

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Participant:	Intercultural Institute Timisoara, Romania
PIC number:	943259817
Project name and acronym:	Remember the Holocaust, Act for Democracy (Remember to Act)

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	2		
Event name:	Learning from the Past, Acting for the Future		
Type:	Teacher training		
In situ/online:	in-situ		
Location:	Cluj-Napoca, Romania		
Date(s):	24-28 July 2023		
Website(s) (if any):	https://www.intercultural.ro/en/remember-to-act/		
Participants			
Female:	26		
Male:	7		
Non-binary:			
From country 1 Romania:	33		
Total number of participants:	33	From total number of countries:	1
Description			
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>			
<p>This 5-day seminar was organised in the framework of the project Remember the Holocaust, Act for Democracy (Remember to Act), coordinated by Big Picture Association (Poland), in partnership with Documenta (Croatia), Intercultural Institute Timisoara (Romania), The Jewish Museum of Greece and Fondazione CDEC (Italy), co-funded by the European Commission through CERV programme. The seminar was co-funded by TOLI – The Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human Rights.</p> <p>A total of 33 teachers, community and NGO activists, and educators working in the field of Holocaust and human rights education from Romania participated in the event.</p> <p>The aim of the seminar was to contribute to increasing the quality of education regarding the Holocaust and human rights in Romania. The program provided a rich opportunity to integrate national and</p>			

international approaches in teaching about these topics and in understanding the contemporary relevance of this important chapter of modern history.

The objectives of the program were to:

- Develop teachers' coherent understanding of the Holocaust, based on historical facts;
- Develop teachers' understanding of the impact of stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination at individual, group and society level;
- Promote positive values for life in a diverse world, such as: respect, interculturalism, dialogue and appreciation of the other;
- Develop teachers' knowledge of the Roma genocide;
- Develop teachers' competences to teach the history of the Holocaust in an innovative, student-centered way and implement local and international projects;
- Approach the connection between Holocaust education and human rights education as a means to better understand the past and to act for the future.

The methodology of the seminar was learner centered, based on the principles of experiential learning and a human rights-based approach in education. The seminar offered a rich schedule of lectures and workshops, a survivor's testimony, a theatre performance and a guided tour, providing the teachers with the opportunity both to acquire or consolidate information and to reflect on how to transfer it into the activities with their students.

During the opening session, participants were welcomed by the organizers and the teachers were invited to briefly present themselves. The day continued with a session by Oana Bajka on the role of identity and stereotypes in shaping human interactions, as well as national and international policies. The participants reflected upon the meaning of identity and the ways in which identity was used as a reason for exclusion and murder during the Holocaust. The session ended with a reflection upon the ways in which teachers can work with their students to help them overcome their stereotypes, engage critically with any attempts at discrimination and stand up in front of injustices.

The second day began with a presentation by Ana Bărbulescu on the antisemitism of Romanian elite during the interwar period, which helped teachers understand the general climate and the attitudes towards Jews in the interwar period which made the Holocaust in Romania possible. The seminar continued with a session by Radu Ioanid, former Director of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's International Archival Programs Division, which helped the teachers understand on the one hand the specific traits of the Holocaust in Romania, and on the other hand to see the Holocaust as a European project and to learn some of the national myths about the Holocaust in various parts of Europe.

The session of Zoltán Tibori Szabó focused on the characteristics of the Jewish population in Transylvania before WWII and on the Holocaust in North Transylvania (under Hungarian administration) and in South Transylvania (under Romanian administration).

Oana Bajka presented more details about the interdisciplinary approach to teaching about the Holocaust and human rights, which allows students both to learn about the Holocaust and to learn from the Holocaust, in order to apply their learning to present day realities, to address discrimination, injustice, unfair treatment and to promote human rights. This interdisciplinary methodology uses the lens of human rights to help teachers and students understand how an event like the Holocaust was possible, how the propaganda functioned and how the rights of Jewish people – and other groups – were taken away one by one. At the same time, it uses the lens of the Holocaust to understand that today we need to take action when human rights are violated or at risk of being violated for members of any group living in our societies. This approach develops teachers' and consequently students' critical thinking and ability to challenge populist messages that are becoming prevalent in the European society (and elsewhere in the world). It motivates them to be upstanders in the face of discrimination, injustice and human rights violations. It raises their awareness about the unfair treatment of various groups in their society and about the need to take action.

