



KAZERNE DOSSIN

Holocaust and Human Rights

POLICY PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 2025–2030

CONTENT

What We Stand For	3
Summary of Ambitions for 2025–2030	3
Environmental Scan	4
Strategic and Operational Priorities for Kazerne Dossin (2025–2030)	7
Concept for a New Permanent Exhibition in 2029	15
Contact	17



WHAT WE STAND FOR

At Kazerne Dossin, we preserve, research, present, and share the history of the persecution of Jews, Sinti, and Roma during the Second World War through our memorial, museum, and archive and research centre. As a site of Holocaust remembrance, we reflect on the past while questioning the contemporary meaning of human dignity and human rights.

SUMMARY OF AMBITIONS FOR 2025–2030

As a public institution, Kazerne Dossin aims to offer a space for confronting difficult histories and engaging with human rights. The focus lies on the Belgian case of the Holocaust and the genocide of the Sinti and Roma, approached with care and respect in order to contribute to an inclusive culture of remembrance. The mission goes beyond remembrance; it also seeks to inform and raise awareness of contemporary social challenges, with human rights at its core. Emphasis is placed on the inherent dignity and fundamental rights of every individual.

From a site marked by a painful past and rooted in the principle of human dignity, Kazerne Dossin provides meaningful experiences that communicate history in a powerful way. This implies that the past remains relevant to today's society. By engaging with its collections and making the past more accessible, the institution aims to foster connection in the context of a history that is often perceived as divided.

Kazerne Dossin collects, researches, and shares knowledge about the Holocaust and the genocide of the Sinti and Roma in Belgium. This extends beyond historical facts to include the sharing of educational insights, with a focus on reaching a broad and diverse audience.

The organisation is working to improve both its physical and digital infrastructure in order to enhance its operations and the visitor experience. This includes its physical sites, such as the memorial and museum, as well as its online presence.

The team is composed of permanent staff, student workers, volunteers, freelance guides, and interns. The aim is to build and maintain a strong, professional team that works together to fulfil and promote the mission of Kazerne Dossin.



©Ilse Liekens

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

A series of profound challenges are shaping our daily lives and our future. Political fragmentation is putting pressure on stable governance and decision-making, directly affecting the quality of our social cohesion. At the same time, the precariat is growing—a group of people facing precarious employment and living conditions, with limited economic security.

In recent years, intolerance has been on the rise. This trend manifests in various forms, including racism, antisemitism, antiziganism, and Islamophobia. Multiple factors contribute to this development, including economic insecurity, migration crises, and the rise of populist political movements, all of which fuel distrust and hostility towards minorities and newcomers.

Simultaneously, geopolitical tensions in and around Europe are intensifying due to the unpredictability of power politics, the relations between global superpowers, and regional conflicts. Wars result in humanitarian crises and regional instability, which are also felt within Europe, further feeding uncertainty and fear.

Opportunities in the Museum Sector

In 2022, ICOM introduced a new, guiding definition of the museum:

“A museum is a permanent, not-for-profit institution in the service of society, that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Museums are open, accessible and inclusive, and promote diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with community participation. Museums offer varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing.”

Kazerne Dossin aligns itself with this definition and sees the following additional opportunities:

There is a growing trend towards personalised visitor experiences—ranging from customised guided tours to interactive exhibitions tailored to individual preferences. This reflects a broader desire among visitors to feel more engaged and connected during their museum visit.

In parallel, the digital revolution is transforming how museums operate and engage with their audiences. By digitising collections and offering online exhibitions, museums can reach wider audiences and improve accessibility.

Technological innovations such as augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI), and virtual reality (VR) offer new ways to enhance the visitor experience and make exhibitions more interactive.

There is also increasing demand for participatory approaches in museums, so that audiences are actively involved in the creation and curation of exhibitions. This includes crowdsourcing initiatives and collaborative projects with local communities. Participation helps foster a deeper connection with the public and contributes to exhibitions that resonate with a more socially diverse audience. This trend also draws attention to ethical questions driven by ongoing societal debates about justice, inclusion, and solidarity.

Finally, there is a growing awareness of the importance of provenance research and the integration of environmentally sustainable practices into all aspects of museum management, from energy use to waste reduction.

Together, these developments shape a dynamic and complex environment for museums to operate in. They present both challenges and opportunities to reposition and adapt to changing societal expectations.



©Guy Kleinblatt

Developments in Holocaust and Sinti and Roma Genocide Remembrance

Approaches to Holocaust remembrance and the genocide of the Sinti and Roma have been evolving.

