

Why were STOLPERSTEINE installed for forced recruits in Luxembourg?

In September 2021, Gunter Demnig installed a number of STOLPERSTEINE in Junglinster, Luxembourg, including for men who were forcibly enlisted into the Wehrmacht. We decided to go ahead with the installation after consulting with our regional partners.

These were some of our considerations: The people recruited by force in occupied territories were often young men sent to the front against their will as “cannon fodder”. As a rule, they did not share the beliefs of the Nazis and were not directly involved with the Holocaust. In Luxembourg, which was occupied in 1942, 11,200 men and 3,614 women were forced to join the German military. They have been recognized as official victims of the Nazis since 1967.

Our decision was also made after a round table debate in which representatives of different groups of victims in Luxembourg voted unanimously in favor of installing Stolpersteine for forced recruits.



It must be noted that the debate and conflict about whether to include forced recruits as an officially recognized group of victims existed in Luxembourg long before the STOLPERSTEIN project. The fact that the recent installation of STOLPERSTEINE rekindled the

debate shows that Gunter Demnig's art monument functions as a seismograph of the discourses on history and remembrance.

For our part, Gunter Demnig's idea that STOLPERSTEINE should be laid for all victims of National Socialism still applies. STOLPERSTEINE attempt to illustrate and trace the lives of all those who were persecuted. They commemorate them and encourage contemporary society to reflect on the past and present.

However, the fact that a STOLPERSTEINE might be installed for somebody does not mean that we believe that all victims of the Nazis suffered equally, nor that we judge a respective life on this basis.

Our team and partners always conduct research into the life of each person for whom a STOLPERSTEIN is installed as extensively as possible and to the best of our ability according to contemporary understanding of the historical context. We will not say that we will place a STOLPERSTEIN for all forced recruits in territories occupied by the Nazis or for every deserter. We will not place STOLPERSTEINE for people proven to have participated in the Nazis' mass extermination program, even if they later became victims themselves. We always try to take into account recent research, perhaps because an archive has opened up, or new documents have been discovered, that sheds a different light on the life of a person for whom a STOLPERSTEIN has been installed. In such a case, the wording on a STOLPERSTEIN might be changed; and in certain cases, the STOLPERSTEIN might be removed completely.

We do not want to participate in the debate on the hierarchy of victims and are glad when the representatives of different groups of victims support each other.

Each STOLPERSTEIN and inscription is supposed to encourage the observer to think and commemorate. Furthermore, the different aspects of National Socialist persecution can invite reflection on certain developments in today's world and view them from a different perspective. Ideally, a STOLPERSTEIN can also inspire people to look at others with an open mind, acceptance and respect, regardless of religion, skin color, belief system, nationality and so on.

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