# Learning from the Past, Acting for the Future

## An Interdisciplinary Approach to Holocaust, Human Rights and Intercultural Education

TOLI

The Olga Lengyel Institute for
Holocaust Studies and Human Rights

**Author:** Oana Nestian-Sandu

**Contributions and feedback by:**
Oana Bajka, Intercultural Institute Timisoara / TOLI - The Olga Lengyel Institute
Calin Rus, Intercultural Institute Timisoara
Manuela Oprea, Intercultural Institute Timisoara
Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, Fondazione CDEC
Patrizia Baldi, Fondazione CDEC
Katarzyna Laziuk, Big Picture
Michael Franke, educator
Sonya Krancheva, teacher
Dragomir Dachev, teacher

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**Cover design:** Timea Serb

**Cover photo:** Detail of suspended sculpture at Mexico City's *Museo Memoria y Tolerancia*, created in collaboration with Jan Hendrix. A cascade of 20,000 'tears' symbolize the 2,000,000 children who have been victims of horrifying genocides.
Photo by Oana Nestian-Sandu.

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# Introduction

This Handbook was inspired by the work with thousands of teachers in Europe, carried out by The Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human Rights (TOLI), together with its partners in 10 European countries, over the last 10 years.

In the framework of the project *Learning from the Past, Acting for the Future – Teaching about the Holocaust and Human Rights*, co-funded by the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union, a series of events with teachers from Italy, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria were organized in 2021-2022, in a consortium led by the Intercultural Institute Timisoara, with the participation of Fondazione CDEC, Italy, Big Picture, Poland and Amalipe, Bulgaria. The experiences with the teachers in this project, as well as with teachers in other European countries – Austria, Greece, Lithuania, Portugal, Serbia, Ukraine – facilitated by TOLI, together with its national partners, served as a basis for this handbook.

The interdisciplinary methodology presented in this handbook has been appreciated by the teachers engaged in our programs as a powerful way to connect the past with the present. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work with committed teachers and to support them as they engage their students in relevant and meaningful educational activities, in ways that are respectful of both the historical truth and of human dignity. The educational approach proposed focuses on active learning processes that develop students' competences to be active citizens who stand up in front of injustices.

In this handbook, teachers can find: a rationale for an interdisciplinary approach combining Holocaust education, human rights education and intercultural education; an explanation of the ways in which this interdisciplinary approach can lead to the development of competences for democratic culture; an overview of the methodologies which are best suited for an interdisciplinary approach; a set of educational activities that can be used by the teachers with their students; as well as recommendations for further reading.

Theodore Adorno stated that "the premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again" (Adorno, 2005 [1996], p. 191) Adorno was not referring specifically to teaching history, or any particular subject, but to education in general, an education that "provides an intellectual, cultural, and social climate in which a recurrence would no longer be possible, a climate, therefore, in which the motives that led to the horror would become relatively conscious". We hope that this handbook will inspire teachers to use the proposed approach and activities with their students, to adapt and develop their own interdisciplinary activities, as well as to revise their educational practice from the standpoint of human dignity, in order to contribute to the development of a society in which genocide, violence and discrimination are inconceivable.

# Why an Interdisciplinary Approach?

The Holocaust is one of the most complex phenomena in world history and it should never be reduced to simplistic explanations. This means that the tools of one discipline are not enough to really understand it (or attempt to understand it). Through interdisciplinarity we can find complex answers to complex questions, even if these answers are difficult to accept. Interdisciplinarity can make us ask ourselves even more questions, analyze our past and our present from diverse perspectives, in order to get a more nuanced and unbiased understanding.

In order to achieve this, the pedagogical process must find the right balance between cognitive and emotional elements; balance between the information about the horrors of the Holocaust and information about the life of Jewish people before and after the Holocaust, for a more complex narrative; balance between individual stories and historical narratives; balance between reflection and action – learning is not enough, acting upon what was learned is the key to social change.

Holocaust education has been viewed for a long time as a way to learn about the history of the Holocaust, with emphasis on its uniqueness among historical events. While this remains an important part of Holocaust education, one cannot overlook the lessons that the Holocaust can teach us for today and the future.

**The interdisciplinary approach that we propose in this handbook combines the approaches and methods of Holocaust education, human rights education and intercultural education, with the aim to guide students to learn about the past, understand the way in which the past is connected with the present and contribute to the development of democratic and intercultural societies in which every individual can live a life of dignity.**

**When we look at the past through the lens of human rights, we can better understand how an event like the Holocaust was possible, how the propaganda functioned and how the rights of Jewish people – and people belonging to other groups – were taken away progressively. At the same time, through the lens of the Holocaust, we can 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 methodology develops students' critical thinking and their ability to challenge populist messages that are becoming prevalent in European societies and elsewhere in the world. It raises their awareness about the unfair treatment of various groups in their society and about the need to take action.**

An interdisciplinary approach to teaching about the Holocaust and human rights can also contribute to shifting away from nationalist perspectives in history teaching. The nationalist perspectives (not to be mistaken for national perspectives) refer to the belief in the superiority of the nation and in the use and misuse of history as a tool for affirming this superiority, by distorting facts and ignoring various perspectives. For example, in many countries, institutions, politicians and even educators are reluctant to admit the responsibility of their

co-nationals in the Holocaust. Claudia Lenz (2016) talks about the "more or less open tension" between the legacy of the nationalistic paradigm of history education and an orientation towards democracy and human rights which emphasizes a critical, reflexive and de-nationalized understanding of history.

According to Liam Knox, "the very core of Holocaust education is to alert the public to dangerous developments that facilitate human-rights violations and pain and suffering; pointing to similarities across time and space is essential for this task" (2019, p. 2). Nevertheless, the studying of history in itself does not have this impact (especially in younger students), unless the learners are involved in a process of understanding how the past influences the present and how their identity and social context is connected to the subject there are studying.

An interdisciplinary approach allows us to compare various instances of social injustices, while understanding the genocidal scope of the Holocaust and its uniqueness in our history. The Holocaust, one of the most important events in modern history, has been and must continue to be studied with the tools of historical research. At the same time, one cannot deny the lessons that the Holocaust can teach us, such as: the power of propaganda, empathy, how to be better citizens, etc. In the process of studying the Holocaust, we can be made aware of our present-day human rights and of our responsibility to act in the face of injustice.

When done intentionally, carefully and in a contextualized manner, comparisons contribute to a deeper understanding of both the history of the Holocaust and the principles of human rights. Using a framework for comparisons, such as the human rights lens, ensures that the Holocaust is not lightly compared to other forms of persecution or used as a general metaphor for all that is wrong in a given society. At the same time, it is important to make sure that the Holocaust is not misused as a manipulative tool for political and ideological purposes. In the words of Elie Wiesel, "not only are we responsible for the memories of the dead, we are also responsible for what we do with those memories" (1993).

"Never again" has been an aim for educators and policy makers for decades, but turning it into a reality is still a struggle. A number of other genocides have occurred after the Holocaust; systemic discrimination is a daily reality for an incredibly high number of people around the world; the dichotomy of "us vs. them" is still prevalent in political discourse in Europe and beyond; the number of totalitarian regimes is still high and even established democracies are shaken by populist political movements which disregard human rights.

While extensive research exists on the history of the Holocaust, more adequate approaches need to be used in order to "translate" this research into educational practice. Learning about the past is not enough if people cannot use this learning to create more democratic and intercultural societies – arguably, the only tool that can prevent authoritarianism and human rights violations in a peaceful and long-lasting way.

Gregory Wegner reflects upon the potential of the lessons we can draw from the Holocaust to teach civic competences. He considers Holocaust education particularly timely, given the rise of far-right movements globally, as a way to highlight what can happen when democracy is threatened (Wegner, 1998). Unfortunately, in recent years, political extremism has continued to grow and to threaten European societies and other parts of the world.

The potential of Holocaust education to teach us lessons for today has been recognized by many scholars and international organizations. However, van Driel (2010) draws attention to the fact that while there is a major focus on historical issues, when the importance of addressing stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and racism in today's world is mentioned, it is more of an afterthought than anything else. He argues that a possible reason for this might be the fact that the majority of teachers are not trained to talk about prejudice and discrimination, topics which might unleash a variety of emotions in students. Nevertheless, one should not hope that a kind of "osmosis" will take place and that, by studying what happened to Jews in Europe almost a century ago, students will become more empathetic and civic-minded human beings.

For most people and nations, it is difficult to accept a troubling past, because this past threatens self-esteem and affects both the personal identity and the national myths (Ambrosewicz-Jacobs and Szuchta, 2014). The human rights lens can offer a standpoint for analyzing injustices that is less emotionally charged, allowing educators to be more open to facing the facts. It may help them understand that history is not a tool for increasing national identity and pride – as it has been too often used – but a series of events that we should strive to understand as accurately as possible, in order to learn from them and build better societies. At the same time, it opens the perspective that people who live today are not guilty for what happened in the past. However, they are responsible for remembering the past, honoring the victims and the survivors, and striving to create a better present and future.

