

# The preparation of the landscape-architectural competition “Lety u Písku. The Memorial to the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti in Bohemia”

## Record of the meeting with the residents of neighboring municipalities

May 2019

### Ordering party

Museum of Romani Culture, state contributory organization  
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# 1 Introduction

Lety u Písku, or the place of the former so-called Gypsy camp, has undergone a dramatic development over the past 80 years. Several layers of history overlap here – the centuries-old original agricultural landscape had been transformed in part into a labor camp and, subsequently, a Gypsy camp associated with enormous suffering.

During the war, the camp was razed to the ground and, same as the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti, almost forgotten, the place returned to the countryside. Thirty years of oblivion were completed by the construction of a large pig farm. However, the memory came to life after half a century, followed by protests for many years for the demolition of the pig farm and the restoration of the memory of the victims of the camp. The pig farm was finally redeemed with great media attention by the government and the place will be transformed into a dignified Memorial to the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti in Bohemia.

Today, many participants are interested in the future shape of the area. These are mainly Czech Roma and Sinti – the bereaved of the camp victims but also other citizens living in the Czech Republic and abroad, associations, initiatives, organizations dealing with Roma issues, human rights issues, professional and academic institutions. Last but not least, the future of the Memorial affects the residents of Lety and the surrounding municipalities.

In 2018, the Museum of Romani Culture held several public debates on the issue of the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti and the future form of the Memorial. The debates took place in Brno, Prague and Lety. The museum collected suggestions on its website and, in cooperation with Romea.cz, organized three discussion round tables. In March in Prague with the subtitle Return of Dignity to the memorial place in Lety u Písku, in April a round table in Lety on the future form of the place for the general public, including the residents of Lety and the neighboring municipalities; in May, with Romea.cz and Prague Forum for Roma History and Roma Seminar, a discussion on the current research of the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti in the Czechoslovak context.

Currently, the Museum of Romani Culture, in cooperation with the company ONplan, is preparing an architectural competition for the future design of the Memorial. The main participants in the project, including the local residents, are involved in the preparation of the competition.

## 1.1 Objectives of the meeting with the residents of the surrounding municipalities

The suggestions in this document are a record of a meeting with the residents of Lety u Písku, Orlík, Mirovice, Probulov and Kožlí.

The aim of the meeting was to present the current situation of the Cultural Heritage Memorial in Lety, the intention to build a Memorial to the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti in Bohemia and to organize an architectural competition.

In the second part of the evening, there was a discussion over a map on present values, problems of the area, opportunities, risks connected with the presented plan as well as a discussion about the concerns of local residents connected with the future of the Memorial.

The aim of the discussion was not to find a common position on the assessment of the current state and the future of the area but to gather and record the opinions and suggestions, both

of which may differ, from all participants. The comments and suggestions collected will be used to complete the landscape-architectural competition.

## 1.2 The course of the meeting with residents

The meeting took place on 22 May 2019 in the restaurant hall in Lety u Písku. The residents were invited to the meeting in the form of invitation posters which were put up in the villages Lety u Písku, Orlík, Králova Lhota, Mirovice, Kožlí. In Lety u Písku, the invitations were distributed to the mailboxes of the residents. 17 citizens from Lety, Orlík, Mirovice, Probulov and Kožlí attended the meeting. The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor of Lety and the Mayors of Orlík and Kožlí were present.

On behalf of the Museum of Romani Culture, the meeting was attended by the museum Director Jana Horváthová, the Head of the Memorial Mr. Luděk Strašák, Štěpán Štarha, Lenka Sedláčková and Kristýna Čajkovičová. Karolína Koupalová, Olga Škochová and Eva Dubcová attended on behalf of the ONplan company, which is responsible for the preparation and organization of the competition.

The meeting started at 17.45, when the Director of the Museum of Romani Culture welcomed the attendees.

Subsequently, Karolína Koupalová from the company ONplan presented the objectives and agenda of the meeting and started the professional part of the meeting – the introductory presentations. Mr. Luděk Strašák introduced the current state of the Memorial, the sources of financing the project preparation and implementation, the Director presented the mission of the Memorial and, at the end of the introductory part of the programme, Karolína Koupalová presented the basic parameters of the competition and its schedule.

After the presentations, the audience was given the possibility to ask questions. These were answered by the representatives of the museum and the company ONplan.

In the second part of the meeting a discussion over a map took place. The discussion was led by a moderator and had three parts:

- **Values of the territory and opportunities related to its future** - what is good here, what needs to be supported, protected and further developed, what is the opportunity for the future of the Memorial
- **Problems of the territory and risks related to its future** - what does not work, what needs to be improved, what can be a risk for the future of the Memorial and the nearby territory
- **The citizens' concerns about the future of the Memorial**

During the discussion over a map, the attendees also spoke about the history of the surrounding area of the Lety Memorial. The meeting ended at 20.00.

