jews was put on the list of remembrance days observed in Lithuania. International Holocaust Remembrance Day – 27 January – has been observed in Lithuania since 2009. Every year the March of the Living in Paneriai reminds us of the Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom haShoah) observed in Israel. In addition, every town in Lithuania observes their local remembrance day, or even several days, thus paying tribute to the annihilated local Jewish community. Evidently, Lithuania has ample opportunities to commemorate victims of the Holocaust, however, they are not always successfully used to the full extent. Jakulytė-Vasil noted that recently more and more efforts are being made to unofficially commemorate the victims of the Holocaust with numerous grass-roots initiatives stemming from the society at large.

After the majority of participants briefly presented their work and projects, a discussion took place on the following topics: Who takes part in the commemoration process – state institutions, NGOs or private initiatives? How to involve various remembrance institutions into the commemoration of the Holocaust victims? How to educate on the topic and what form that education should take: exchange of experience, personal stories, educational trips, thematic excursions? Who should the target groups be? They should not be limited to pupils and students, but should also include teachers, mass media representatives and even professional researchers with different educational programs prepared for each of the target groups. General discussions on commemoration events were held and specific issues such as national remembrance policy, national narrative, education, self-awareness and understanding were explored. Discussions were elaborated on international cooperation, introduction and application of new technologies of the 21st century, remembrance days, identification of victims, reading out of victims’ names, purposeful use of historical buildings (sites), including marking memorial stones and graves, which is invariably linked to commemoration. Intensive discussions were held on the topic of education, such as how to establish the connection between the mass killing sites and school curricula, which is especially topical in Eastern Europe due to the existence of differences between the school curricula in the west and in the east. The representative of the Prime Minister of Luxembourg spoke about the difficulties with commemoration in Luxembourg, where people may simply refuse to take part in commemoration events. The issue of the need to separate commemoration and ed-
ucation was raised and discussed. It was finally concluded that sometimes commemoration may promote education. There was extensive discussion on whether remembrance includes the preservation of mass killing sites, speaking on historical subjects, and whether it is important that as many mass killing sites as possible are marked while the witnesses of these events are still alive. Participants in the discussion unanimously emphasized the importance of employing new technologies, especially in places where it is actually not possible to erect a marker (due to lack of financing, hostile attitude of the government, or vandalism). The place of the Righteous Among the Nations in the national remembrance policy was discussed with a special focus on the effort to include them in said policy and the form it should take. Much was said about remembrance days, especially about International Holocaust Remembrance Day (27 January). How is this day related to the Holocaust in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine and Romania, including national remembrance days in each of these countries? The participants in the discussion noted that it is considerably easier to commemorate national Holocaust remembrance days and involve local communities, due to their connection with local Holocaust events, than the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, when more formal and official commemoration events take place.

Conclusions
It is often difficult to draw a dividing line between marking and commemoration, because they are both part of the same phenomenon. It is equally difficult to single out good practices in the area of remembrance, because often they are very specific and inseparable from a local historical context. It is therefore recommended to pay more attention to national remembrance days including their informal commemoration by involving, as far as possible, local communities.

According to Paul Shapiro, moderator of the final session of the conference, all workshops one way or another touched upon the issue of time. What is to be done when all witnesses who survived the Holocaust have died? Who will give testimonies then? Who will take over the remembrance? Who will then take care of identification, marking and commemoration of sites? How to ensure that local communities will take care of the erected markers and monuments, or the sites? Will the markers survive when those who used to take care of them have passed away? This is exactly where the role of education comes into play. All communities have a component of education to them. They can teach, take over remembrance activities and make it relevant. Relevant content, i.e. information and personal experience, helps attract members of local communities. Nonetheless, it is still difficult to find officials who would take part in the process of remembrance conscientiously and regularly, thus ensuring continuity, rather than playing a formal role at commemoration events once or twice a year. All three workshops challenged the participants to reflect on whether we are actually prepared for the foreseeable future when all the survivors and witnesses will have passed away.