**Moreover, Holocaust and human rights education intersect with intercultural education in their common aim to address social injustice and intolerance of diversity, as well as to promote respect for diversity and non-discrimination. In the 21st century, teaching any subject without incorporating intercultural education as a transversal theme means teaching in a bubble that does not correspond to the reality in which young people live.**

Our societies are more and more diverse and daily interactions with people from different cultures – in-person or online – are a reality for most school students. While there is a general belief that the young generation is apathetic and not interested in politics, in reality youth engagement is moving away from conventional participation to non-conventional and civic participation, as young people are attracted to – and even develop themselves – new social movements (Chryssochoou and Barrett, 2017). This context calls for an education that "respects and promotes diversity, while continuously challenging the status quo and the power structures in society" (Nestian-Sandu and Lyamouri-Bajja, 2018, p. 21) and that education is intercultural education.

Totten and Feinberg (2001) list 17 "rationales" for teaching about the Holocaust, out of which several correspond directly with the aims of intercultural education, such as: exploring concepts like prejudice, discrimination, racism, antisemitism, obedience to authority, the bystander syndrome, conflict and conflict resolution, decision making and justice; understanding how 'little' prejudices can easily be transformed into far more serious ones; raising awareness about ethnic and religious hatred; valuing pluralism and diversity.

At the intersection of Holocaust education, human rights education and intercultural education learners can be involved in processes that help them:

- Learn from the history of the Holocaust in order to promote democratic values and human rights;
- Understand the role that identity played in the persecution of Jews and other groups during the Holocaust and the role it plays in present-day societies;
- Understand their own identity in connection with history and the society in which they live;
- Question nationalist perspectives in Holocaust education;
- Understand their responsibility to acknowledge and remember the pain, trauma and loss caused by the Holocaust;
- Preserve Jewish heritage and acknowledge the contribution of Jewish people to the history of various places in which they are no longer present;
- Learn about the history of antisemitism and connect it with antisemitic manifestations in the present;
- Understand that present day discrimination and marginalization of Roma people in Europe is a direct consequence of a long history of persecution, slavery and Roma Genocide in Europe;

- Learn about other cultures and how to engage in meaningful interactions with people with diverse backgrounds, cultures and experiences;
- Reflect upon one's own stereotypes and find ways to overcome them;
- Understand that change has happened in the past and societies are changeable;
- Develop respect for human rights and human dignity;
- Become aware of the need for social action to ensure the protection of human rights in contemporary societies;
- Stand up in the face of injustices.

In order to achieve these aims, there needs to be a well-thought and well-designed educational process, one that is cross-curricular, with teachers from different disciplines collaborating to show the complexities of social and historical context and of human behavior. Jennifer Lemberg talks about the need for disciplinary conversations "that would bring together innovative scholarship in Holocaust studies with more concrete considerations of pedagogy, and that would acknowledge how teaching and learning about the Holocaust has to do, somehow, with who we are as human beings (Lemberg, 2021, p. 113).

# An Interdisciplinary Approach to Competence Development

The Holocaust cannot be taught just like any other subject. It cannot be taught in a detached manner, avoiding emotional implications. At the same time, it should not be used as a simple pretext for a lesson in morality. Failing to help students understand the underlying causes and the context that made the Holocaust possible, particularly its connection with the larger history of Europe and the history of antisemitism, can make them believe that the Holocaust was an isolated event, an anomaly. This can lead to trivializing the memory of the Holocaust.

It is important to ensure that students have access to accurate facts about the Holocaust, that their learning starts with a historically accurate definition of the Holocaust and that they learn to use other related terms correctly. Learning from primary sources can help students construct a more objective understanding of the Holocaust. Needless to say, a critical analysis of the sources is needed, even when it comes to primary sources. Many of the primary sources were created by the perpetrators themselves and an analysis of why and how each source was produced helps learners construct meaningful understanding of a complex and deeply troubling event. At the same time, studying the Holocaust should not be focused on facts and figures only, which ignores the human dimension; nor should teachers present individual stories without a general understanding of the historical context. Using diverse sources, such as literature, art, personal narratives, film, etc., can support the development of more balanced perspectives. Supporting students to understand the historical context of the Holocaust "helps convey the fact that Nazi persecution was intended but not inevitable" (Polgar, 2018, p. 20).

Studying the Holocaust can trigger strong emotions, which requires adequate reflection about one's thoughts and perceptions. It can leave students feeling helpless, angry and frustrated. Acknowledging this fact and addressing these feelings can be a powerful motivation to take action in the present. It can support or guide students towards creating change in present-day societies. This is possible only when students feel that the learning context is safe and stimulating and that they can connect their own identity and worldview with the topics they are studying.

Peter Cook advocates for putting "culture before content" (2021), referring to the importance of creating a classroom culture with strong democratic values in order to be able to address complex and emotionally charged contents. By creating a safe environment in which students feel they are not judged when they express their ideas, students will engage more actively with the subject that is being taught. This can be reached only when

self-respect, respect of others and respect of human dignity are considered fundamental values in the group interaction. The learners should not be merely objects of pedagogical interventions, but have ownership of the pedagogical interventions. "For history education, this means that the learning process needs to open for what appears as relevant and meaningful for students in light of their own personal backgrounds and invite them to express their views and interpretations while respecting others'" (Lenz, 2016).

**Historically, there is a close connection between the Holocaust and the development of the modern framework of human rights: the Holocaust was a catalyst for the founding of the United Nations; the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the establishment of legal systems to protect fundamental rights were done with the atrocities of WWII in mind. Nevertheless, building meaningful bridges between the past and the present requires significant preparation from the teachers, as well as respect for historical truth, valuing democratic principles and diversity, willingness to collaborate with other teachers and to keep searching for adequate methods which engage students in meaningful reflections.**

Teachers can access excellent resources for teaching about the Holocaust, such as *IHRA Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust*, *USHMM Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust* and many others[1]. These resources, along with the practical experience of The Olga Lengyel Institute and its partners in Europe, working with thousands of teachers, served as an inspiration for this handbook. The added value of the handbook lies in the interdisciplinary approach it proposes, drawing on the most relevant aspects of each discipline in order to support students in understanding the connection between the past and the present, and to empower them to become active citizens who stand up in the face of injustices.

Human rights education has been often described as a way to learn *about*, *through* and *for* human rights:

- Learning *about* human rights refers to the knowledge of the history and mechanisms of human rights, the institutions and the legal system, the significance and content of human rights.
- Learning *through* human rights refers to learning that takes place using educational approaches and tools that reflect the ideas behind human rights – the educational process is organized in a democratic way, it encourages active participation of students and protects the human dignity of each student.
- Learning *for* human rights refers to acting for protecting those rights and behaving in a way that prevents and rejects injustice, inequality and human rights violations.

An interdisciplinary approach, in which the learning *about*, *through* and *for* human rights takes place in connection with Holocaust and intercultural education, offers students a more comprehensive way of understanding the past in connection with the present, and of understanding their identity and their fellow students' identity in connection with history in general, and with the Holocaust in particular. While students are often interested in human rights issues, they "may not be aware of how human rights violations have historically been the result of social, economic and political conditions and processes, or how the struggle for human rights has its own histories" (Tibbitts, 2016, p 94). An interdisciplinary approach can stimulate students to engage in difficult conversations about history, the present, and the future. It can also motivate them to contribute to ensuring that the memory of people who were dehumanized in the past is preserved with dignity.

For Azadeh Aalai, acknowledging that "not every experience or historical event can be fully understood or comprehended" is crucial. Such acknowledgement can have a particular potential for growth for students

[1] A list of Guidelines and Resources is offered in the last chapter.

and teachers alike (Aalai, 2020, p. 215). In this sense, she argues for the choice of theme as a way to enable educators to avoid problematic Holocaust education, such as "simplifying the atrocity, offering 'easy' or packaged conclusions and/or overwhelming students" (Aalai, 2020, p. 210). A theme is a lens which offers students a reference framework, allowing them to navigate through such a complex and incomprehensible atrocity. The human rights lens is a perspective through which students can attempt to make some sense of this atrocity. Instead of attempting to offer clear cut answers, it engages students in a richer perspective and it leads them to recognize greater complexity.

**The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), published by the Council of Europe in 2018, can serve as a guiding tool for teachers in planning and assessing their interdisciplinary educational activities (curricular and extra-curricular).**

The Framework presents a competence-based approach to education which proposes a conceptual model of competences. The model contains 20 competences that fall into four categories: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding (see Figure 1). These competences represent psychological resources which need to be developed in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by democratic and intercultural situations (Barrett, 2020).

