

On the road with the *For real?* mobile exhibiton – Insights from the tour team. Part 2: Germany-wide tour

Johanna Schüller (JS): Olga, after the tour in Brandenburg everyone was thinking about what to do next. Fortunately the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future encouraged us to apply for a second round of funding. This time, we wanted to take the exhibition around the country – and that's when you joined us as tour manager. What was the project like for you?

Olga Preiss (OP): Right away I could see the importance of mobile educational projects. After the Brandenburg tour all kinds of queries were coming in – from cities, schools, museums – who all wanted us to visit them. So it only made sense to do a country-wide tour.

We also made some improvements. We replaced the pavilion with a truck so we weren't dependent on the weather. The tour was eight weeks long and went through eight states. We expanded the educational program and adapted it to new target groups – like college students or police trainees – as well as to adults in general. The exhibition was barrier-free and available in six languages. We also prepared a summer school on "Digital Remembrance" and laid the groundwork for this publication.

JS: That sounds like a huge job. What was the biggest challenge for the planning?

OP: The short amount of time, without a doubt. Eight different federal states, often without any contacts beforehand, so we had to start everywhere from square one. We found local partners and built up networks, sometimes in just a few weeks.

In Schwerin, for example, the local "Partnership for Democracy" chapter and the Documentation Center for Dictatorship Victims were very supportive. They even held additional events like a concert and a flash mob. We also trained our team, including with sensitivity workshops, and began each day with a brief reflection.

Not everything went perfectly, of course. Some workshops weren't fully booked, and a few partners cancelled at short notice. But overall, the tour showed that there's a lot of interest. The demand is actually much greater than what our budget could cover.

JS: What was the educational work like on this big tour?

OP: The truck was a real eye-catcher. It stood there on town squares, and in no time people gathered around it. Pupils were curious, and people stopped what they were doing to ask about it. Some were skeptical – “Do we really still need this?” – but then they took a look inside and started talking with us. That's the power of a mobile exhibition: it meets people right where they are, in their everyday lives.

The workshops were very intense. Young people often had strong emotional reactions, as if they were sitting with the survivors “for real”. It was moving to see how affected they were.

JS: Was there one situation that really stands out?

OP: Yes, the opening in Frankfurt am Main at the German National Library. Pupils were visiting our exhibition and also the one at the German Exile Archive called *Just ask!*¹ Afterward there was a discussion with Michel Friedman, the patron of the country-wide tour. He spoke with the young people, listened to them, asked questions and brought home the fact that the survivors aren't the only witnesses, there are also the perpetrators: “Ask your parents and your grandparents: how could that have happened?” he said.

You could have heard a pin drop. One girl, who had talked about her close relationship with her grandmother, was obviously struck. You could see that remembrance isn't just about history – it keeps going into the present, and touches your family.

JS: And what was your impression: how was the exhibition received overall?

OP: Very differently, at different places. In city centers like Zwickau or Halle we met a lot of people who weren't expecting to be thinking about history. Some were critical at first, but then became curious. In Frankfurt, however, a lot of people knew about it already and came prepared for deeper discussions.

1 See the account by Sylvia Asums in this volume or the exhibition's website: <https://fragnach.org/en>.

You really see that mobile exhibitions offer easy access and open up spaces that weren't there before. You also reach people who wouldn't go to a memorial site or a museum. For me that's the biggest win of all from the tour.



Fig.1: Michel Friedman, patron of the Germany-wide tour, at the launch of the tour in Potsdam, May 2025 (© Adam Sevens)

Fig.2: Opening event in Schwerin, June 2025 (© Corinna Mehl)





Fig.3: The exhibition truck in Zwickau, May 2025 (© Corinna Meh)

Fig.4: Visitors and displays in Schwerin, June 2025 (© Corinna Meh)

Olga Preiss, director, producer and tour manager. Studied sociology, psychology and photography in Bielefeld. Entered film via documentaries, music videos and advertising. Since 2014 independent work in cultural production, film directing and tour management. Numerous projects that combine documentary narratives with visual sensitivity. Tour manager for the Germany-wide *For real?* exhibition from the Brandenburg Association for Culture and History.

Johanna Schüller, specialist in Judaism, Polish language & literature and media science, studied in Potsdam and Warsaw with a focus on the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish cultural history. Traineeship at the Topography of Terror Documentation Centre, curatorial work for multiple exhibition offices, project coordination for the BERLIN GLOBAL exhibition at the Humboldt Forum. Since 2022 lead project manager of the *For real?* mobile exhibition from the Brandenburg Association for Culture and History.