With the passing of the last Holocaust survivors, we are losing direct links to the past. However, the physical sites of related historical events offer an alternative form of connection. This “*spatial turn*” highlights the importance of geographical context in understanding these events, thereby deepening our insight into where and how these atrocities occurred.

There is also a shift from testimonies towards microhistories—detailed studies of individual lives and local communities. These help to highlight the specific experiences of victims and survivors. Here, too, digital technologies such as online archives and interactive databases provide new tools for research and remembrance, lowering barriers and increasing accessibility for younger generations.

The increasing presence of Holocaust and Sinti and Roma genocide histories in literature and the arts reflects a lasting interest and provides new pathways for storytelling and understanding.

International initiatives promote collaboration and exchange across countries and cultures, aiming for a more inclusive perspective on remembrance and facilitating historical research. In education, there is broad consensus on why and how the Holocaust should be taught.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day is observed annually on January 27, the date when Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated by the Red Army in 1945. In addition, many countries recognise August 2 as the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, marking the liquidation of the so-called “*Gypsy family camp*” at Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944, when 4,300 people were murdered.

Finally, we observe a growing politicisation and instrumentalisation of Holocaust remembrance in contemporary political debates, where historical narratives are sometimes instrumentalised to support current political agendas.





Trends in Human Rights

A number of developments are threatening the rights of individuals and minorities on a global scale. These are often interrelated and unfold across multiple levels.

Despite scientific consensus on the urgency of the climate and environmental crisis, many governments lag behind in implementing effective measures to protect citizens and their rights.

In many countries, authoritarian tendencies are on the rise. Democratic institutions and processes are being undermined, with power increasingly concentrated in the hands of a single leader or small elite. Alongside this, we see an increase in the use of violence. Regional tensions are escalating, often leading to manifest conflict and serious humanitarian consequences.

A complex interplay of mass data collection, lack of transparency, commercial exploitation, and insufficient regulation has granted significant power to private media companies, to the

detriment of individuals' privacy rights. In this context, authoritarian regimes are using advanced surveillance technologies to monitor citizens, suppress dissent, and restrict civil liberties and activism.

Rhetoric that plays on public fears—often by scapegoating migrants or institutions—has a real impact. The accompanying shift towards isolationism and protectionism is making international human rights protection more difficult.

Perpetrators of human rights violations are rarely held accountable, which erodes public trust in justice, the international legal order, and public institutions.

While the global human rights landscape faces immense and complex challenges, there remains hope for progress. Governments, organisations, and citizens can work together to uphold and protect fundamental rights. Only through collective effort can we realise a world where everyone has the opportunity to live in freedom and dignity.

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR KAZERNE DOSSIN (2025–2030)

Strategic Objectives (SO) define the direction in which Kazerne Dossin is moving and have a broad, overarching scope. Operational Objectives (OO) translate that direction into concrete steps and actions. Naturally, these objectives will be further developed into specific initiatives.

We share our objectives because we want to invite engagement. Would you like to contribute to our mission—through your organisation, your professional role, or your personal interest? We would be glad to hear from you.

CONTACT

info@kazernedossin.eu

+32 (0)15 29 06 60



SO 1.

Give Space to Difficult History and Human Rights

Giving space to the history of the Belgian case of the Holocaust and the genocide of the Sinti and Roma requires a careful and respectful approach. Kazerne Dossin contributes to an inclusive culture of remembrance. We position this case both within its local context and within the broader framework of European history.

Our mission is not only to remember but also to inform and raise awareness of the challenges that still lie ahead. In doing so, human rights serve as our compass. We emphasise that every person is inherently worthy and entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms.

OO 1.1

We organise commemorative activities and provide space for personal reflection

The organisation of moments of silence and rituals is a powerful way to show respect and encourage reflection. We do not view commemoration as a one-off event; rather, we regard it as part of an ongoing effort to acknowledge those who have suffered, to keep the memory of history alive, and to inform and raise awareness among future generations.

OO 1.2

We promote respect for human dignity and human rights

Human rights protect the dignity of every individual. They concern dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity. Everyone is entitled to human rights and to exercise them fully, regardless of gender, ethnic background, religion, or political belief. These rights apply at all times, everywhere, and to everyone. Kazerne Dossin supports the aspiration to uphold respect for human rights—always, everywhere, and for all.