An important aspect of the model is the fact that knowledge is associated with critical understanding, which means that gaining new knowledge is valuable only to the extent in which it supports critical understanding, allows interconnections and meaning (Rus, 2019). In an educational process, this is translated into the need for creating opportunities for learners to process, discuss and integrate new knowledge in their worldview, ensuring thus that the knowledge is understood and increasing its chances of being remembered in the long term. Another important aspect of the model is the significant role it gives to values as key elements of competences. Developing knowledge, skills and abilities without strong democratic values runs the risk of creating societies that are the opposite of what is understood by "never again".

In educational processes the competences for democratic culture can be developed in clusters. They are strongly inter-connected and, in any given situation, including a learning process, a person can use and develop more than one competence. For this reason, interdisciplinary learning processes are well-suited for the development of competences for democratic culture.

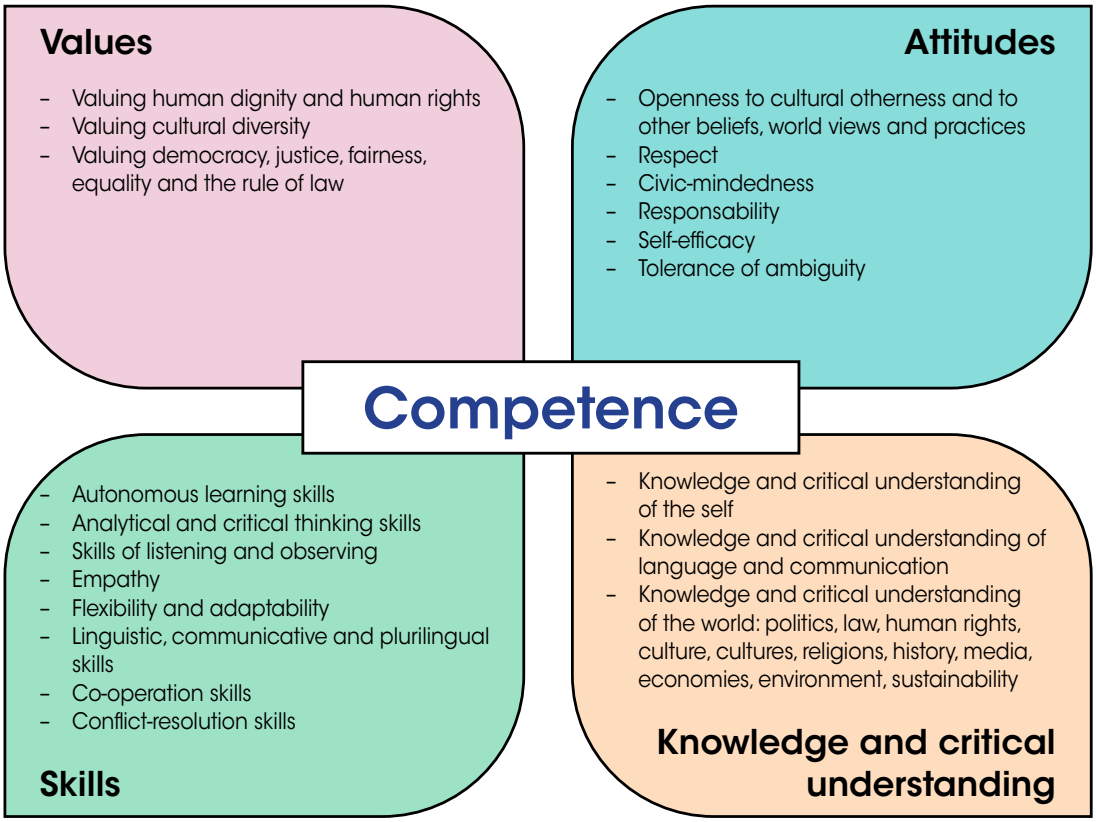


**Figure 1.** Model of competences for democratic culture. Source: Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, vol. 1.

This Framework is proposed by the Council of Europe as the primary vehicle through which human rights education and intercultural education can be implemented in the educational systems of member states. The use of this framework in relation with Holocaust education has been tested in several teacher training programs implemented by The Olga Lengyel Institute and its partners in Europe. Over 100 teachers were engaged in processes of identifying the competences that their students can develop by participating in Holocaust education activities and concluded that this framework is a useful tool both for planning educational activities and for assessing their impact on students, as well as for identifying the competences that are needed for a democratic and interculturalist teacher.

Using the RFCDC in the planning, implementation and assessment of interdisciplinary educational processes that combine Holocaust, human rights and intercultural education gives teachers a consolidated model of competences and a guiding tool for designing academically sound, participatory and meaningful educational activities. The educational activities presented in this handbook were developed based on the RFCDC.

# Methodological Considerations

Educators like Maria Montessori, John Dewey, Paolo Freire, and David Kolb promoted the view that learning is most effective when the learner becomes actively engaged with the content. Methodologies such as inquiry-based learning, experiential learning or project-based learning are appropriate for interdisciplinary approaches that combine Holocaust education, human rights education and intercultural education.

**Inquiry-based teaching** is based on asking deep question about life, about human behavior, about society. Using questions as the starting point for guiding the educational process means that "teachers understand the myriad ways one might approach the content, choose questions that are of great interest to the particular group of students in the room, and guide their students towards asking questions of their own" (Lemberg and Pope IV, 2021).

In this process rushing towards the answers is discouraged. Without enough time and opportunities for students to examine history from a human perspective and to make sense of the connections between their own realities and the historical realities they are studying, the answers to inquiry questions have no value. "I often encourage groups to sit quietly with questions that have been asked, and invite each person to explore the question in the context of their own lives and hearts. For me, this is what means to teach with and for humanity" (Zagray Warren, 2021, p. 106). When students learn about the Holocaust, they are often left with more questions than they had in the beginning. When it comes to questions about the human condition and the suffering of others, each new answer elicits at least one new question for further research.

In order to engage students in educational processes focused on the Holocaust and human rights, inquiries could include questions such as: How was the Holocaust possible? Why the Jews? What did regular citizens know about the Holocaust at the time? Why did other European countries collaborate with the Nazis? What was the role of various Christian Churches? Can the countries which were neutral in the war claim neutrality regarding the Holocaust? What does it mean to be an upstander or a bystander? How can we become active citizens? Under what circumstances can we refuse to obey orders? How do we know when it is time to take action? Are some human rights more important than others?

Such questions can guide students in research processes that lead them to consult diverse sources, to build categories for investigation, to develop a nuanced understanding of the past and to reflect upon the ways in which the past influences the present and the present influences the future. They require navigating between the role of historian and the role of regular citizen trying to understand his/her/their own identity and role in the wider society. In this sense, using adequate sources and making the Holocaust relevant to modern concerns are key aspects of the educational process.

**Experiential learning** is a process of learning by engaging in hands-on experience and reflection. Democratic competences cannot simply be taught, they need to be experienced and practiced on a regular basis.

David Kolb, based on previous works by Dewey, Levin and Piaget, developed the experiential learning cycle as a four-step learning process that starts from the relationship of the student with the topic, from his/her/their *concrete experience*. Through a process of *observation and reflection*, students achieve ownership of what is learned. The conclusions of the reflection are then linked with *abstract thinking* in order to form concepts, which can be *transferred* in new situations, to put into practice what was learned. When the competences developed are used in a new context they are reinforced and form the basis of a new learning cycle.