One of the most important elements of this conference is education. In order to identify a place, it is necessary to find respective sources, i.e. to have knowledge and qualification. How can one acquire knowledge if the system of education in Eastern Europe does not ensure proper integration of the topic of the Holocaust
into school curricula, especially knowing that the numbers of the Holocaust survivors is rapidly decreasing? Once a site has successfully been identified, the issue of marking comes into play. Very often private initiative alone is not enough, because without the cooperation of state institutions and organizations who have to take further care of the identified site, it would be impossible to ensure the preservation of the site itself. Yet another issue is the preservation of the sites which have already been marked. What kind of information should be provided there? Should it be information referring to the place, the memorial, the victims or even the perpetrators? What and how can we learn in situ? This is where the Holocaust commemoration policy and the function of education come into play again.

Thus, the subject of the Holocaust must be comprehensively integrated into school curricula and university studies, whereas local communities must be involved in the Holocaust commemoration process. It is equally important to continue the cooperation of experts working in the areas of identification, marking and commemoration, and share both good and less positive experiences with the aim to speed up the marking of as yet undiscovered or discovered but not yet marked sites, and granting the status of state protected areas to them. It is no less important that the people or initiatives taking care of the memorialization of the Holocaust sites have moral, expert and institutional support enabling them to overcome various bureaucratic obstacles more easily.
Marketplace: Sharing Projects and Ideas

The Marketplace of projects and ideas offered ample opportunities to meet the curators of various projects, book authors and scientists involved in current research, make professional connections, draw attention to relevant issues, get suggestions and even discuss criticism. In all, eight participants of the conference availed themselves of the opportunity to present their projects at the Marketplace. Giles Bennett and Charlotte Hauwaert presented the activities of the project “European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI)”. Professor Anne Knowles introduced the book “Geographies of the Holocaust” and a modern approach to the visualization of the topic of the Holocaust. Milda Jakulytė presented the project “Lost Shtetl”. Michal Chojak shared the interim outcomes and future plans of the project “Yahad in Unum”. Ray Brandon introduced the activities of the “Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” and the newest exhibition of the museum “Mass Shootings. The Holocaust from the Baltic to the Black Sea 1941–1944”.

Dr Anne Knowles presenting project “Geographies of the Holocaust”
Site visits

It was not by accident that a site visit to the mass killing site in Paneriai was organized. It was the practical part of the panel presentation “Re-discovering Paneriai: Current Research in the Paneriai Mass Killing Site” that allowed the conference participants to see an example of the theoretical outcomes of the newest research in situ. Neringa Latvytė and Mantas Šikšnianas, historians of the Memorial Museum of Paneriai, guided the tour around the memorial. Handouts presenting respective topographic and iconographic material allowed the participants in the guided tour to identify the unmarked mass killing pits, trenches, burning pits of exhumed bodies and other objects that have been localized by the historians of the museum in cooperation with the specialists of the Lithuanian Institute of History in 2015–2017 by combining respective archival documents, oral testimonies and non-invasive exploration methods. Alongside identification, the early killings carried out in Paneriai were presented based on the work of the museum’s historians, who established the historical events as a result of continuous research of archival documents both in Lithuania and in Germany. The theoretical presentations given during the visit to the mass killing site helped the participants gain a comprehensive understanding of the site itself and allowed them to unravelling the changes that the site had undergone over time, including substantiation of the need for comprehensive reconstruction of the site.

The aim of the visit to the mass killing site in Naujaneriai, where on 24 September, 1941, Jews from Maišiagala, Riešė, Paberžė and other small Northern rural districts of Vilnius were killed, was to show the participants of the conference one of the 220 early mass killing sites that are scattered all over Lithuania. The mass extermination of Jews in Naujaneriai was organized and performed by the Nazi Security Police and the Sonderkommando. Local policemen, former white arm-banded partisans and volunteers also assisted during the mass killing when 1,767 Jews (512 men, 744 women and
511 children) were murdered in one day in a 25 m long, 4 m wide and 2 m deep ditch. The sharing of information at the site where it all happened, the presentation on how the site was perceived during Soviet times, including the changes it underwent in the 1990s, and the way it is maintained now by integrating the narrative of the local community, encouraged the participants in the site visit to talk about the way mass killing sites are taken care of in their own countries.
General Conclusions of the Conference and Recommendations for the Future

The conference focused on the modern societal perception of the issue of early mass killing sites of Jews. Many global and country-specific issues were raised. Moreover, it was noted that in many cases these issues can be solved only by taking respective decisions locally. Yet the positive side is that, unlike the IHRA conference in Krakow in 2014, which mainly focused on the challenges faced by the researchers of the Holocaust working on commemoration, this year’s conference in Vilnius mainly discussed changes and accomplishments, including the involvement of local communities and institutions.

