

# Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/about-the-institute/mission/2,Institute-of-National-Remembrance-Commission-for-the-Prosecution-of-Crimes-again.html>

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## **The statutory tasks of the Institute of National Remembrance**

The mission of the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu – the IPN) is to research and popularize the modern history of Poland and to investigate crimes committed from 8 November 1917, throughout the Second World War and the communist period, to 31 July 1990.

The Institute was established by the Polish Parliament by virtue of the Act of 18 December 1998. Its actual activity began in the middle of the year 2000, after the Sejm (the lower chamber of the Polish Parliament) with the Senate's consent appointed the first President of the IPN. This post was taken by a lawyer, Professor Leon Kieres, who headed the Institute until December 2005. In the years 2005–2010, the function was held by Professor Janusz Kurtyka. Łukasz Kamiński, Ph.D. headed the IPN from 28 June 2011 until 22 July 2016. Jarosław Szarek, Ph.D. was nominated for President on 22 July 2016.

The Institute is headed by the President appointed by the Polish Parliament. The IPN's Council, consisting of nine members, is an advisory body to the President.

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## Mission

The main principles, considered as the fundamental reasons for the establishment of the Institute were thus defined. These principles were later to become the foundations of the work of the Institute.

The principles defining the work of the Institute of National Remembrance are:

- the preservation of remembrance about the enormity of the number of victims, losses and damages suffered by the Polish Nation during the Second World War and after it ended,
- the patriotic traditions of the Polish Nation's struggles with its occupants, Nazis and communists,
- the obligation of prosecuting crimes against peace, crimes against humanity and war crimes,
- the actions of Polish citizens in support of the independence of the Polish State and in defense of freedom and human dignity,
- the obligation of the state to compensate all the aggrieved by a state which violated human rights; as an expression of the belief

that no unlawful action by the state against the citizens can be classified or forgotten.

These words were transformed into years of arduous work and hundreds of published books, seminars, exhibitions and conferences concerning various, sometimes previously undiscussed, issues. Moreover, this work has resulted in uncovering the truth about the most difficult but also the most triumphant moments in the history of Poland and the Polish Nation. These are also activities aimed at popularizing recent history among the youngest generation, including rallies, competitions and reaching out to them through the Internet and social media. In certain cases the IPN's work has proved to be a race against time in order to honor the heroes who have been consigned to oblivion for years.

The IPN's headquarters are located in Warsaw. Eleven branch offices were also established in all of the cities where there are courts of appeal, namely: Białystok, Gdańsk, Katowice, Cracow, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań, Rzeszów, Szczecin, Warsaw and Wrocław. There are also 7 subbranches located in Bydgoszcz, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Kielce, Koszalin, Olsztyn, Opole and Radom.

### **The Institute of National Remembrance consists of :**

- **The IPN Archive**– extensive archives of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century history of Poland,

- **The Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation** – a commission prosecuting perpetrators of crimes committed during both the German and communist totalitarian regime,
- **The National Education Office** – an educational center,
- **The Historical Research Office** – an academic research center,
- **The Office of Search and Identification** – a team searching for burial places of victims of totalitarian regimes and ethnic cleansing in 1917–1989,
- **The Vetting Office** – dealing with the lustration process,
- **The Office for Commemorating the Struggle and Martyrdom** – commemorating important Polish historical events, places and figures,
- **A publishing house** – a publisher of historical books, educational materials, historical journals, popular magazines and more.

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## **The National Education Office**

The National Education Office knowledge about the most significant events in the modern history of Poland. The Institute organizes classes

at schools, workshops for teachers, lectures, seminars, competitions and educational trips. It prepares exhibitions, concerts, films and film screenings, websites and educational materials for teachers and their students. Moreover, the National Education Office conducts interviews with witnesses of key historical events and makes such materials available to the general public. It also organizes campaigns and media events to promote knowledge of modern Polish history.

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## **The Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation**

The prosecutors at the IPN's Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation prosecute the perpetrators of German and communist crimes, war crimes and crimes against humanity. They conduct investigations even if the perpetrators are no longer alive, in order to clarify all the circumstances and identify the victims.

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## **The Archive**

The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance collects, elaborates on, and discloses materials related to the history of the Polish Nation between 1917 and 1990, i.e. mainly under German and Soviet occupation, and during the communist period. The Institute's collection contains files acquired from the communist organs of repression and documents of the Second World War occupational authorities. They are now accessible to the victims of repression, journalists, researchers and public institutions. The IPN's archival resources amount to over 91 km of files.

The Act on the IPN regulates the recording, collecting, storing, processing, securing, making available and publishing of the documents of the state security authorities, produced and accumulated from 22 July 1944 until 31 July 1990, as well as the documents of the security authorities of the Third Reich and the Soviet Union concerning the crimes committed against the Polish Nation and Polish citizens of other nationalities from 8 November 1917 until 31 July 1990. The documents in question pertain to both German and Soviet repressions.

Apart from documentation in paper form, the resources of the IPN consist of photographs, microfilms, videos and audio recordings.

- 39,000 000 photos
- 840,000 microfilms
- 1,900 films
- 1,100 audio recordings

**The IPN's archival resources were obtained from the following institutions:**

- Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration,
- Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the

PolishNation,

- Office for State Protection,
- Ministry of Defense,
- Ministry of Justice,
- common and military courts, common and military prosecutor's offices,
- state archives,
- international archives and institutions,
- private donations.

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## **The Historical Research Office**

The Historical Research Office disseminates knowledge and conducts academic research on the 20<sup>th</sup>-century history of Poland and the Polish Nation, including the history of Polish emigration. It initiates research projects, organizes conferences, seminars, releases academic publications and materials to popularize historical knowledge.

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## **The Office of Search and Identification**

The Office of Search and Identification looks for unidentified burial sites of the soldiers struggling for independence and victims of totalitarian

oppression from the period between 8 November 1917 and 31 July 1990. It restores the memory about the people who have been condemned to oblivion by the communist authorities. A team of historians, archeologists, forensic experts and geneticists conducts research and exhumations in many places in Poland.

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## **The Vetting Office**

The Vetting Office examines the vetting declarations of candidates to the highest public offices in regard to their truthfulness. Persons born before 1 August 1972 have to submit information on whether they collaborated with communist security services. A false statement in this regard may result in exclusion from holding a public office for several years. The purpose of this procedure is the transparency of public life. The Office publishes four catalogues on the Internet: communist security service officers, persons investigated by Security Services before 1989, persons holding management functions during the Polish People's Republic, and the people who currently hold the most significant public offices.

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## **The Office for Commemorating the Struggle and Martyrdom**

The Office for Commemorating the Struggle and Martyrdom deals with commemorating historical events, places and figures in Poland and abroad, as well as honoring the struggle and martyrdom sites of other



nations from the period 1917–1990 which are located in Poland. It is also responsible for the de-communization of public space.

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## International Cooperation

The Institute of National Remembrance has been active in international organizations. It is a member of the European Network of Official Authorities in Charge of the Secret-Police Files, and the Platform of European Memory and Conscience. (The IPN is one of the founding members of the Platform. Now the Platform brings together 62 institutions from all over the world.)

The IPN's cooperation with international partners results in academic conferences, publications, an exchange of documents, as well as numerous educational projects. In accordance with Article 53 point 4 of the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, the IPN "promotes in the country and abroad the results of its work and research of other institutions, organizations and people concerning the issues being the subject of its activity".

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