OO 1.3

We ensure that Kazerne Dossin remains widely recognised as the site of memory for racial persecution and genocide in Belgium

Through a hybrid approach that reaches a broad audience both digitally and physically, Kazerne Dossin is committed to preserving this history. We do so through innovative exhibitions—such as the forthcoming renewed permanent exhibition—targeted communication, and active engagement in collection acquisition and research. In this way, Kazerne Dossin reinforces its crucial role in fostering understanding of historical injustice and encouraging social dialogue around these themes.

OO 1.4

We connect with our audiences online

Strengthening our online museum activities is essential in today's digital age. We aim to offer a user-friendly website with intuitive navigation and a seamless user experience. Initiatives are being taken to strengthen and diversify Kazerne Dossin's online presence in a structured manner across various channels. These digital platforms function as both an entry point to and an extension of the museum experience.

SO 2.

Creating Meaningful Experiences at Kazerne Dossin

Kazerne Dossin is a site marked by a painful history—a site of memory and a space for dialogue on human dignity. What kinds of experiences do we want to offer through stories from a past that may seem increasingly distant? How can we communicate this history effectively? What does this history and the concept of dignity mean in today's society? In what ways are they relevant and significant?

OO 2.1

We develop visitor experiences from the perspective of the visitor, with attention to the entire journey

As a memorial, museum, and research centre, the organisation serves different functions for different visitors—ranging from leisure visitors to the museum, to relatives visiting the memorial, to researchers, school groups, and event participants. Each visitor embarks on a journey, beginning with the decision to visit and continuing well beyond the actual experience. What paths do these visitors take? What do they need in terms of information, context, support, or guidance? And how can Kazerne Dossin provide inclusive support throughout their journey?

OO 2.2

We apply a differentiated approach for different visitors and target groups

The difficult history and the emphasis on human dignity presented at Kazerne Dossin are relevant to a wide range of societal groups, including school pupils, students in professional training, general citizens, and tourists. We are also attentive to other forms of diversity, including people with disabilities, neurodiverse individuals, and gender-diverse communities. Experience shows that understanding and insight are internalised in different ways by different people. Therefore, the museum strives to diversify its offerings and methods to achieve the most inclusive outcomes possible.

9





OO 2.3

We connect our offerings with our own (digital) archives and research

Kazerne Dossin houses a growing archive. The tangible and intangible heritage in our collection is made accessible through multiple channels—within the museum and memorial, in our own publications and communications, and beyond the site through partnerships. Our offerings aim to create meaningful experiences that are rooted in the collection, with room for expansion through relevant loans. Unlocking a carefully preserved archive gives heritage its meaning. In a place that was once part of a system designed to erase people from society based on their identity, the physical traces that remain allow us to restore their dignity and presence.

OO 2.4

We make space for diverse voices and perspectives

Our society faces dilemmas and must constantly confront impactful external events that can cause unrest or provoke difficult questions. Giving space to painful history and human dignity means addressing uncomfortable topics. Kazerne Dossin provides a safe environment for such discussions, allowing time for reflection and offering space for plurality of voices and viewpoints.

Expanding, Deepening, and Sharing Knowledge and Understanding

Kazerne Dossin collects, researches, and shares knowledge about the Belgian case of the Holocaust and the genocide of the Sinti and Roma. In addition to historical knowledge, we also share practical experience in making this history and the importance of human rights accessible to a variety of audiences. From a position of expertise, we aim to make facts and insights widely accessible to the public.

OO 3.1

We work with the most up-to-date and accurate historical information

In addressing historical events, we use the most current and verified information available. Our focus lies particularly on the Belgian case of the Holocaust and the genocide of the Sinti and Roma, and more broadly on the history of the Second World War and human rights. Accuracy—ensured through reviews and validation processes—forms the foundation for our research, education, exhibitions, and communication.

OO 3.2

We acquire, manage, and make knowledge resources accessible in an efficient way

In line with the ICOM museum definition, Kazerne Dossin collects, preserves, and makes tangible and intangible heritage accessible. We do this with care—via streamlined processes—and with attention to developments in the professional field and appropriate technologies.

OO 3.3

We disseminate knowledge, insight, and skills to relevant target groups

We strive to inform and educate diverse audiences in a way that deepens their understanding of the Belgian case of the Holocaust, the genocide of the Sinti and Roma, and the broader context of human rights. In addition to historical content, we also share insights and skills related to education and audience engagement. We do this through targeted communication, publications, and activities.

OO 3.4

We actively contribute to local and international exchange of expertise

As a recognised centre of expertise, Kazerne Dossin shares knowledge and good practices with both local and international partners. Staff members also actively seek inspiration from institutions with similar mandates. This overlap—whether content-related, methodological, or practical—is aimed at improving the visitor experience and optimising the organisation's operations. We pursue this through conferences, webinars, and collaborative projects.