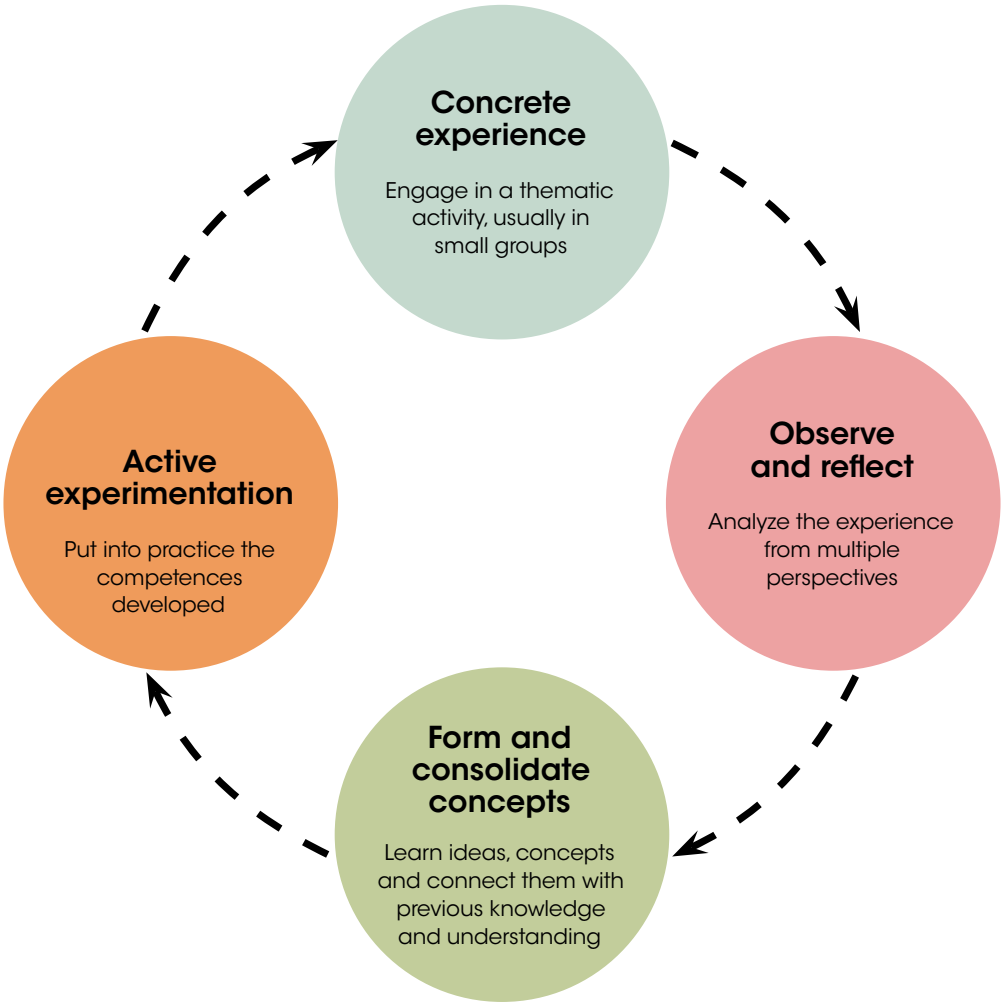


**Figure 2.** Adapted version of Kolb's model of Experiential Learning

Transformation occurs when students become active subjects in the world, when they experience shifts in their worldview (Hoggan, 2016) and "in order to bring about a catalyst for transformation, we need to expose students to viewpoints that may be discrepant with their own" (Cranton, 2002, p. 66). However, simply "reciting" different viewpoints to the students has little potential to make them consider a shift in their perspective. It is essential to engage them in processes in which they can actively interact with people, texts, videos and objects that present diverse viewpoints, that challenge their stereotypes, the status-quo, as well as nationalist perspectives in history teaching. When this active experimentation is followed by a guided process of reflection, it increases students' openness, empathy and personal connection with history. This, in turn, can lead to an increased interest in learning and contributing to the development of their community.

Cooperative learning is an important aspect of experiential learning. It improves the understanding of complex concepts and increases problem-solving skills, enabling participants to devise solutions that demonstrate greater creativity and practicality. It also helps in building group cohesion, and can contribute to reducing biases between group members. Working in collaboration gives students the opportunity to include their experiences, express their thoughts and have a certain influence on the learning process.

**Project-based learning (PBL)** is a methodology which engages students as active participants in real world issues that are relevant to them. Students work for an extended period of time to complete meaningful, in-depth projects which lead to the development of a diverse set of competences. In PBL students work collaboratively – in small and big groups, as well as individually. They share their knowledge, personal thoughts and independent opinions, make decisions about the content of learning, research, discuss and often struggle. When students memorize facts or find easy answers, the chances that they will forget this information are quite high. On the other hand, allowing students to wrestle with ideas and come to their own understanding leads to the development of diverse and integrated competences and enables them to gain a higher level of autonomy in their learning.

In PBL the teacher enters into a more equitable relationship with the students, giving up some of the traditional "power" of the teacher. Her/his/their role is not so much to deliver information, but to guide the learning process and allow students to make decisions, discover, ask questions and take their learning forward by finding the resources that can help them answer those questions and, eventually, share what they learn with a larger public. Usually, external experts or community partners are involved, in order to support the educational process. A product or a presentation is developed by the students and shared with other students from the school or with external audiences. An ongoing process of feedback and revision, as well as a thorough process of reflection are conducted in order to support the consolidation of and appreciation for the competences developed.

The main aim of PBL is not the development of "the best" project or product. The focus is on the process and on the learning experience. The project itself is just a means through which the students develop their competences. The quality of the final product is secondary. The quality of the process is what the teachers should focus on, in order to ensure that students engage, cooperate, make decisions, give and receive feedback and, most importantly, have opportunities to do thorough reflection on the process, the results and the lessons learned.

**Reflection** plays a very important role in all these methodologies. Including reflection as an integral part of any educational activity has the potential to help students consolidate their competences, as well as to help the teachers learn more about their students' worldview. Reflection time is a good opportunity for students to form and express their thoughts and opinions. By conducting a reflection process – during or at the end of an educational activity – the teacher can better understand how the students experienced the educational activity, what they learned from it and how they can connect it with their previous knowledge and understanding, as well as with their own lives. This, in turn, can guide the teachers to prepare future educational activities that are tailored to the specific context and interests of the students. The length and the content of the reflection process need to be adapted to the type of activity carried out. For project-based learning the reflection usually focuses on three aspects: the process – how the students experienced the process and what they would do differently in the future; the results – how the students feel about the results; and the competences developed – the ways in which the students will use the competences in the future.

These methodologies are well suited for cross-curricular approaches and they are best implemented when teachers not only promote collaboration among students, but when they also engage in collaboration with other teachers in their school, who teach different subjects, or in collaboration with teachers from other schools or from other countries[2].

[2] A booklet on national and international collaboration among Holocaust and human rights educators is available at: https://www.intercultural.ro/en/booklet-collaboration-holocaust-human-rights-educators/.

# Educational Activities

These activities were developed in order to inspire teachers to engage their students in interdisciplinary learning processes. They are grouped according to six main themes which are relevant for an interdisciplinary approach of Holocaust, human rights and intercultural education. Several educational activities are proposed for each theme. Educators can choose the ones that are most relevant for their learners and combine them in ways that respond to the specificities of their environment. Each activity has suggestions for follow-up, going deeper into the subject, or creating project-based learning processes. Some activities have versions for simpler or more complex actions. Adaptations to the local contexts and to the needs of the learners are encouraged. The activities are envisaged for high school students, but most of them can also be used, with some adaptations, for middle school students. When choosing the activities, it is important to make sure that students have enough context to fully engage in the activities and that the Holocaust is not taught in a void.

The proposed activities do not focus on the main historical facts of the Holocaust. They are based on the assumption that students already have basic historical knowledge about the Holocaust and about world history prior to the Holocaust. However, students do not have to be experts of the Holocaust to be engaged in such activities. Moreover, the activities do not have to be carried out as extracurricular activities. They can be integrated in the regular teaching process and intercalated with activities that focus mainly on developing students' basic historical knowledge. The proposed activities below invite students to engage in deeper reflection and support them to make connections between the past and the present. While some of these activities can be used as a follow-up of history lessons, others can be used as a starting point to address certain aspects of Holocaust history, as they have the potential to motivate students to learn more about the Holocaust. We hope that these activities will inspire teachers to conduct most of their teaching in interactive ways, even the activities that are more focused on historical knowledge and information.

# Stereotypes, Prejudices, Discrimination

## Human Dignity

**Overview:**

This activity aims to help students understand human dignity not as an abstract concept, but as an intrinsic value of every human being and to encourage them to develop intentional behaviors to respect the human dignity of the people around them.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Respect
- Empathy
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of history

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:**

- Whiteboard / Flipchart paper
- Markers

**Duration:** 2.5 hours. The activity is divided in two parts of 1 hour each and includes an assignment between the two parts with an estimated duration of 30 minutes.

**Tips for teachers:**

This activity helps students make connection between abstract concepts like human dignity and concrete feelings and behaviors. It is important for them to understand that even though they have to reflect upon various instances in which human dignity was affected, they should never make comparisons of suffering. This aspect is mentioned several times in the handbook and it cannot be stressed enough. Suffering is something very personal that should never be quantified. Nevertheless, analyzing hurtful, denigrating, discriminatory, dehumanizing behaviors through the concept of human dignity will help them become less arbitrary when they decide how people will be treated and will better understand what equality entails.

**Description of the activities:**

In this activity students are engaged in reflection processes regarding their own life and feelings, as well as the lives and feelings of people who were targets of the Holocaust.

**Part I**

1. The teacher asks students to form groups of 4-5 people and to share examples of **hurtful attitudes/ behaviors** they find in their school (from students or from adults). For e.g. various forms of discrimination, lack of respect, aggressiveness, harassment, bullying, verbal or physical violence, etc.