## 2 Record of the meeting with the residents

### 2.1 Values of the area and opportunities connected with its future

The values are recorded in Map 1 – Values of the area and opportunities related to its future

No. in map	Description of values
<b>Landscape</b>	
	For the local residents, the greatest value is a harmonious cultural agricultural landscape with a mosaic of fields, pastures, forests. The remoteness of the place and the peace (especially north of the Memorial), which should not be disturbed by the project, are also worth mentioning.
1	The Lipeš Pond, which is also shown on historical maps and which existed here at the time of the camp, is now a beautiful place in the landscape and is visible from the road.
<b>Roads in the landscape</b>	
	A relatively dense network of historical, agricultural and forest roads, nowadays often used as walking and cycling paths, is the value of the landscape. These roads are a good basis for creating a functional network of walking and cycling paths that can connect tourist destinations in the landscape, including the Memorial in Lety. Existing trips related to the Lety Memorial include:
2	The historical alley from Orlík towards Lety can be a pleasant connection between Orlík and Lety, the path is suitable for walking and cycling. The trip from Orlík to Lety takes about an hour.
3	The road from Lety to the Memorial, the part after the turn off the main road leading through the field, is a pleasant walk. Below the forest is a beautiful view of Šumava (the Bohemian Forest).
4	
<b>Transport connection of the area</b>	
5	The value is also the existing connection to the pig farm from the main road I/19. This connection is a possibility of how to provide transport to the Memorial, while not bringing the transport to the northern, quiet part of the area. At the same time, the connection from the main road can help make the Memorial more visible and can help facilitate navigation.
<b>Places in the surrounding area connected to the history of the camp in Lety</b>	
6 7	The well-preserved sites associated with the history of the camp – the train station in Mirovice, where the prisoners of the camp arrived, the cemetery in Mirovice, where the first deceased of the camp were buried and where the victims of the camp were officially remembered for the first time, have the indisputable significance for telling the story of the camp in Lety and its setting in the wider context of the location. These locations should be mentioned in the competition assignment and their interconnection should be addressed as part of a broader relation with the Lety Memorial.
8	Among the places associated with the camp is the quarry where the prisoners worked.

<b>Respect for the reverence of the bereaved</b>	
	Most of the locals respect the reverence of the bereaved and the place of their memories and they do not associate this with the negative moods associated with the purchase price of the pig farm, political wrangling, the pressure of the media on the local residents.

<b>No.in the map</b>	<b>Description of the opportunity</b>
	Lety should not only be a place of reverence. Directly at the place of suffering, there is an opportunity to explain what happened, how it could have happened, what to do in order not to repeat anything like this. The authenticity of the site can support the importance of the message.
	The fact that the future appearance of the Memorial is sought in the competition means that it will be “something special” and that the Memorial will become an internationally important place. The state expensively bought a pig farm, now the opportunity to build something important should not be wasted.
<b>9</b>	Orlík Castle, the dam and the surrounding countryside are important tourist destinations – Lety can be one of the destinations for day trips for holidaymakers and school trips from Orlík. It is necessary to deal with the completion of the road network, the completion of the information system as well as the promotion of the Memorial.
<b>10</b>	In Lety there is a large social hall owned by the municipality – in the future, there is an opportunity to organize larger cultural events, which will not be held at the Memorial, the place of reverence. The aim of these events, which may also be of interest to the younger generation, should be to link cultures, promote tolerance.
<b>11</b>	The intention to build the D4 road is an opportunity for easier, faster connection of the Lety Memorial and Prague.
<b>12</b>	Wells in the cadastral area of Králova Lhota are the property of the Museum of Romani Culture. This can be an opportunity to address the source of water for Lety. However, the feasibility and sustainability of this solution needs further investigation.

Map 1 – Values of the area and opportunities associated with its future



## 2.2 Area issues and risks related to its future

Problems are recorded in map 2 – area problems and risks related to its future

No.in map	Description of the problems
<b>Roads in the landscape</b>	
<b>13</b>	There is no comfortable, safe connection for pedestrians and cyclists from Lety to Mirovice. At present, it is necessary to cycle / walk along the main road.
<b>14</b>	Part of the road from the municipal council Lety to the Cultural Heritage Memorial, where the nature trail starts after turning off the main road, is dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. The village lacks sidewalks along the main road.
<b>15</b>	It is not possible to walk around the Lipeš Pond, there are no paths or a resting place.
<b>16</b>	Near the mouth of the nature trail to the road to Lety, from which there is a beautiful view of Šumava (the Bohemian Forest), there is a municipal waste dump.

No. in map	Description of risks
	Roads in the northern part of the territory should not be passable, there should not be the main entrance to the Memorial. Intensive traffic would disturb the peacefulness of the area.
<b>17</b>	The intention to build a D4 may mean worsening of the pedestrian and cyclist connections from Lety to Mirovice. The surrounding municipalities should contact the Museum of Romani Culture and intervene with the investor of the construction in order to include measures to increase the safety of cyclists and pedestrians, in part.
	Cultural Heritage Memorial Lety – a place of mass graves but in the future the whole area of the Memorial, is directly adjacent to the municipal forest and it is necessary to take into account the risk of destruction of the grass areas or new plantings by the forest animals.
	The finances for the purchase of the pig farm, its demolition and the realization of the Memorial are many times higher than the budgets of the surrounding municipalities, which creates negative attitudes of the local residents to the Memorial project.