Paul Shapiro and Dr Christoph Dieckmann made presentations on historical issues, which allowed participants to take a broader look at the subject of the Holocaust without being limited to the historical aspect only. When discussing the Holocaust, one often forgets such things as military logic and logistics which undoubtedly impacted the course of the killings and the location of the killing sites. These issues were discussed in detail in the presentations.

The definition of a site of mass killing was one of the widely discussed topics of the conference, and the workshops, and touched upon in some of the presentations. Due to differences in the existing theoretical approaches and interpretations of the term, many issues were raised in relation to the location of the site itself and to the location of the site as a space, including the meaning that we attribute to these terms. How do we define a mass killing site? Is it defined as a grave or a place? How do we mark them? Does a marked killing site gain relevance in terms of space, too? Presentation of the current research at the mass killing site in Paneriai was extremely important in terms of presenting a mass killing site as a space. For the first time in Lithuania, Soviet topography was called into question.
In addition, many more aspects that contribute to the formation of a space where killings took place were presented by combining different methodological approaches.

Observance of religious traditions was one of the topics discussed during the conference, too. The need to observe traditions and preserve the sites was never in doubt, however, it was more difficult for the parties performing research on the sites to find common ground. It was noted that Latvia often faces issues in terms of religious protection of cemeteries and mass killing sites, which become especially topical when doing master planning which requires indicating the purpose and use of respective plots of land. There was a case in Lithuania where a mass killing site ended up being on private property and the landlord tried to sell the plot of land that included a mass killing site of Jews. What is the position of state institutions on the matter? Issues related to the protection of mass killing sites were topical for many countries represented at the conference.

The topic of modern technologies and their application was inseparable from the topics of identification, marking and the observation of religious traditions. Many new technological solutions have been developed in the last ten years. Nonetheless, it must be admitted that many participants in the conference are still widely using sole the historical approach (i.e. working with archives and sources of oral history) for a number of reasons. First, they are used to working this way because new technologies require major financing and it is rather difficult to find a professional team capable of achieving the best results by combining several different approaches. Nonetheless, it is possible, and current research at the mass killing site in Paneriai is clear proof of that. Yet another important issue that caused many discussions was inscriptions on memorials and monuments erected at mass killing sites. The type of discourse and the form in which it is presented (on the inscriptions on the monuments) were discussed in great detail. Opinions of conference participants on the issue varied greatly due to differences in the experience with memorialization of mass killing sites. Although it was agreed that the choice of words for memorial inscriptions is very important, a final decision on the exact wording to be used for the purpose was not been reached, because it all depends on the approach to a particular site and on the way it is perceived. It was more or less agreed that the inscriptions must include information about the victims and the perpetrators. However, such issues as how detailed the inscriptions should be and what form they should take, including how the newest technologies should be used with the aim to provide visitors with access to information about a particular site were not fully discussed due to time limitations, though there was an exchange of experiences and suggestions on the matter.

Another topical issue discussed at the conference was local initiatives and their implementation in cooperation with local government. Some examples were given as part of conference presentations, too. Currently, many efforts are being carried out unofficially in the form of private initiatives. This is where the issue of maintenance and protection of a marked killing site comes into play. Monument maintenance issues appeared to be topical for all participants of the conference. It is important to erect a monument. However, who is to take care of it? What about the physical maintenance of the monument and related future care? What will it be used for in the future? Even though extensive discussions were held on these issues, the answers to the questions
raised were not numerous. The only evident thing was that traumatic heritage must be part of the system of education and its preservation must be part of the official national remembrance policy. All mass killing sites must become part of the narrative of local communities and be firmly placed in their collective memory. International projects and close cooperation between institutions implementing projects related to Holocaust remembrance sites would serve as an encouragement for local communities to take respective responsibility. Remembrance of the Holocaust victims should take place on the international, national and local level. Unofficial initiatives to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust should be promoted and supported.

One of the main recommendations for the future is the necessity to have a joint database of all mass killing sites (maybe under the umbrella of the IHRA). This would facilitate the goal of marking even the smallest mass killing sites. In addition, by making use of various state-of-the-art technologies that make information about the mass extermination sites of Jews accessible at the sites related to the history of the Holocaust, the memory of the 2,000 million Jews murdered by shooting, can be preserved.