2. Then, the teacher asks students to continue working in groups and to share an example of a **hurtful attitude/behavior towards themselves**, which they experienced at some point in their life (in school or outside of school) and to express **how it made them feel**.
3. The students are asked to share the feelings that they experienced as effects of the attitudes/behaviors. The teacher makes a list of feelings on the whiteboard and then leads a debriefing discussion based on the following questions:
    a. Why do you think people manifest hurtful attitudes/behaviors towards other people?
    b. Why do you think these attitudes/behaviors affect us?
    c. What do all these feelings have in common?
    d. What can be done to counter such attitudes/behaviors? The teacher makes a list with the students' ideas.
4. The teacher writes down the concept of human dignity and asks students to share what it means for them. Afterwards, the teacher explains that the concept of human dignity is at the core of the human rights framework, as stated in Art. 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights".
5. Students are given the following quote and are asked to write their reflections before the next meeting/part of the activity.

Hanna Lévy-Hass, a Yugoslavian teacher imprisoned in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, wrote in her diary on:

### 8 November, 1944

We have not died, but we are dead. They've managed to kill in us not only our right to life in the present and for many of us, to be sure, the right to a future life… but what is most tragic is that they have succeeded, with their sadistic and depraved methods, in killing in us all sense of a human life in our past, all feeling of normal human beings endowed with a normal past, up to even the very consciousness of having existed at one time as human beings worthy of this name.

I turn things over in my mind, I want to… and I remember absolutely nothing. It's as though it wasn't me. Everything is expunged from my mind. During the first few weeks, we were still somewhat connected to our past lives internally; we still had a taste for dreams, for memories. But the humiliating and degrading life of the camp has so brutally sliced apart our cohesion that any moral effort to distance ourselves in the slightest from the dark reality around us ends up being grotesque—a useless torment. Our soul is as though caught in a crust that nothing can soften or break…

### 18 November, 1944

In spite of everything, my work with the children continues… I cling desperately to every chance, however slight, to gather the children together to foster in them and in me even the slightest mental sharpness, as well as a basic feeling of human dignity. (…)

I carry out this task spontaneously, even instinctively I would say, through an irresistible need in my soul—in the rare moments when I manage to awaken it—and by an irresistible need that I can clearly sense coming from the children's souls. Because they take my lead, they get excited, they want to live, they want to rejoice, it's stronger than them. What heartbreak!

**Part II**

6. The teacher asks students to work in groups of 3-4 people and to share their writing.
7. A few volunteers are asked to read their writing in front of the whole group.
8. The students are asked to discuss in small groups the following quote: "When it comes to human dignity, we cannot make compromises" Angela Merkel. Each group should write down the conclusions of their discussions and present it to the class.
9. The teacher brings out the list with students' ideas to counter hurtful attitudes/behaviors and asks students if they can come up with more ideas at this point. The teacher collects the papers/files with the groups' conclusions. At the end of the semester or school year the teacher can dedicate some time to showing students their reflection, discuss how their views have changed in the meantime and what they would add/change in their text.
10. The teacher asks students to think of one thing each of them can do differently from now on (based on the list or something new) which can contribute to more dignified everyday experiences for everyone in the school. The students work in groups, but each individual must choose one behavior, write it down, and commit to practicing it on a regular basis.

**Going further:**

- The teacher can assign to the students Maus, by Art Spiegelman, discuss it in class from the perspective of human dignity and ask students to write their reflections on the book and share them with their classmates or in a school event with colleagues from other classes.
- The students can design and implement an awareness campaign on human dignity and equality.
- The students can continue their reflection on human dignity by addressing the topic of hate speech online[3].

[3] For further ideas about educational activities focused on combating hate speech through human rights education consult the Council of Europe's resources such as Bookmarks, available in over 20 languages: https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/bookmarks-connexions.

## Identity and Stereotypes

**Overview:**

This activity helps students reflect upon their own identity, upon the role played by identity during the Holocaust and upon the connection between identity and stereotypes.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Respect
- Empathy
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of history

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Annexes 1 and 2

**Duration:** 3 hours. The activity is divided in three parts of 1 hour each and includes an assignment between the first and the second part with an estimated duration of at least 30 minutes, depending on the interest and the age of the students.

**Tips for teachers:**

Addressing stereotypes with students is always a challenging task because often, students are not aware of their own stereotypes or do not want to admit that they have stereotypes because they want to have a positive image of themselves as good and kind persons. Sometimes, teachers themselves have stereotypes and they cannot fully immerse in such activities. For this reason, it is important that teachers try to analyze their own stereotypes and discuss with other teachers about how they came to have stereotypes and how they can overcome them. Stereotypes have been transmitted from generation to generation in various forms: media, literature, art, everyday language, jokes, etc. Once we understand that it is not our fault that we have these stereotypes, that they were transmitted to us through our socialization and education processes, we can overcome the guilt and start working on deconstructing the stereotypes, rather than pretending we do not have them. In order to develop equal and fair societies, it is crucial to help students understand that they should not feel guilty for having stereotypes, but they should feel responsible for working on getting rid of them and no longer contribute to their perpetuation.

When addressing stereotypes with students, an important aspect is to find the right balance between 1) helping students understand what stereotypes are, and 2) avoiding feeding them stereotypes they did not have before. For this reason, careful consideration is needed when the teacher talks to the students about the stereotypes of Jews that were promoted by the Nazis. In this sense, showing photos is not advised.

The main purpose of the first scenario in Annex 1 is to get students from privileged groups into a scenario in which they are the target of hate. Students are often asked to empathize with people who are treated unfairly, but many of them have never been in a situation of discrimination themselves. The scenario shifts the perspective. Given that many classrooms are diverse, it is important to keep in mind that most likely students belonging to underprivileged groups have already experienced similar situations and to discuss them, when they arise, with care, empathy and respect. Students should never be forced to share situations of discrimination if they do not feel comfortable. However, creating a safe environment in which students can share these situations is an excellent way not only for teaching respect, but also for practicing it.

To further explore the topics of identity and responsibility, the teachers may wish to read *On Austrian Soil. Teaching those I was Taught to Hate* by Sondra Perl (2005), a teaching memoir that offers a pedagogy of hope.

**Description of the activities:**

**Part I – Exploring Identity**

1. The students are invited to reflect upon their own identity and to identify the core aspects of their identity. Their task is to draw a human being (themselves) and to write on the t-shirt or next to the person, the five main aspects of their identity. The students should have the freedom to choose what they want to highlight as main aspects of their identity. If needed, the teacher can give examples of aspects that can be included, such as: daughter, friend, loves animals, loves to read, musician, athlete, boy, honest, etc.
2. After the individual reflection, the students are invited to share their identities in groups of four people. Each student is free to share as much or as little as they feel comfortable.
3. The teacher asks a few volunteers (4-5 people) to share their identity with the whole class. As the students present, the teacher writes down (or remembers) the different categories: gender, family relations, ethnicity, hobbies, personality traits, etc. After the volunteers present, the teacher lists the categories that were mentioned and asks the rest of the class if they included other categories such as religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, etc.
4. The teacher guides a short reflection based on the following questions:
    a. Would you say that identity is something fixed or something that changes over time?
    b. Do we define our own identity or does someone else define it for us?
5. The teacher asks each student to look back at his/her/their list and to try to order the different aspects of identity according to the importance they hold for him/her/their. Then, the teacher asks students to imagine that:

- a friend would say that it is wrong to be [whatever the student put on the top of his/her/their list]:
    i. How would you feel?
    ii. How would you react?
    iii. Does a friend have the right to say this?
- the school would say that it is wrong to be [whatever the student put on the top of his/her/their list]:
    i. How would you feel?
    ii. How would you react?
    iii. Does the school have the right to say this?
- a new law was passed stating that it is wrong to be [whatever students put on the top of their list]:
    i. How would they feel?
    ii. How would they react?
    iii. Does the government have the right to pass such a law?

6. The teacher explains (or reminds) students that during the Holocaust the identity of Jewish people was reduced to only one aspect – it did not matter that they were women, children, teachers, students,

book lovers, (include here aspects of identity mentioned by the students before), it did not matter if they were religious or not, if they had political affiliations or not. It did not matter if being Jewish was at the top of their list or at the bottom. It mattered only that they were identified by the Nazis and their collaborators as Jewish and they were persecuted and murdered based on this one aspect. The Nazis and their collaborators also persecuted and murdered Roma, Jehovah's Witnesses, gay people and other groups based on a single aspect of their identity that was considered "problematic" by the perpetrators.