The day ended with a powerful theatre performance by Giuvlipen, a Roma Feminist Theatre Company from Bucharest. The performance was specifically prepared for this seminar. It consisted of a selection of scenes from two theatre plays of Giuvlipen, namely Kali Tras and Romacen, and readings from two Roma Holocaust survivors testimonies. The teachers were very moved by the performance and

welcomed the opportunity to ask the two actresses many questions about Roma history and also about their artistic militant work, at the end of the performance.

The third day began with a session on Roma Genocide, in which Petre Matei presented historical facts about the fate of Roma during the war and their persecution in Romania, as well as provided teachers with a range of useful resources to use in the classroom on this topic. Next, Catalina Olteanu, the first Roma woman to become a member of the National Council for Combating Discrimination, conducted a workshop on the topic of combating anti-Roma racism, in which she led the teachers through a process of understanding the diversity of Roma communities in Romania and the urgent need for intercultural education and anti-discrimination in Romania and beyond.

The teachers had the opportunity to meet Vasile Szekely, Holocaust survivor from Cluj, and to listen to his testimony about his life before and during the Holocaust, but also after the Holocaust. His moving testimony about the hardships he and his family went through during the Holocaust helped the teachers reflect on the personal destinies crushed by the Nazis and their collaborators, and to commit to becoming a part of Mr Szekely's legacy.

As the seminar transitioned into the Jewish traditions segment, Peninah Zilberman described various customs, rituals, and practices that have been preserved through generations. She also spoke about artifacts, photographs, and traditional music, allowing participants to visually connect with the traditions being discussed. Her approach ensured that participants left not only with knowledge about Jewish traditions but also a profound connection to a culture that has triumphed in preserving its heritage despite unimaginable adversity.

The fourth day started with a session about war criminals, led by Marius Cazan. The speaker delved into the legal processes and ethical considerations that shaped the post-war trials. The presenter spoke about the legal framework that was established to prosecute those involved, detailing the specific charges, evidence and judgments. Emphasizing the challenges faced in bringing these criminals to justice, the speaker analyzed both the legal and societal implications of the trials.

The day continued with a session in which Alexandru Florian spoke about the transition that Romania faced after the fall of communism, particularly emphasizing how the memory of the Holocaust was either preserved, suppressed, or manipulated. The presentation was rich with historical context, examining the political and societal factors that shaped public memory, education and commemoration of the Holocaust during this transformative era. The speaker detailed the various ways in which post-communist governments have engaged with Holocaust memory, either embracing truthful historical representation or, in some cases, struggling with historical denial and revisionism.

The day moved forward with a very inspirational session in which three teachers presented their educational projects and shared their experience with their peers. This session offered the participating teachers the opportunity to start thinking about the activities they could do with their own students.

Then, the teachers had the opportunity to visit MuzeON, an innovative exhibition, which tells stories of the Jewish community in Cluj. Through impressive exhibits and rich narratives, the teachers were led on a journey through time, discovering the history and traditions of the Jewish people in the region. The visit to MuzeON provided a memorable learning experience, presented in a captivating and accessible way. Following MuzeON, the group continued with a visit to the Neolog Synagogue and the Jewish Center which was recently built in the yard of the synagogue. The tour offered teachers the opportunity to meet and discuss with representatives of the local Jewish community, as well as to learn more about Jewish life before the war and about the present-day Jewish community of Cluj. The participants then went to see the buildings which belonged to the Lengyel family, the Lengyel hospital and Olga Lengyel's house, where she lived together with her family before their deportation to Auschwitz.

On the last day, Oana Bajka led a session about methods and approaches that are best suited to teach the Holocaust in various contexts. Teachers were invited to use interactive activities with their students, to organize student-centered learning processes and to focus on developing competences (values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical thinking) rather than just transmitting information. The USHMM Guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust were presented and discussed.

The last session focused on teachers' action plan – how they will put into practice what they learned in the seminar. Teachers were invited to work in small groups to think about individual or collaborative project ideas and then present them in the plenary. Feedback was offered in order to help teachers avoid problematic approaches in teaching the Holocaust and to raise their awareness on risky or sensitive issues, such as using role play as a method of learning about the Holocaust or choosing methods that run the risk of dehumanizing Jewish people, etc. Feedback from teachers was gathered both orally and through a written evaluation form.