



visits4u case studies:

Polin Museum

Warsaw, Poland

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Title: With Respect to Disability

Description

The idea to create a Museum of the History of Polish Jews emerged at the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute. This idea soon secured support both in Poland and abroad. Because of the generous help of individual and institutional donors from all over the world, the works on a project of the Museum commenced in 1995 and continued as a social initiative until 2005. It was then that the Museum of the History of Polish Jews was formally instituted under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski.

For the construction of the Museum to be a success, a broad international network of supporters was established. Thanks to the financial support received mainly from private donors as well as foundations from the United States, Germany, Great Britain, and Poland, the final project of the future Museum was completed, and a unique documentation on Polish Judaism, both locally and abroad, was collected. These relationships with both private donors and international foundations were crucial for obtaining the funds necessary to design and produce the core exhibition of today.

Becoming inclusive:

1. Description



POLIN Museum is the first public-private partnership in Poland, created jointly by the government, the local government, and a non-governmental organization. Under a tripartite agreement signed on January 25, 2005, by

the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, the Mayor of Warsaw, and the Chairman of the Association of the JHI, the public party financed, i.a., the construction of the building and its equipment. The Association of the JHI was responsible for financing and organizing the process of producing the core exhibition.

POLIN Museum is a modern cultural institution - a narrative museum which presents a 1000-year history of Polish Jews. It is also a place for meetings and conversations for all of those eager to learn more about the past and present Jewish culture, to confront the stereotypes, and to face the perils of today's world such as xenophobia and nationalistic prejudices. By promoting openness, tolerance, and truth, POLIN Museum contributes to the mutual understanding and respect amongst Poles and Jews.

Jerzy Halbersztadt, the first Director of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, played a major role in its creation. From 1999 to 2011, he oversaw all of the Association's work in creating the Museum, initially working as the Project Director and then as the Association's Coordinator for the Museum. It was from 2006 until 2011 that he was the Museum's first director. He was then succeeded by Agnieszka Rudzińska, who was the Museum's Acting Director until June of 2012. Andrzej Cudak was then appointed as the Museum Director until succeeded by the Museum's current Director, Professor Dariusz Stola.

In 2016, POLIN Museum won the title of the European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA 2016).

2. Description of steps taken, changes and progress



The POLIN Museum tries to reach the greatest possible number of people with its programming. They are continuously looking for channels to reach new groups and communities. Hence, many local projects are undertaken, such as The Museum on Wheels - an educational exhibition traveling all

over Poland, Internet educational platforms and related mobile applications that can be accessed anywhere in the world, as well as publications in both specialised and popular media.

They work to make the Museum's exhibits and programming accessible to all, through tactile graphics, audio-descriptions, translations into Polish Sign Language, and the introduction of integration projects addressed to people with various types of disabilities.

The Museum is accessible to persons with motor disabilities. The main entrance can be reached by wheelchair from the Nalewki-Muzeum bus stop. The granite cobble paving around the building may pose slight difficulties. The main entrance consists of three doors that lead to the building - revolving doors on the sides and a double door in the middle. The double doors do not open automatically, they are opened by security staff.

Persons with motor disabilities may also enter the Museum through the entrance from Anielewicz Street. Ticket offices are situated there. There is a 25m ramp with a 5% incline that leads to the entrance, made of granite cobble paving. The side entrance consists of revolving doors and a double door. The double doors do not open automatically, they are opened by security staff.

If necessary, security staff shall provide assistance to persons with motor disabilities.

There are two designated spots reserved for people with motor disabilities in the Anielewicz Street parking lot. The parking lot is not open to all visitors. After pulling into the driveway, a security person must let you in.

The building is divided into two parts, separated - across all the floors - by the main hall. Both parts are connected at level 0 (main hall level) and level 1 (bridge).

To reach the main museum hall at level 0 from the main building entrance it is necessary to pass over an 18 m bridge with an 8% incline. Some wheelchair users may need to be assisted by Museum security staff due to the lack of a handrail.

An elevator will take you from the entrance from Anielewicz Street to the museum hall at level 0, as well as all other levels.

The curvilinear wall in the main hall is inclined towards the space available to visitors. This may represent a potential threat to the blind, moving around with white canes, as the base of the wall is impossible to detect with the cane.

Reaching any area of the Museum at level 0 is possible without the use of stairs.

All levels can be reached from level 0 by using stairs or an elevator.

All stairs are marked with contrasting tape, with the exception of the stairs in the Core Exhibition area and the stairs leading to it.