SO 4

Connecting People and Communities

Kazerne Dossin documents and develops knowledge, manages collections, and seeks effective ways to communicate the Belgian case of the Holocaust and the genocide of the Sinti and Roma to a broad audience. This history is complex and often evokes difficult questions and associations. Engaging with a divided past requires starting from common ground and approaching issues with care and thoughtfulness.

OO 4.1

We take a strategic approach to stakeholder management

Kazerne Dossin's work relies on the many stakeholders we engage with through networks, partnerships, communication, visits, and more. In the coming policy period, we will develop a comprehensive stakeholder mapping and further align our (internal) operations accordingly.

OO 4.2

We actively involve survivors, descendants, and the Jewish, Sinti, and Roma communities in the organisation's activities

Survivors, descendants, and their communities are essential partners in the mission of Kazerne Dossin. In the coming years, we will value and strengthen their contributions by actively including diverse narratives and seeking meaningful interaction.

OO 4.3

We are a valued partner in local initiatives

Kazerne Dossin aims to invest further in local initiatives through outreach and support. We continue to expand our local network, maintain a visible presence in the wider region, and join forces with partner organisations.

OO 4.4

We foster continued engagement among staff, guides, volunteers, and donors

The Kazerne Dossin community is essential to the organisation's success. We actively nurture these relationships and will continue working to structure and strengthen them. We seek new ways to enhance engagement and increase the diversity of this group.

12



SO 5

We Improve Our Infrastructure and Optimise Its Use

Kazerne Dossin operates across multiple spaces: as a memorial, museum, and research centre, both on a physical site and in the digital realm. To enhance our operational capacity and the hospitality that goes with it, we aim to invest in improving our infrastructure and its use during the coming policy period. This includes both the physical site and buildings, as well as digital infrastructure.

OO 5.1

We ensure that the entrance and reception areas offer a welcoming, accessible, and safe environment

To provide visitors with a warm and inclusive welcome, we are reviewing the entrance and reception areas of the museum. This strategic step is aimed not only at improving operational efficiency but also at creating a positive and hospitable experience for all visitors, regardless of their background or needs.

OO 5.2

We support operations and enrich the visitor experience through digital systems and tools

In an era when technological innovation continues to reshape society, Kazerne Dossin actively invests in strengthening its operations by deploying advanced digital systems and tools. The focus lies on developing and enhancing a digital ecosystem that not only supports internal processes but also transforms the visitor experience in meaningful ways.

OO 5.3

We improve the preservation of archival materials

Through the implementation of advanced archiving systems and improved digital accessibility, Kazerne Dossin aims to ensure better preservation of its historical documents and data. We strive for efficient use of space and optimal storage conditions for our valuable collections.

OO 5.4

We use sustainable materials with attention to experiential value

Our efforts focus on minimising our ecological footprint while enriching the educational and aesthetic dimensions of the museum environment. This strategy reflects our commitment to responsible resource management and to creating a positive impact on both our visitors and the world around us.

SO 6

Strengthening the Team

Kazerne Dossin operates with a team of permanent staff, organised into five departments, and is supported by a pool of student workers, volunteers, freelance guides, and interns. We aim to build and sustain a strong team that works professionally to carry out and communicate Kazerne Dossin's mission.

OO 6.1

We promote a shared work culture

A shared work culture strengthens overall performance and cohesion within the organisation. We foster an environment where staff feel connected to the organisation's core values and mission, and to one another. This includes encouraging open communication and collaboration, and creating space where staff feel free to share ideas and feedback.

OO 6.2

We focus on wellbeing, inclusion, recognition, and flexibility

In a time when employee needs and expectations are constantly evolving, it is essential for our organisation to actively provide a workplace where everyone feels valued and supported. This means cultivating a culture that embraces diversity and inclusion, and providing opportunities for each staff member to grow and contribute in a way that suits them. Ensuring wellbeing involves attention to both physical and mental health.

OO 6.3

We develop a diverse workforce in terms of profiles and backgrounds, and work to reduce staff turnover

Diversity brings a broad range of perspectives and skills, leading to innovation, creativity, and better problem-solving. By actively fostering an inclusive environment in which everyone feels valued, we can attract and retain top talent. Reducing staff turnover is essential, as a stable team ensures continuity, preserves institutional knowledge, and strengthens team dynamics.

