PRESS RELEASE

First 32 Holocaust memory sites join a new European network

32 places where the Holocaust happened, from 18 countries, were welcomed into ESHEM, the European Sites of Holocaust Memory network, at a ceremony in Brussels on 17 November.

Brussels, 18 November 2026 – On 17 November, 32 places where the Holocaust happened formally became the first members of ESHEM, the European Sites of Holocaust Memory network. An initiative of the European Commission, ESHEM connects these sites and the people who take care of them, so that they continue to tell this history to future generations.

"The Holocaust did not happen only in camps and ghettos. It happened across an entire continent and beyond: in forests, villages and city streets, at railway stations and along escape routes", says Dr Aleksandra Janus, Director of ESHEM. "As the last survivors pass away, these places become the material evidence of what happened. Remembering this history accurately is part of what keeps our democracies strong."

The people who take care of these places

Behind every site, there are people who care for it every day: museum teams, educators, local Jewish communities, Roma organisations and volunteers. ESHEM members range from large institutions such as POLIN Museum in Warsaw (PL) or well-known like the Drancy Internment and Transit Camp (FR), to the association that looks after the former Gurs internment camp in the Pyrenees (FR), the small Jewish community of Palanga (LT), or a citizens' group that keeps alive the history of the Föhrenwald displaced persons camp in Bavaria (DE), where Jewish survivors rebuilt their lives after 1945.

Many of them work with limited resources, sometimes alone. ESHEM recognises their work, gives it visibility and helps them learn from one another.

Today, the people who look after these places have come together to learn from one another. Their work is no longer only a local effort: it becomes our shared European responsibility", continues Aleksandra Janus.

Sites that are still revealing their history

Preserving these places also matters because some of them still reveal new evidence, more than 80 years later, that adds to what we know about the Holocaust. In Będzin (PL), a house bought from a private owner in 2024 revealed previously undocumented hiding places and a tunnel used by the Jewish resistance in the ghetto, then a prayer book and an armband with the Star of David hidden in its attic.

Other sites face pressure: In Belgrade, the former Zemun camp (RS), set up on the city's old fairground, went through decades of neglect and reuse before a memorial center began to be built there.

By connecting the people who care for these places, ESHEM helps ensure that such findings are documented, preserved and passed on, and that each site's history is understood in its European context.

The ceremony in Brussels

The ceremony took place at the Arsenal in Brussels, opened by Commissioner Magnus Brunner and Dr Aleksandra Janus with a message from Pina Picierno, Vice-President of the European Parliament. Representatives of the member sites received an ESHEM recognition statuette. In the coming weeks, an ESHEM plaque will be installed at each site, so that visitors across Europe can recognise these places.

The first 32 member sites

The first members range from well-known memorials to far less known places, for example:

- Killing centres and camps: Treblinka (PL), Sobibór (PL), Bełżec (PL) and Majdanek (PL)
- Transit camps: Drancy (FR) and Westerbork (NL)
- Mass shooting sites: Babyn Yar (UA) and Palanga (LT)
- Sites of the genocide of Roma and Sinti: Szczurowa (PL), Hodonín u Kunštátu (Cz)
- Sites of rescue and escape: the escape route from Gilleleje (DK) to Sweden and the house of Žanis Lipke in Riga (LV)
- Burial sites: the St Martin Jewish Cemetery in Mauritius (MU)

They are located in Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Poland, and beyond the European Union in Moldova, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine and Mauritius.

The stories of the member sites are available on the ESHEM website: https://holocaust-memory-sites.ec.europa.eu

A network that will keep growing

A second Open Call will run from 1 December 2026 to 26 February 2027, with the aim of bringing together at least 50 member sites by the end of 2027.

Information on the eligibility criteria and how to apply is available on the ESHEM website: https://holocaust-memory-sites.ec.europa.eu/members_en

###

Notes to editors

Attached: full list of the 32 ESHEM member sites

Photos: official photos of the ceremony are available here: https://bruagency.photodeck.com/m/-/galleries/2026-11-17. Photo credit: © Bernal Revert.

About ESHEM

The European Sites of Holocaust Memory (ESHEM) is a network to connect people and organisations that safeguard historical Holocaust sites across Europe. As the last witnesses of the Holocaust pass away, the responsibility for preserving its memory is undergoing a profound transformation. Given the dispersed nature of the Shoah and the vast legacy of violence inscribed across the landscapes of Europe and beyond, there is an urgent need for a coordinated and future-oriented approach. The ESHEM Network seeks to provide precisely this: a European response that mobilises the evidentiary power of Holocaust sites and unlocks their potential to strengthen historical understanding, foster civic responsibility, and sustain meaningful remembrance.

ESHEM is an initiative of the European Commission, managed on its behalf by a dedicated Secretariat. As a European Commission initiative, ESHEM advances the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life (2021-2030) by connecting Holocaust remembrance with Europe's shared values and commitments.

Media contacts

Grégoire Van den Ostende: g.vandenostende@breaking-news.be, +32 476 45 15 04

Perrine Sokal: perrine@sounds-good.be, +32 478 34 49 69