

## Oświęcim – the City of Peace

Oświęcim is an old town which dates back to the 12th century. Preserved monuments and traces of the past give it a specific atmosphere. The 800-year history of Oświęcim has tragic years in its pages. During World War II, the Germans built in Oświęcim the largest death camp in human history, KL Auschwitz-Birkenau, in which 1.1 to 1.5 million victims were murdered in the years 1940-1945. It was an unimaginable drama and the greatest evil a man could ever do to another man. Therefore, KL Auschwitz-Birkenau, on the site of which the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum was established on 2 July 1947, must be a warning to the world and a call to respect the fundamental values: the right to human life, freedom and dignity. The memory of what happened in KL Auschwitz-Birkenau during World War II and the presence of a museum on its premises became the starting point for constructive thinking about the future.

Nowadays, Oświęcim is a town with over 35,000 inhabitants, it is a center of numerous peace initiatives, a meeting place for people of various nationalities, regardless of religion and beliefs, a place where new generations want to build a future without wars and violence. The opportunity for the town is to create an open, multinational and multi-religious center of reflection and dialogue. Therefore, one should bet on values such as coexistence, reconciliation, love, peace, tolerance, dialogue, memory, freedom, understanding, a world without violence. Life shows how people and nations know little about each other, about their history, culture, religion, customs and beliefs.

For many years, the town of Oświęcim has been working for peace, striving to make it perceived in the minds of people as a place of interpersonal understanding, tolerance between nations, social dialogue, respect for other cultures, races, beliefs and nationalities. The image that the town aims at, and which is consistently implemented through the activities described below, can be described as “Oświęcim – the City of Peace”.