CONCEPT FOR A NEW PERMANENT EXHIBITION IN 2029

The new permanent exhibition aims to explore and foster understanding of the Holocaust and the genocide of the Sinti and Roma, rooted in the history of the Dossin Barracks, the concept of human dignity, and human rights. In doing so, we construct a narrative that informs, moves, invites, and challenges visitors.



©Jeroen Van Looy

The Story of the Dossin Barracks

At the heart of the new permanent exhibition is the history of the Dossin Barracks and the pivotal role it played in the process of exclusion, persecution, and mass murder. Between 1942 and 1944, 25,490 Jews and 353 Roma and Sinti were held at the barracks before being deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and several smaller camps. Only around 1,700 of them survived the deportation.

Facts form the foundation for the visitor experience. Anchored in the latest academic research, the exhibition is firmly embedded in its historical context. Starting from the events at the Dossin Barracks and the lives of those deported and their families, we position this local story within a broader European—and even global—perspective.

Understanding the human dimension of history

Every person possesses inherent dignity and inalienable rights. The aspiration to promote awareness of human dignity, rights, and the rule of law runs as a central thread throughout the exhibition. We remain vigilant against falling into anachronistic interpretations.

The new exhibition embraces a diversity of voices and perspectives. We create space for varied experiences and narratives. Eyewitness testimonies play a vital role and are embedded within historical research. The exhibition sheds light on how individuals occupied or assumed different roles—as victims, perpetrators, collaborators, members of the resistance, or bystanders. The inhumanity of genocide is shown for what it truly is: a human-made catastrophe and crime. Deportees, perpetrators, and bystanders are not reduced to stereotypes or categories, but are presented as complex individuals with layered identities.

By bringing history to a human scale, the exhibition seeks to honour both personal choices and collective experiences. This dual focus allows us to connect micro-level events with broader historical developments.

A Local History, a Global Story

The history of the Dossin Barracks is part of a layered structure of organisation, logistics, and administration, grounded in ideology and systemic processes.

Dominant worldviews and political ideologies shaped the historical context in which individuals acted. The origins of beliefs and their far-reaching impact on communities and individuals are examined, as is the way in which perceived states of exception were used to justify oppression.

Processes of exclusion and dehumanisation are explored within their socio-psychological contexts. Racism, antisemitism, 'us-versus-them' thinking, group pressure, and authoritarian tendencies are essential to understanding the events. At the same time, ideas of resistance, freedom, equality, democracy, and justice are also central.

These ideas and processes are made tangible through attention to the transports, their routes, the authorities involved, and a critical examination of the bureaucratic systems and the role of the

state. Specific decrees that directly affected people's lives are interpreted and contextualised, as are the infrastructures and systematic procedures underpinning the persecution and mass murder. The organisation of escape, hiding, and resistance—as well as collaboration—are thoroughly addressed.

Life thereafter

The exhibition also highlights the lasting impact of the Holocaust and the genocide of the Sinti and Roma on individuals and society. Although the mass murder ended in 1945, and the Dossin Barracks ceased to function as a waiting room for Auschwitz following the liberation of Mechelen, the story did not end there.

For the victims of racial persecution, suffering continued. Survivors hoped for the return of loved ones but were met with little understanding or support from the post-war bureaucracy. Their physical and psychological trauma was scarcely acknowledged, and legal reparation was slow and incomplete. The pain was passed onto future generations. For many years, remembrance was not a widely shared or supported process.

While personal suffering left deep internal scars, the outside world also changed. The United Nations was established, the Genocide Convention was adopted, and the aspirational Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted as the foundation for a renewed vision of how to live together. The exhibition builds on this recognition of the inherent dignity and equal, inalienable rights of all people.

The exhibition's interpretation and educational context are structured around a number of guiding questions:

- – *What knowledge do we have?*
- – *How do we communicate about this history?*
- – *In what ways do we position ourselves in relation to it?*



CONTACT

info@kazernedossin.eu
+32 (0)15 29 06 60

Goswin de Stassartstraat 153, 2800 Mechelen
kazernedossin.eu



©Ilse Liekens

17

Tomas Baum
General Director Kazerne Dossin

tomas.baum@kazernedossin.eu

Nina Béghin
Director of Communication and External Relations

nina.beghin@kazernedossin.eu

Veerle Vanden Daelen
Curator and Director Collections & Research

veerle.vandendaelen@kazernedossin.eu

Koen Van Looy
Director Reception and Operational services

koen.vanlooy@kazernedossin.eu

Adriaan Baccaert
Director Public engagement and Education

adriaan.baccaert@kazernedossin.eu