Warsaw, 9 November 2022

# We know the names of the finalists of 2022 POLIN Award!

**On 30 November, the POLIN Award granted by POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews to individuals, organizations or institutions actively engaged in the preservation of the memory of the history of Polish Jews will be presented for the eighth time. From 117 applications from all across Poland, the competition’s jury has selected six finalists. The name of 2022 POLIN Award laureate will be announced during a formal gala held at the Museum and broadcast via the institution’s social media. The overall sum of financial awards to be distributed among the finalists exceeds 70,000 PLN.**

This year, the competition jury shortlisted six applicants. Nominees for 2022 POLIN Award are:

* **Katarzyna Łaziuk,** Mińsk Mazowiecki
* **Sądecki Sztetl,** Nowy Sącz
* **Izabela Sekulska,** Mielec
* **Magdalena Smoczyńska,** Rabka
* **Michał Szaflarski,** Czarny Dunajec
* **School Complex in Krzepice,** Krzepice

*Each year, the competition jury faces a particularly difficult task of selecting the finalists. This year, we received 117 applications, all of whom deserved recognition. In many towns—bigger and smaller—ceremonies were organised to commemorate 80th anniversaries of the liquidation of the ghettos, accompanied by a great many new initiatives and projects. Among our nominees there are people who act out of the call of their hearts or a sense of mission, sacrificing a lot of their energy and time. In addition to individuals, the jury also shortlisted two organisations for the final of the competition. This goes to show that working together to preserve the heritage of Polish Jews and standing together against indifference and oblivion yields results,"* says Radosław Wójcik, Head of 2022 POLIN Award competition.

During the final of 2022 POLIN Award competition which will take place at the POLIN Museum auditorium and will be broadcast via the Museum’s social media (Facebook and YouTube) on 30 November at 7PM, the winner of the competition and the recipients of honourable mentions will be announced.

The cash prizes were funded by Tomek Ulatowski, POLIN Museum Distinguished Benefactor, Wiktor Askanas and Ewa Masny-Askanas, Odette and Nimrod S. Ariav Foundation and an anonymous donor.

The patron of 2022 POLIN Award competition is the Jankilevitsch Foundation, the co-organiser is the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute in Poland. The competition is organised within the framework of the *Jewish Cultural Heritage* project and is financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Fund and the state budget.

## Finalists of 2022 POLIN Award competition

**Katarzyna Łaziuk**

Katarzyna Łaziuk is active in the field of preservation of the memory of Mińsk Mazowiecki’s multicultural past. Her social activities include educating youth, adults and teachers, animating local life and preserving material Jewish heritage. She establishes contact with the descendants of Mińsk Jews and welcomes them in the local community. She has formed a group of people with whom she works for the remembrance of local history. Her activities include organising days of remembrance, educational trips, and visits of Israeli youth at the school where she has worked until recently. Katarzyna herself takes part in—and also inspires others to join in—nationwide social campaigns such as POLIN Museum’s Daffodils campaign. She is engaged in the development of international projects.

Katarzyna Łaziuk also organises seminars for teachers. She is the author of an educational programme based on anti-discrimination ideas, lesson plans and educational materials. Since 2015, she has been organising Days of Jewish Culture in Mińsk Mazowiecki and commemorating anniversaries of the liquidation of the Mińsk Ghetto, which include ceremonies held at the Jewish cemetery, concerts, historical walks, theatre performances and meetings with descendants. For the 80th anniversary of the liquidation of the ghetto, she organised a two-day commemoration with the participation of descendants of Mińsk Jews from several European countries. She always stresses that all activities undertaken with the aim of remembering Mińsk Jews are realised thanks to the cooperation and involvement of numerous local social activists.

**Sądecki [Tsants] Shtetl**

For 11 years now, Sądecki Shtetl has been promoting the idea of Polish-Jewish dialogue and remembrance of the Holocaust victims among the inhabitants of Nowy Sącz and the Sądecki county. It is the only organisation of its kind in the region working on a large scale towards building Polish-Jewish relations, commemorating places connected with the Jewish population and anniversaries, as well as disseminating knowledge about the history of the Jews of Nowy Sącz. In its activities, the organisation cooperates with Jewish communities in Poland and abroad, with NGOs, local cultural centres, parishes and local authorities. It also carries out educational and commemorative activities.

The Sądecki Shtetl activists are engaged in collecting accounts of the Holocaust survivors and maintaining contact with their descendants scattered around the world. Members of the Shtetl help families find information about their relatives in the surviving archives, creating their own social archive comprising testimonies and keepsakes of both the survivors and the victims. For several years now, they have been recording the memories of elderly residents of Nowy Sącz, especially memories related to the wartime. Currently, the organisation boasts the largest oral history archive in the region. The members of the Sądecki Shtetl also welcome organised groups and individual tourists from Israel, offering guided tours of memorial sites and organisational assistance.

