EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Participant:	2 - Fundacja Akcelerator Obywatelski Spark (Spark)
PIC number:	887435832
Project name and acronym:	SURVIVE: Stories of Women and Children's Resilience in World War II

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	WP2		
Event name:	Commemoration and Cultural Preservation, Poland		
Type:	Commemoration event		
In situ/online:	in-situ		
Location:	Poland, Wroclaw, Bedzin		
Date(s):	20.09.2025		
Website(s) (if any):	https://survive-cerv.eu/		
Participants			
Female:	34		
Male:	18		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 1 [Poland]:	46		
From country 2 [Italy]:	2		
From country 3 [Romania]:	2		
From country 4 [Latvia]:	2		
Total number of participants:	52	From total number of countries:	4

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

As part of the CERV Remembrance project SURVIVE: Stories of Women and Children's Resilience in World War II, the second international event under Work Package 2: Commemoration and Cultural Preservation was organised in Poland on 20 September 2025. The activity was coordinated and hosted by Spark Foundation, with the support of local remembrance and cultural organisations.

The commemoration in Poland was designed as a two-part event, both implemented in the form of city walks dedicated to discovering and commemorating local stories connected to World War II. The first part took place in Wrocław, focusing on the Siege of Festung Breslau and the experiences of forced

labourers, particularly women, during the final months of the war. The second part was held later the same day in Będzin, where the emphasis was placed on the wartime experiences of mothers and children, highlighting the human dimension of separation, loss, and resilience during the Holocaust.

In total, the Polish commemoration brought together 55 participants, including 52 participants from CERV-eligible countries and 3 participants from the United States. Among them were representatives of partner organisations, local residents, educators, young people, and members of cultural and remembrance institutions. Of the total participants, 36 were women and 19 were men.

Both parts of the event were free of charge and open to the public. Each began with an introduction presenting the objectives of the SURVIVE project and emphasising the European Union's support under the CERV Programme, ensuring visibility of the funding and alignment with the project's overarching aim of promoting remembrance through inclusive and educational approaches.

Part 1. "Spacer/City Walk: Z zapisków obozu dla auslanderów. Festung Breslau oczami robotnic przymusowych/ From the notes of the camp for foreigners. Festung Breslau through the eyes of forced laborers."

The first part of the Polish commemoration was a guided city walk in Wrocław devoted to the Festung Breslau and the experiences of forced labourers, with particular attention to women employed in the final phase of the war. The walk was coordinated by Spark Foundation in cooperation with three local partners: the regional branch of the Institute of National Remembrance in Wrocław (a public historical institution responsible for research, archives and education), the Urban Memory Foundation (a Wrocław-based NGO dedicated to restoring the memory of the pre-war Jewish community and the city's multicultural heritage), and the Cukerman's Gate Foundation (a cultural heritage foundation from Będzin working on Jewish history and education, involved in outreach and in linking the Wrocław programme with the second part of the day).

The programme began at 10:00 at Bastion Sakwowy, near the former wartime command point of the Festung Breslau garrison. After a brief introduction to the SURVIVE project and acknowledgment of EU support under the CERV Programme, the organisers outlined the historical frame of February -May 1945 and the scale of employment of foreign civilians in Lower Silesia and in Breslau/Wrocław during the siege. The walk was conducted bilingually (Polish and English), free of charge with prior registration, and followed an accessible route in the city centre.

From the bastion, the group proceeded to the building of the former vocational school on Haukego-Bosaka Street, identified during the war as one of the largest Ausländerlager (camp for foreign civilians) operating within the fortress city. Here the guide presented the structure and functions of such camps, daily routines and labour assignments, and the specific vulnerabilities faced by women. Short readings from period sources were used to anchor the narrative: extracts from a parish chronicle, an eyewitness diary and several accounts written after the war by Polish female forced labourers. These materials illustrated camp conditions, movement restrictions, food shortages and air-raid procedures.

The route then crossed Grunwaldzki Bridge towards Grunwaldzki Square, an area that served as a provisional airstrip in the last months of the siege. The guide explained how sections of the runway were built jointly by forced labourers and local civilians and described the hazards of construction under bombardment. Attention was given to what happened to many workers after the capitulation in May 1945, including dispersal, repatriation processes and the lack of immediate support structures for civilians who had been displaced or coerced into labour.

The guidance was provided by a specialist from the Institute of National Remembrance with academic and public-history experience in WWII forced labour, prisoners of war and the armaments industry in Lower Silesia, as well as research on 1945 war burials in the region. The Urban Memory Foundation supported the route design and bilingual facilitation to ensure clarity for both Polish- and English-speaking participants. The Cukerman's Gate Foundation assisted with registration and audience development, building continuity with the afternoon programme in Będzin. Throughout the walk, the organisers maintained a documentary approach, using only sourced materials and situating each stop within a verifiable historical context.

