**Statement of the Presidium of the Executive Board of the Polish Teachers' Union (ZNP) on Holocaust Education**

The Polish Teachers' Union (ZNP) has been carefully following the discussion evoked by the amendment to the Polish Act on the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) and its consequences. Our particular concern has been aroused by a complete lack of reflection on how this amendment will influence history education, local history education, social studies and education as such, including Holocaust education. We ask ourselves how teachers seeking to nurture the remembrance of the history of local communities are going to be perceived, especially in areas where various cultures and nationalities met; and how initiatives to organise debates on difficult, often painful and still ambiguous events, will be evaluated.

Profound history education, also in regard to difficult and sometimes infamous episodes in our history, is not only in the interest of Polish pupils, but it is their inalienable right, and for teachers – their unconditional duty.

For decades, the ZNP has been undertaking activities related to the Holocaust and Polish citizens of Jewish background, among others, in the framework of the Teachers’ Freedom Movement, brought into being by the ZNP in 1985. The task of the Movement was and still is the implementation of the message included in the Declaration on the Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on Poland’s initiative in 1978.

The Teachers’ Freedom Movement of the ZNP advocated to establish the Teachers’ Remembrance and Freedom Day on 27 April. For more than thirty years on this day, teachers visit Auschwitz to walk with pupils in the March of Silence from the camp gate to the Death Wall and the monument for the murdered in Birkenau.

Every two years, on 27 January, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the ZNP, in cooperation with the Education Department of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, organises seminars for young teachers from Israel, Germany and Austria. The aim of the seminars is not only the joint participation in the celebrations of the anniversary of the camp’s liberation, but first and foremost the joint examination of the problem how to teach about Holocaust in our countries today.

As a signatory of the declaration, adopted in 2008 by the biggest education unions from Israel (Histadrut Hamorim), Poland (ZNP and NSZZ „Solidarność”) and Germany (GEW), the ZNP recognized the special responsibility of teachers and trade unionists “to educate young people and the next generations in committing themselves to humanity, civil awareness and living together in peace – by also confronting them adequately with the Holocaust and its remembrance.”

The Polish Teachers' Union puts forward solutions:

• which forbid indoctrinating and thus limiting pupils’ independent evaluations of events,

• which oblige to present controversial historical and political phenomena, not obliterating these controversies, but considering different perspectives and different assessments of these phenomena,

• which make it possible to prepare pupils to analyse opinions and sources independently, differentiating between facts and untrue information, as well as preparing them to wield influence over political situations, according to their own interests and judgments.

We appeal to all groups who relate to the ideals of education free from nationalism, xenophobia and prejudice to start discussions and support our initiative.

Simultaneously, we appeal to members of the media to stop using the term “pedagogy of shame”. The theory of pedagogy does not know such a concept. It is a propaganda term, which serves to justify negating a part of historical knowledge. The aim of pedagogy is to educate aware and critical citizens, who are able to take responsibility for their country and solve modern global problems peacefully, in cooperation with others, and in the spirit of tolerance.