In 2022, together with the Centrum Foundation of the Popiel family and partners, Sądecki Shtetl organised a commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the liquidation of the ghetto in Nowy Sącz. The event’s highlight was the opening of a memorial site in the area of the former ghetto—the fruit of the work performed within the *People Not Numbers* project. In the project, the members of Sądecki Shtetl were responsible for, among other things, preparing a name list of almost 12,000 Holocaust victims from the Nowy Sącz region.

 **Izabela Sekulska**

Izabela Sekulska is engaged in restoring the memory of the Jewish inhabitants of Mielec, a town with a pre-World War II population of 11,000, more than half of whom were Jews. Izabela became active in this area in 2019. She operates mainly in her hometown of Mielec, but also in Tarnów where she resides, and occasionally in other towns in southern Poland. She founded a Facebook group called “Mayn shtetele Mielec”. She runs a blog of the same name where she has published several dozen texts about the Jewish history of the town and its inhabitants. In her own words: “The blog is a memorial to the Jews of Mielec constructed with words.” She is a member of the Committee for the Protection of Jewish Heritage in Tarnów and a leader of the nationwide network of Dialogue Leaders at the Forum for Dialogue.

Together with the community formed around the Mayn shtetele Mielec group, Izabela engages in tidying up cemeteries and memorial sites, organises ceremonies to commemorate anniversaries of, e.g., the destruction of the Mielec synagogue or the deportation of the Jews from Mielec, and acquaints the local population with Jewish history, religion and culture. She carries out archival research related to the Mielec Jewry. The fruit of her research is a description of the fate of the people buried in one of the cemeteries in Mielec. In 2021, Izabela began to compile the List of Holocaust Victims from Mielec. Her activities have brought her into contact with the descendants of Mielec Jews who are now involved in the creation of a space of remembrance, namely the Mayn shtetele Mielec group.

**Magdalena Smoczyńska**

Magdalena Smoczyńska is a psychologist and linguist, professor emeritus at the Jagiellonian University as well as at the Institute of Educational Research and Maria Curie-Skłodowska University. For five years now, she has been researching the fate of approximately one hundred children who survived the Holocaust and ended up in two Jewish orphanages in Rabka and Zakopane in the summer of 1945.

These orphans’ homes, organised by psychologist Lena Kichler, had to be closed due to repeated armed attacks by members of the antisemitic underground. After the home in Rabka had been closed, thirty children were transported to Zakopane, and after a few months Lena Kichler secretly transported all the children from the orphanage in Zakopane to France. Three years later, the children were taken to Israel.

Professor Smoczyńska’s study is based on research conducted in numerous archives and databases. It involves attempts at getting in touch with those of Lena Kichler’s children who are still alive, now aged 80-95, i.e. numerous travels to Israel, the United States and France. As a result of such an extensive search, Prof. Smoczyńska has already reached and interviewed more than forty persons. She is currently working on a book titled *Lena Kichler and Her Children*.

**Michał Szaflarski**

Michał Szaflarski is involved in activities aimed to commemorate the Jews of Czarny Dunajec. A few years ago, he launched a campaign to tidy up the local cemetery. In 2020, he joined *People, Not Numbers* project run by Dariusz Popiela. A monument to the Holocaust victims from Czarny Dunajec and the vicinity with plaques containing their names was erected in Czarny Dunajec. Today, it is an important site in the memory of the families and descendants of the survivors. The fenced and looked-after cemetery is a vital point in the touristic itinerary—tourists stop here and learn about the tragic history of the Jews of Podhale.

Michał Szaflarski gets in touch with the descendants of Jews who used to reside in the Czarny Dunajec region. In 2022, he co-organised the ceremony held on the 80th anniversary of the annihilation of Jews from Czarny Dunajec and the vicinity with the participation of the descendants. He also engages in collecting and recording the history of Jewish families from the region.

**School Complex in Krzepice**

In 2008, the Krzepice School Complex initiated the project titled “Krzepice—Two Cultures—Joint Memory”. Within this project, it adopted an 18th century Jewish cemetery located on Nadrzeczna Street—one of the largest collection of cast-iron *matzevot* in Europe. The cemetery houses around 400 unique cast-iron tombstones, which were cast in nearby Kuźnia Stara. Today, they testify to the splendour of the Jewish community at that time. Since 2008, the youth, under the supervision of their Polish language teacher Jolanta Drab and other school staff, have been carrying out the tidying-up works on an annual basis. For years, Ms Jolanta Drab and other teachers have initiated educational projects devoted to Polish-Jewish history and the Jewish inhabitants of Krzepice, involving the local authorities and the town’s community. These projects include research and inventory works, historical walks, events and commemorations of anniversaries. Young people are also encouraged to participate in historical and anti-discrimination workshops run by NGOs. In June 2022, students of the Krzepice School Complex worked at the cemetery with volunteers from The Matzevah Foundation from the United States, with whom they have been cooperating for eight years now. They also worked with the students from Staffordshire University’s archaeology department who surveyed the site looking for a mass grave. It is believed that approximately 50 Jewish men murdered during the Second World War were buried there.

For full bios of the nominees, the competition’s rules and regulations, members of the jury and notes on POLIN Award laureates to date, please go to [www.polin.pl/nagroda](http://www.polin.pl/nagroda).

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