Toilets on every level are adapted to the needs of people with motor disabilities.

Assistance dogs are allowed in all Museum areas available for visitors.

It is possible to borrow a wheelchair.

Persons with movement or sight impairments can reach the beginning of the Core Exhibition (Level -2) by elevator.

The exhibition consists of 8 galleries.



The Museum offers audio guides which provide a designated navigation path for persons with hearing or vision impairments. These audio guides feature a screen which displays a Polish Sign Language interpreter. The audio guides also offer the audio description of the core exhibition. The navigation pathway with translation into Polish Sign Language and the pathway with audio description were designed for 100 and 150 minutes of

exploration respectively. The audio guides come equipped with induction loops.

A customer service representative will provide the user with the audio guide and appropriate instructions for use of the equipment.

At the request of the community of the Deaf, they have prepared tablets with a navigation pathway presented in the Polish Sign Language, available for pick-up at the cash desk. The tablet screens are much larger than those of our audio guides, which makes viewing the included video content more comfortable. The museum's customer service staff provides a manual for the tablet. The tablets are available free of charge.

Persons with sight impairments have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with tyflographics showing certain objects of the core exhibition. Tyflographics and their descriptions are available at the Resource Centre.

As the core exhibition has a number of places that are difficult to detect with a cane, it is recommended that persons with sight impairments visit the museum with a friend or a guide. People with vision impairments are encouraged to take advantage of the tactile graphics presenting selected objects included in the core exhibition. A special pack of tactile graphics and descriptions thereof may be picked up by visitors at the cash desk in the main hall and carried around while exploring the core exhibition. These packs are also available at the Resource Centre and the Education Centre.

Persons with motor disabilities are encouraged to collect maps of the core exhibition from the information desk, which show the location of two elevators that reach the level of the core exhibition. Only the elevator on the left of the information desk leads to the beginning of the core exhibition. The map also shows two elevators located in the core exhibition area. The elevators allow for independent movement between floors, but if necessary, information staff working in the core exhibition area will provide assistance in the use of the elevators.

A three-dimensional model of the POLIN Museum building can be found at the core exhibition level, vis-a-vis the panoramic elevators. The visitors are welcome to touch it, as it has been designed with people with vision impairments in mind. The model allows visitors to explore the interior of

the Museum by touching the distinctive, curved shapes of the walls inside its main hall. Individual components of the model are described in Braille.

All facilities for disabled persons are available free of charge.

Three core exhibition galleries are connected with a rest area: Into the Country, Encounters with Modernity and On the Jewish Street galleries. This allows the visitors to finish the tour route earlier.

The exit level (0) can be reached from the core exhibition level by panoramic elevators located between the Into the Country gallery and the rest area.

The temporary exhibitions area and all the areas in which educational and cultural events are held are accessible to people with motor disabilities.

The distance from the Museum to public transport is also very convenient. The Metro is in a distance of approx. 1 km, trams in a distance of approx. 500 m and Buses in a distance of approx. 200 m and 550 m. All courses provided by low-floor buses.

All employees of Customer Service have been trained to assist people with disabilities by Fundacja Integracji.

3. Main stakeholders

The institutional founders of the Museum are:

The City of Warsaw (represented by President Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz),

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (represented by Minister Bogdan Zdrojewski) and

The Council of the Jewish Historical Institute (represented by its chairman Marian Turski).

The Museum Council is a collective body which brings together various parties and institutions involved the Museum's establishment process. The Council provides a common platform for the discussion and exchange of ideas. In addition to authorities from various fields, the Council includes prominent scholars and experts in Jewish and general history. Its role is to evaluate the Museum's to-date achievements and to determine directions for future development. The Council is also mandated to approve the final appearance and content of the Core Exhibition.

Results and Impact

Citizens and tourists, from Poland or abroad, who visit the museum can enjoy a high quality and inclusive visitor experience, thanks to the measures taken and the range of access features available.

As accessibility is integrated in the operation and services of the Polin Museum, it can better serve its mission as a modern museum and fulfil its goal to be a platform for social dialogue where everyone, disabled or non-disabled people, can take part. Its inclusive approach also means that the museum can welcome higher number of visitors, which increases its popularity as a tourist attraction and eventually income generation.

Lessons learnt

Conclusively, the infrastructure and services' accessibility can be a strong tool for the development, progress and economic growth of touristic and non-touristic cities.

Increase of positive awareness and behavior in the society, regarding the barriers that disabled people may encounter when travelling.

Further information

www.polin.pl

Information about the access to the Museum: www.niepetnosprawnik.eu



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