Part 2. „Rozstania. Spacer śladami matek i dzieci w czasie Zagłady" / "Partings: A Walk in the Footsteps of Mothers and Children during the Holocaust"

After the Wrocław programme concluded, the group travelled by organised transport to the city of Będzin for the second part of the commemoration, entitled "Partings: A Walk in the Footsteps of Mothers and Children during the Holocaust." This part of the programme took place in the afternoon of 20 September 2025 and was dedicated to the wartime experiences of Jewish and Polish families, with particular focus on the stories of mothers and children during the Holocaust.

The Cukerman's Gate Foundation, a local institution dedicated to the preservation of Jewish heritage and education in Będzin, played a key role in the preparation and implementation of this part of the event. The foundation manages two significant heritage sites in the city - the historic prayer house

known as the “Cukerman’s Gate” and the House of the Ghetto Fighters - and regularly organises cultural and educational programmes devoted to memory and remembrance. For the SURVIVE commemoration, it provided historical expertise, access to local archives, and coordination of local participation. The Urban Memory Foundation, specialising in public history and cultural preservation, contributed to content development and documentation of the event, ensuring continuity between the Wrocław and Będzin programmes.

The walk began at Plac Kazimierza Wielkiego (Old Market Square), a central site in Będzin’s historic district, and lasted approximately two hours. At the beginning, the organisers presented the context of the SURVIVE project and the aims of the day’s second activity. Participants were introduced to the wartime history of Będzin, which before the war had a large and vibrant Jewish community. During the German occupation, the city became part of a ghetto area and witnessed multiple deportations, executions, and forced labour actions.

The guided route followed locations connected to the personal histories of Jewish and Polish families who lived through the occupation. Along the way, participants stopped at key sites where fragments from wartime diaries, letters, and memoirs were read aloud. The testimonies, drawn from historical archives and survivor accounts, described moments of separation, fear, and the struggle for survival, as well as the rare instances of hope and human solidarity that persisted in extreme conditions. Some stories carried special significance because they were read by the relatives of those they described. One of the readings included a mother’s account of parting from her child before deportation, illustrating both the trauma of loss and the courage required to act under unimaginable circumstances. After each story was read, the reader placed at the stopping point a symbolic stone with the name of the person written at, as an act of remembrance.

The guide, a cultural educator and researcher associated with the Cukerman’s Gate Foundation, provided historical background at each stop, linking the readings to the broader context of the Holocaust in the Dąbrowa Basin region. The walk maintained a calm and reflective atmosphere, encouraging participants to listen, observe, and engage with the memory of the sites. Residents of Będzin also joined the visiting group, creating a mixed audience of local community members, educators, and international participants.

At the conclusion of the walk, the group gathered at the House of the Ghetto Fighters, managed by the Cukerman’s Gate Foundation. After the last story was read, organizers shared the history of the House, which is now recognised as one of the most important and oldest monuments of Jewish resistance in Poland. This was followed by a short presentation on the use of digital technologies in remembrance, including the example of 3D scanning and virtual reconstruction techniques developed within the SURVIVE project. The presentation demonstrated how new tools can support the preservation and sharing of fragile historical materials and personal stories, especially for educational purposes.

The commemoration programme closed with a collective discussion and reflection on the human side of war, and significance of intergenerational transmission of memory and on the importance of linking remembrance with modern educational practices. The activity in Będzin complemented the Wrocław walk by broadening the historical perspective and focusing on the civilian, family, and gender dimensions of wartime experience, reinforcing the project’s mission to highlight women’s and children’s resilience during World War II.

Following each part of the event, all participants were promptly provided with essential project data and a link to access and complete the EUSurvey platform.

Social media communication about the Commemoration Event in Poland:

Facebook page Spark – post 1

Facebook page Spark – post 2

Facebook page SURVIVE – post 1

Facebook page SURVIVE – post 2

Instagram SURVIVE – post 1

Instargam SURVIVE – post 2

Website article:

https://survive-cerv.eu/commemorating-the-human-side-of-war-the-survive-project-in-wroclaw-and-bedzin/

Publication of the EDS:

https://www.you-net.eu/survive.html

https://survive-cerv.eu/what-we-do/

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).

SURVIVE: STORIES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S RESILIENCE IN WORLD WAR II

FROM THE NOTES OF THE AUSLÄNDER CAMP. FESTUNG BRESLAU THROUGH THE EYES OF FEMALE FORCED LABORERS

WROCŁAW 20.09.2025 10:00

PARTINGS. A WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN DURING THE HOLOCAUST

BĘDZIN 20.09.2025 16:00

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SPARK
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INSTYTUT PAMIĘCI NARODOWEJ
Oddział we Wrocławiu