7. The teacher engages students in a reflection process based on the following questions:
    a. How do you think Jewish people felt when they were asked to wear the Star of David on their clothes?
    b. How do you think children felt when they were forbidden to go to school?
    c. How do you think their parents felt when they were forbidden to practice their professions?
    d. Did the Nazis and their collaborators have the right to pass such laws? Why?
8. The teacher explains that the actions of the Nazis and their collaborators were legal, in the sense that legislation was passed in order to carry out their actions. The modern framework of human rights forbids the passing of such legislation. For example, article 2 of the UDHR states: *Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.*
9. It is important that the teacher explains to the students that the purpose of this exercise was not to make them feel what Jewish people felt during the Holocaust, because it is impossible to know that. One can try to imagine what people went through and can learn about personal experiences from diaries or testimonies, but what we feel when we do an exercise cannot be compared to what people felt in the actual situation. Nevertheless, such exercises can help us develop our empathy. If needed, the teacher can check with the students whether they understand the meaning of empathy.
10. The teacher explains that, even though we have legislation to protect people against discrimination in Europe, in reality not everyone can fully enjoy their human rights. The teacher asks students to share whether they are aware of any groups that are still discriminated today based on one aspect of their identity.
11. The students are asked to research the meaning of stereotypes until the next meeting.

**Part II – Deconstructing stereotypes**

12. The teacher gives students the first scenario from Annex 1 and asks them to work in groups of 4 people to answer the following questions:

    a. Is the world described in the scenario a good one or a bad one? Why?
    b. Why does everyone hate that particular group of people in the scenario?
    c. If you identify with the group mentioned in the story, how does this story make you feel?
    d. If you do not identify with the group mentioned in the story, how does this story make you feel?
    e. Have you seen something similar in real-life, but related to a different group in your society?
    f. Was it related to a group with which you identify? If yes, how did you feel? If no, how do you think people from that group feel when they hear/read this kind of things? Did you ever ask someone from that group how they felt about this?

13. The teacher informs students that they are going to discuss about stereotypes and asks them to share what they know about stereotypes, and how they would define stereotypes. Ideas are gathered on a board or shared document.
14. The teacher emphasizes the fact that stereotypes are overgeneralizations and oversimplifications which assign one characteristic (usually a negative one) to an entire group of people: if someone belongs (or is perceived to belong) to a certain group, that person "must" have that characteristic.
15. The students are asked if they are aware of any stereotypes used by the Nazis to portray Jews. If students do not have prior historical knowledge on this topic the teacher can share some examples of stereotypes explaining that they ranged from attributes related to physical aspects, to political affiliations (communists), aspects like greed or world domination, etc.
16. The teacher gives students a copy of Annex 2 and asks them to read it. Then, students are asked to work in groups of four to reflect on what they think Roman Kent meant when he said: "Of course, a word is not a gun. Words don't kill you at once but they can create conditions where people lose their inhibitions about doing dreadful things."
17. The groups present their reflections and a general discussion follows, based on the following questions:

    a. How does a stereotyped person feel?
    b. What are the dangers of stereotyping?
    c. Who benefits from stereotypes?

**Part III – Taking Action**

18. A volunteer student is asked to read the second scenario in Annex 1 and the class is invited to reflect on the difference between the first scenario (which can be provided again, if needed) and the second scenario.
19. The teacher invites students to work in groups of 4 people and think of concrete actions that can be done in the real world, to change reality so that it looks more like the second scenario. Their task is to think of concrete actions that can be taken by themselves, by adults in their life, by the school, by public institutions, by the media / social media, by civil society, by the business sector, etc., in order to challenge existing stereotypes and promote more civic engagement.
20. Each group presents their reflections and a guided discussion follows:

    a. Was it easy or difficult to come up with ideas to break stereotypes?
    b. Who do you think promotes stereotypes in our society?
    c. Do you have stereotypes?
    d. What can you do to overcome your own stereotypes?

The teacher can remind the students that everyone has stereotypes, as they were transmitted to us by our parents, teachers, mass-media, books and art. It is not our fault that we have stereotypes, but it is our responsibility to identify them in order to stop relying on them and to stop perpetuating them.

**Going further:**

- At the end of this series of activities the students can organize a campaign to raise awareness about stereotypes and propaganda.
- Students can take one or more Implicit Association tests available in English here: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html
- Students can watch the TED Talk: The Danger of a Single Story, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, available with subtitles in many languages.

# Annex 1

**Scenario 1**

You woke up this morning and turned on the TV. The news reported that a group of 3 [teacher inserts here the culture of majority students, e.g. Romanian, Italian, etc.] people robbed a tourist in the main square. You scroll on social media and see comments regarding the robbery. People say that [insert same group here] have always made only trouble and they should be sent away from Europe, somewhere on a different continent, as far away as possible. This is not the first time you hear something like this and you know it is not going to be the last.

You leave home and on your way to school you pass by a graffiti, one that you have been passing by every day for the last month, which says: Protect yourselves from filthy [insert same group here]. When you enter the school, you hear a group of students who make fun of [insert same group here] and call them lazy, good for nothing and other names.

**Scenario 2**

You woke up this morning and turned on the TV. The news reported that a group of 3 people robbed a tourist in the main square. You scroll on social media and see comments regarding the robbery. People say that we should make our city safer – they propose better lighting in the streets in the night, more police patrolling the streets, better education and more job opportunities for its citizens.

You leave home and on your way to school you pass by a graffiti, one that you have been passing by every day for the last month, which says: Human rights for all. When you enter the school, you see a group of colleagues and go straight to them. They are talking about a project to help homeless people in the neighborhood, in which you were all involved as part of the civics class.

# Annex 2

**From Words to Genocide, by Roman Kent**[4]

"Cursed Jew" were the first hate-filled words thrown (along with stones) at Roman Kent by children his own age as he made his way to school in Lodz, Poland.

"It was a very common expression used by many people at the time, nothing out of the ordinary for me, but in using it those children were telling me: 'You are not a human being'. With those words they were taking the first step to dehumanizing me (…) Once that is achieved and you have reduced the person to something that is less than human, you can do to them things you would not do to an animal."

"Most conflicts start with words and in the context of the Holocaust, words used by a master propagandist like Goebbels could not have been more powerful. During the war the Nazis made it clear they did not consider the Poles or the Slavs to be human and they were one level up from the Jews."

"Of course, a word is not a gun. Words don't kill you at once but they can create conditions where people lose their inhibitions about doing dreadful things. People are gullible. They want to believe in something that seems to be to their advantage like victimizing others. In the end words can do far greater damage than a bullet."

"It was indifference and the silence of people which led to the Holocaust. I would tell people not to turn away, to say something. Words can be used for good too."

[4] Excerpt from the speech given by Roman Kent at UNESCO's Holocaust Remembrance Day event on January 27, 2016, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/holocaust-survivor-roman-kent-speaks-out-dangerous-power-words.

## Antisemitism – Then and Now

**Overview:**

This activity takes students through a brief history of antisemitism, addressing antisemitic beliefs in the Middle Ages, antisemitism expressed by prominent people in the 19th and 20th century, Nazi propaganda and present-day manifestations. The aim of the activity is to help students understand how antisemitic stereotypes were formed, transmitted and how they can be combatted.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law
- Respect
- Civic mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Empathy
- Cooperation skills
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Annexes 1 and 2

**Duration:** 3 hours

**Tips for teachers:**

When talking about antisemitism it is important to ensure that students are aware of the meaning and impact of stereotypes and that they do not leave the classroom with more stereotypes than they had before. The examples found in Annex 1 focus on certain events and practices that have led to the creation and enforcement of stereotypes. Nevertheless, they are explained in a way that helps students understand how they were completely made up in order to serve some purposes and had nothing to do with the actual beliefs or practices of Jewish people. It is advised to introduce some historical evidence to make it clear that antisemitism is based on negative stereotypical views of Jews and Judaism, unsupported by historical evidence. It is quite possible that the students already have some stereotypes, prejudices and stories conveyed by their family, the media, or other sources. It might be useful to invite an expert who can present the history of antisemitism and/or the history of Jewish people in Europe and answer the students' questions before this series of activities.

The examples of antisemitic publications can show students that people from different walks of life and different professions felt justified to publish such virulent antisemitism.

When conducting activities focused on antisemitism or other forms of hatred, racism and dehumanization, it is important to help students understand that people who belong to groups who were/are discriminated have dignity and agency. They are people who deserve respect, not pity.

This activity might leave children depressed when they come to understand the inhuman behavior of their ancestors, their virulent hatred and even readiness to kill other human beings. Teachers should pay attention to cues on students' emotional wellbeing. The activity ends with a call to action, which might help students turn their frustration or anger into active citizenship.

Teachers might find it useful to consult the OSCE Teaching Aids on Addressing Antisemitism through Education. They are available in several languages: https://www.osce.org/odihr/441146.

