

From the website of the European Commission:

Commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day in the European Commission, Berlaymont 28 January 2013

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The audience of more than 150 consisting of many nationalities and generations, including the youth from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance project "Train 1000", gathered in Commission headquarters - Berlaymont for a commemoration event hosted by the Vice President of the European Commission Viviane Reding.

The ceremony took place around the central piazza in Berlaymont where an exhibition featuring a group of young girls interned in the Ghetto Theresienstadt/Terezin, Girls quarters, Room 28 from 1943 to 1944, was located. The girls from Room 28, around 50 of them, were present in photographs, drawings they made in Theresienstadt and in the memories of their friends who survived the Holocaust. Only 15 girls out of about 50 saw the day of liberation.

Helga Pollak-Kinsky one of the Girls of "Room 28" who arrived there at the age of twelve was present at the commemoration and read from the diary she kept during her time in Theresienstadt. Upon her arrival in January 1943 she wrote: *"I am lying on a mattress, squeezed in, in the middle of a three-level bunk-bed. I feel very uncomfortable"*. - But soon out of anxiety, fear and discomfort rose the feeling of solidarity, trust and friendship. Even though only few girls were able to meet *"on the first Sunday after the war under the Bell Tower in the Old Town Square in Prague"* as they promised each other when they were torn apart by transports to the "East", those who survived kept their friendship across time and continents and never ceased to pass the memory of those terrible days on the young generations.

Their effort is central in *"passing the important message onto those with no direct memory of Holocaust"* to ensure that never again should future generations of Europeans have to experience what the girls of room 28 had to go through, as Vice President Reding reminded the audience.



Robert Badinter, former French minister of Justice and human rights advocate engaged in the abolition of capital punishment underlined in his speech that "the memory of Jewish genocide remains essential to the European civilization" and that we need to remain vigilant to any emerging signs of anti-Semitism and other forms of racism.



The "Room 28 Project" guardian spirit Hannelore Brenner-Wonschick prepared a special cultural programme for the occasion of the commemoration which included live reading from Helga Pollak-Kinsky's Theresienstadt diary and music from the original Theresienstadt Cabaret and from Ilse Weber presented by the ensemble 'Zwockhaus' from Berlin.

After the event Vice President Reding together with Helga Pollak-Kinsky and Mr. Badinter visited the recreated Room 28 to learn more about Helga's and the other girls' plight in Theresienstadt.