Map 2 – Problems of the area and risks related to its future

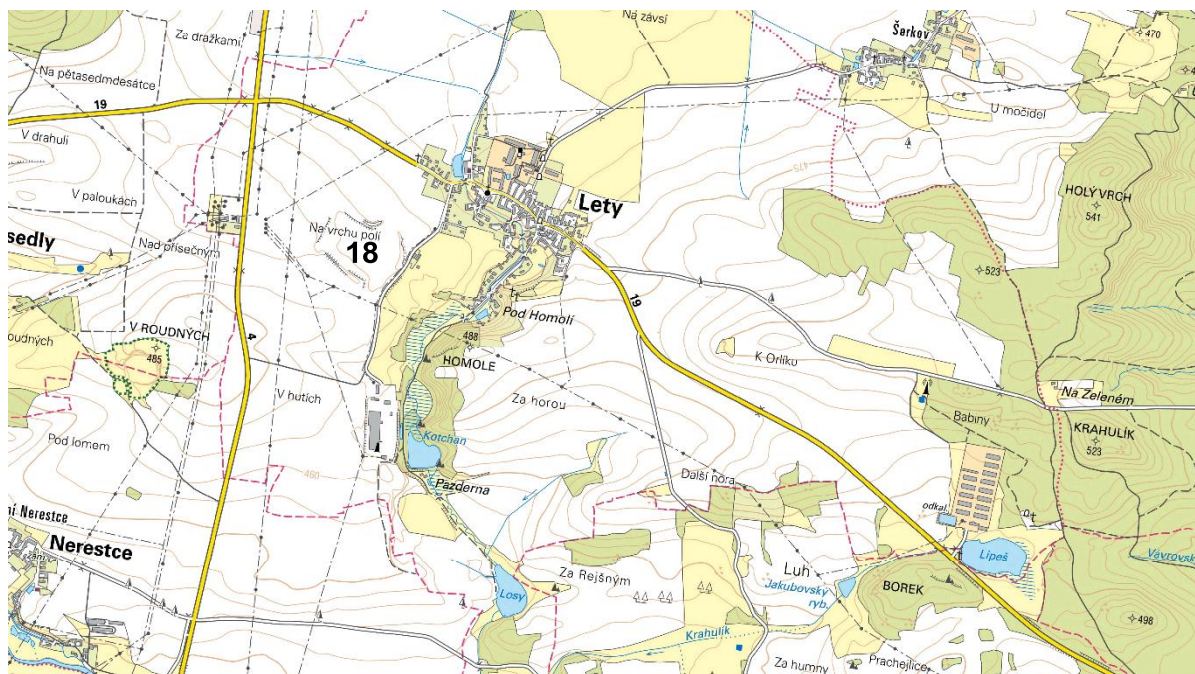


## 2.3 The citizens' concerns related to the future of the Memorial

The concerns of the residents are recorded in Map 3 – concerns related to the future of the Memorial

No. in map	Description of the concerns
	The local residents see the picturesque landscape as one of the greatest values of the place. They fear that the architecture of the Memorial will not respect the surrounding landscape and will draw attention to itself at all costs. Part of the assignment of the competition should be an emphasis on the respect for the landscape character.
18	There was information about the intention to set up a landfill place at the former brickworks near Lety. The residents of the neighboring municipalities disagree with this intention and are afraid that extensive demolition of pig farm might support this. The Museum of Romani Culture must communicate the intention of demolition and the way of waste disposal well and thus dispel the concerns of local people that the realization of the Memorial will be connected with the establishment of a landfill in the area.

Map 3 – Concerns related to the future of the Memorial



## 2.4 Memories associated with the place

The location of the memories of the residents is recorded in Map 4 – memories associated with the place

Marked in map	Memories associated with the place
A	The area on which the camp was built, perhaps during the First Republic, served as a camp area for the nomadic Roma. The place was always a meadow – pasture, it was barren, rocky, wet in the southern part, unsuitable for cultivation. This is also reflected in the local name Dolní dráha.
A	It was said that there was a children's summer camp at Dolní dráhy in 1937.
B	It was also mentioned that at the end of World War II, after the surrender of Germany, which had also been signed in Čimelice, there were detained soldiers of the retreating German army at the site of the original camp for a short period of time. This period is associated with the death of local teacher Vlk, who was, at night, on the way from where he guarded detained soldiers, shot in a nearby forest. It has not been found out by whom. This event is reminded by a cross in the woods north of the camp.
C	Across the main road, southwest of the site of the future camp, there was a place where the carcass was discarded - this place was called Na Mrchovišťatech.
	The pig farm was built by the association of societies Prasex. Mr. Vaněček – a librarian, a member of the Communist Party, a cultural man – is said to have been the only one against the construction of the pig farm (this is perhaps documented in some records in the village).
	The plaque on the cemetery in Mirovice has been there since 1960.

Map 4 – Memories associated with the place