**Description of the activities:**

**Part I**

1. The teacher divides the class into four groups. Each group receives a handout with one of the events described in Annex 1. The students are asked to read the handout and discuss the following aspects:
    a. What were the accusations made against Jews in this situation?
    b. Why did people make those accusations?
    c. What were the consequences of such accusations?
    d. What could have been done differently?
2. Each group presents the case studied and the reflections to the questions. Then, a discussion with the whole class follows, based on the following questions:
    a. Was there anything that surprised you in the case that you studied or in the ones presented by your colleagues? Why?
    b. Were you aware of some of these events/beliefs?
    c. How have these events/beliefs contributed to the spreading of stereotypes and the increase in antisemitism?
    d. Were Jewish people seen as human beings with equal dignity by other Europeans? Why?
3. The teacher asks the students if they are familiar with the term *scapegoating*. If students do not know this term, the teacher can explain that it refers to blaming others for something that is wrong and that does not necessarily have any connection with them. Students are asked if they can identify the process of scapegoating in the cases discussed.
4. The teacher explains to the students the term antisemitism (in its simplest definition: hatred of Jews[5]) and the fact that it has been expressed in many forms throughout history.

[5] For a more comprehensive definition consider the IHRA 2016 working definition which was endorsed or adopted by over 30 countries: https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism.

**Part II**

5. Each student receives a copy of Annex 2. After allowing a few minutes for reading the handout, the teacher engages the students in a reflection based on the following questions:

    a. Was there anything surprising in what you read? What?
    b. Why do you think those people expressed such antisemitic views?
    c. Do you think their views were an exception or the norm? Here the teacher can give examples of other intellectuals or prominent people who expressed such views.
    d. Do you think that there were reactions against these views from other prominent people or intellectuals? The teacher can share with the students that in the case of Wagner just one letter of complaint was received by the editor of the magazine. No public reactions are known in the case of Paulescu. In the case of Ford, many people expressed views against his writing and San Francisco lawyer and Jewish farm cooperative organizer Aaron Sapiro filed a libel lawsuit. In 1927 Ford discontinued the publication of the paper. Following Ford's death in 1947, the Ford family and the Ford Motor Company have supported many social projects, including many that addressed Jewish concerns.
    e. Why do you think there were not many reactions against antisemitic views in those times? Here the teacher can give more context to the students if they do not have the historical background.

6. The Nazis took antisemitism – which already existed in society – to a whole new level. They created the so-called Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, with the aim to communicate the Nazi message as widely as possible, through art, music, theater, films, books, radio, educational materials, and the press. The teacher can choose articles from Der Stürmer or excerpts from Goebbels' speeches to analyze with the students. When the students analyze propaganda materials, they can focus on three aspects: (1) respect for human dignity – more specifically, how it was not ensured in propaganda materials; (2) scapegoating – how propaganda was used to blame Jews for all the ills of German society, especially the destruction and defeat suffered by Germany and its allies in World War I and for the economic crisis in which Germany found itself; (3) how propaganda made use of existing stereotypes such as blood libel, financial control, etc. Students can work in groups to analyze propaganda materials in class or as homework activity.

**Part III**

7. The students share their reflection on the propaganda materials studied and a group discussion follows:

    a. Why do you think the Nazis engaged in such extensive propaganda and even created a Ministry with this name?
    b. What are the effects of propaganda?
    c. Do you think propaganda is still present in our societies today?
    d. Are you aware of antisemitic propaganda in the present?
    e. Have you heard any stereotypes about Jewish people, from your family, friends or other people?

8. The teacher or a volunteer student writes down on a board or shared document the examples of antisemitic propaganda in the present and stereotypes about Jews, then asks students if they are able to deconstruct the stereotypes, based on what they learned in the previous lessons (this part works better if students have also been engaged in the activities proposed above on human dignity, on identity and

stereotypes). A simple way to identify a stereotype is to check whether generalizations are used such as: all Jewish people are… If needed, the teacher can remind students the definition of stereotypes.

9. The teacher asks the students if they are aware of present-day manifestations of antisemitism. If the teacher believes that the students are not aware of such incidents he/she/they can prepare a handout with recent manifestation in their country such as: desecration of cemeteries, swastikas painted on Jewish institutions or in other public spaces, threat messages received by Jewish people (public of private persons), Neo-Nazi rallies, Holocaust denial and distortion, derogatory memes and videos, attacks on synagogues, etc.
10. The students work in groups to discuss ways in which antisemitism can be counteracted. At this point, the teacher can share with the students that Nazi radio was most effective in places where antisemitism was historically high, but had a negative effect in places with historically low antisemitism.
11. Each group presents the results of their work and then the teacher engages the class in a debriefing discussion, based on the following questions:

    a. Was it difficult to come up with ideas to combat antisemitism?
    b. Do you think that some ways are more effective than others?
    c. What can we learn from the fact that Nazi radio was most effective in places where antisemitism was historically high but had a negative effect in places with historically low antisemitism?
    d. Is there something that you can do, personally, to combat antisemitism?
    e. Is there something you can do as a group to combat antisemitism?

**Going further:**

- The students can launch an awareness campaign to combat antisemitism in general, or specifically related to incidents that are present in their town/region.
- The students can write a letter to the public institutions in their town to ask them to take action to prevent antisemitic incidents.
- The students can engage in a project focused on conspiracy theories in the present: what they are, how can we help our families and other citizens to identify them, what can we do to limit their dissemination.

# Annex 1 – Handout

1. **Deicide**

For millennia many people believed (and some still do) that Jews killed Jesus. According to most historians, the Romans are to blame for the murder of Jesus. At the time of Jesus' death, the Romans were imposing a harsh and brutal occupation on the Land of Israel, and the Jews were occasionally unruly. Jesus was a Jew and he was outspoken. Some of his followers called him "King of the Jews". That was reason enough for Romans to want to silence him. The Jewish community, on the other hand, had different factions – pharisees, sadducees, essenes and others – but despite many disagreements among these factions no group engaged in executions of leaders of the other groups.

In 1946, the Catholic Church under Pope Paul VI finally discredited the notion of Jewish deicide in its "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" (Nostra aetate), published by the Second Vatican Council. In clear, unequivocal terms, the Declaration states that the crucifixion of Jesus "cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today." The Qur'an also explicitly states the Jews did not kill Jesus.

2. **Blood libel**

This term refers to false allegations that Jews used blood of Christian or other non-Jewish children for ritual purposes. Historically, blood libels often took place close to Passover, when Jews were charged with using the blood of Christian children to bake matzahs (a type of bread that is usually baked at Passover). The proximity of such charges to Easter was thus also often associated with the continuing belief that Jews were responsible for the killing of Jesus. Many cases of blood libel were recorded in the Middle Ages. In various parts of Europe, when children disappeared or were murdered in unknown situations, the Jewish community was blamed. The blood libel was combined with allegations of well-poisoning by Jews during the time of the Black Death (bubonic plague) in the middle of the 14th century. By the 17th century, blood libels became increasingly common in eastern Europe and often resulted in the outbreak of pogroms or anti-Jewish riots, even after the Holocaust. In 1946, the Jewish Community was accused of kidnapping a non-Jewish boy, Henryk Blaszczyk, who had in fact left home without informing his parents. Although the boy returned home two days later, a pogrom broke out, killing 42 Jews.

3. **Usury (money lending)**

In the Middle Ages, Jews were prohibited from owning land or being part of a guild. Therefore, out of necessity, some Jews became moneylenders or tax and rent collectors. Several passages in the Old Testament condemn the practice of usury, especially when lending to less wealthy individuals. In the Jewish community, this created the rule of lending money at interest only to non-Jews. Even though the Church forbade money lending, there were many Christian bankers. They gave big amounts of money to their church so that their sin(s) would be forgiven. The kings and the lords profited from money lending in many ways, including by receiving taxes from these transactions. When peasants took loans from Jewish money lenders, they had to pay interest to the lender and pay taxes to the lord. The peasants needed to borrow money for agricultural work. Nevertheless, they viewed Jews who gave them the loans as greedy. Even though the lords were the ones who benefited most from this practice, money lending – which was in fact practiced by few Jews (1-5% of Jews, depending on the area) – was one more factor that increased hatred against Jews, especially in rural areas.

4. **The Protocols of the Elders of Zion**

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is a document organized in 24 chapters or "protocols" which are presented as minutes of a late-19th-century meeting attended by world Jewish leaders, titled the "Elders of Zion", who were allegedly conspiring to take over the world. In reality, this is entirely a work of fiction, intentionally written to portray Jews as conspirators against the state and plotting for world domination. The Protocols were first printed in Russia in 1903 and then translated in several languages. The forgery makes it seem that Jewish leaders had a variety of plans, most of which derive from older antisemitic beliefs, such as subverting the morals of the non-Jewish world, plans for Jewish bankers to control the world's economies, plans for Jewish control of the press, and – ultimately – plans for the destruction of civilization. In 1921, the London Times presented conclusive proof that the Protocols was a "clumsy plagiarism", copied in large part from a French political satire that never mentioned Jews—Maurice Joly's Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu (1864).

# Annex 2 – Handout

Henry Ford (1863-1947), an American industrialist and founder of Ford Motor Company, purchased in 1918 his hometown newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*. A year later he began publishing a series of articles that referred to Jews in every possible context as at the root of America's and the world's ills. The articles claimed that Jews controlled the gold supply and, hence, American money, that Jews were responsible for agricultural depression, strikes, or any financial scandal. They even blamed Jews for provoking incidents of mass violence. The articles from the series, which ran for 91 issues of the weekly newspaper, were bound in four volumes titled *The International Jew*. Ford also republished The Protocols of the Elders of Zion in the newspaper.

Nicolae Paulescu (1869-1931), a Romanian physiologist who made important contributions to the development of insulin, published in 1913 a book called Philosophical Physiology. In this book and in many other publications, Paulescu expressed virulent antisemitism: "But there is a radical question for us, Romanians: what shall we do with these unwanted guests who have forthwith settled in our country – or better said with these villain parasites who are equally thieves and assassins? Can we exterminate them like bugs? This would be the easiest and most comfortable way to get rid of them (…)"

Richard Wagner (1813-1883), a world-renowned composer, published in 1850, under a pseudonym, an essay called Jews in Music, in a German music journal. Wagner holds that Jews were incapable of authentic artistic expression, of creating music, because they lacked a nation and culture of their own. He considers them unable to speak European languages properly and he portrays them as people whose way of speaking is a "creaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle" or an "intolerably jumbled blabber". Many scholars have argued that the essay was a product of Wagner's jealousy over the success of Jewish opera composers such as Giacomo Meyerbeer. Nevertheless, Wagner never changed his stance. In fact, the text of the article was republished, in 1869, in an extended version, with Wagner's real name. The text was also translated in other languages.

## Anti-Roma Racism – Then and Now

**Overview:**

This activity confronts students with historical and present-day manifestations of anti-Roma racism. It gives students tools to identify instances of anti-Roma racism and to take action to contribute to combating this phenomenon.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Respect
- Civic mindedness
- Self-efficacy
- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Cooperation skills
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Annexes 1 and 2

**Duration:** 3 hours

**Tips for teachers:**

Anti-Roma racism is still very present in Europe and it is probable that many students have prejudices and stereotypes against Roma. This activity works best after students have been engaged in self-reflection processes regarding their own stereotypes and the stereotypes that exist in society in general (like the ones suggested earlier in this chapter). Through this activity students can understand how the social and political context contributed and continues to contribute to Roma people's position in the societies in which they live. This can help students move away from the general tendency of blaming Roma themselves for not being "well integrated" in the societies in which they live. Special consideration needs to be given by the teachers when Roma students are engaged in these activities. They should not be expected to know about these topics more than other students or to be "ambassadors" of an entire ethnic group.

This activity focuses on aspects of anti-racism that are quite general. However, it is important that the teacher reminds students that behind numbers there are always individuals, people who have families, lives, hopes and dreams, people who have dignity and agency, people who deserve respect, not pity. Anti-Roma racism refers both to the prejudiced attitudes that other people have about the Roma and to a system of oppression that has been in place throughout history.

The teachers can find out more information about Roma history from various resources that are available online, in different languages such as:

- The factsheets on Roma history, published by the Council of Europe: https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/roma-history-factsheets

- The Fate of European Roma and Sinti during the Holocaust: https://www.romasintigenocide.eu/en/home
- Digital Archive of Roma Arts and Culture: https://www.romarchive.eu/en/

**Description of the activities:**

**Part I**

1. The teacher distributes to each student a copy of Annex 1 – Roma in Europe. After reading the handout, the students work in groups of 4-5 people to discuss the following questions:
    a. What are the (new) aspects regarding Roma history that you learned from this text?
    b. Did anything surprise you? What?
    c. What other relevant aspects of Roma history do you know, which were not included in this text?
2. Each group presents the main aspects of their discussion and the teacher asks students if they know the meaning of the term anti-Roma racism. After gathering the students' input, the teacher can present the IHRA working definition of anti-Roma racism or an adapted version if the language used is too complex for the students. The definition can be projected, written on a board, or printed and handed out to the students:

*Anti-Roma racism is a manifestation of* ***individual expressions and acts*** *as well as* ***institutional policies and practices*** *of* ***marginalization, exclusion, physical violence, devaluation of Roma cultures and lifestyles, and hate speech*** *directed at Roma as well as other individuals and groups perceived, stigmatized, or persecuted during the Nazi era, and still today, as "Gypsies." This leads to the treatment of Roma as an alleged alien group and associates them with a series of* ***pejorative stereotypes and distorted*** *images that represent a specific form of racism.*

If the teacher decides to use an adapted version, it is important to make sure that both aspects are included – the **individual** expression and acts, as well as the **systemic** racism – the institutional policies and practices. Another important aspect is the fact that anti-Roma racism is directed towards individuals who are Roma or just "perceived" as Roma, which means that they do not necessarily identify as such, but are hetero-identified.

The teacher discusses the definition with the students, to make sure they understand it and asks them if there are aspects of the definition they do not understand or that need further clarifications, then hands out a printed version of the definition.

3. The students are asked to work in groups of 4-5 people and read again the text in Annex 1, in order to identify examples of anti-Roma racism and to answer the following questions:
    a. How many examples of anti-Roma racism did you identify in this text?
    b. Explain why you consider each of the identified actions as examples of anti-Roma racism. Refer to the definition, as needed.
4. Each group presents the main aspects of their discussion and the teacher engages the students in a general discussion, based on questions:
    a. Was it easy or difficult to find examples of anti-Roma racism?
    b. Are you surprised by the number / type of anti-Roma manifestations in the past?
    c. Were you aware of (some of) these aspects related to Roma history?
    d. What other aspects would you be interested in learning about Roma history?

Based on the students' responses, the teacher can include certain aspects in the next parts of this activity or can add more parts, including inviting experts to speak to the students. If historians are invited to speak to the students – in-person or online – it is advisable that they are Roma themselves (in order to contribute to breaking the habit of excluding Roma and having outsiders speak about them) and that the teacher has preparatory meetings with them to make sure that they are able to adapt their language and content to the level of the students' knowledge and understanding.

**Part II**

5. The teacher uses the jigsaw technique – a collaborative way of learning. The class is divided into three groups with an equal number of students in each group. Each group is assigned one of the texts in Annex 2 – A, B or C. Each student in group A receives a copy of the text A, each student in group B receives a copy of the text B and each student in group C receives a copy of text C. After individual reading, the students discuss in their small group to make sure everyone understood the text and is able to present it to colleagues from the other groups. The teacher allows enough time for individual reading and at least 5 minutes for discussion. Afterwards, the students have to form mixed groups of 3 people, one from each group (A, B and C). Each student presents to the other ones the subject assigned.
6. The teacher engages the students in a reflection process based on the following questions:

    a. Were you aware of some of the aspects you read or discussed? Which ones?
    b. Did you learn something new from this activity? What?
    c. What surprised you most in what we discussed today?
    d. Was there something unclear in what you read/heard? What?
    e. What are the aspects about which you would like to learn more?
    Depending on the students' answers the teacher can give more information on the spot or engage the students in a research process.

**Part III**

7. The students work in groups of 3-4 people to discuss present-day manifestations of anti-Roma racism. The teacher can offer students a list of categories in order to help them think of concrete examples. These categories can be based on the IHRA working definition of anti-Roma racism:

    - Distorting or denying persecution of Roma or the genocide of the Roma.
    - Glorifying the genocide of the Roma.
    - Inciting, justifying, and perpetrating violence against Roma communities, their property, and individual Roma.
    - Forced and coercive sterilizations as well as other physically and psychologically abusive treatment of Roma.
    - Perpetuating and affirming discriminatory stereotypes of and against Roma.
    - Blaming Roma, using hate speech, for real or perceived social, political, cultural, economic and public health problems.
    - Stereotyping Roma as persons who engage in criminal behavior.
    - Using the term "Gypsy" as a slur.
    - Approving or encouraging exclusionary mechanisms directed against Roma on the basis of racially discriminatory assumptions, such as the exclusion from regular schools and institutional procedures or policies that lead to the segregation of Roma communities.

- Enacting policies without legal basis or establishing the conditions that allow for the arbitrary or discriminatory displacement of Roma communities and individuals.
- Holding Roma collectively responsible for the real or perceived actions of individual members of Roma communities.
- Spreading hate speech against Roma communities in whatever form, for example in mass-media, including on the internet and on social networks.

8. Each group presents one of the examples discussed and the students are asked whether they are aware of people/institutions taking action against the anti-Roma racism expressed/manifested in the example shared by them.
9. The students then work in groups to think of ways in which anti-Roma racism can be counteracted.
10. Each group presents the results of their work and then the teacher engages the class in a debriefing discussion, based on the following questions:

    a. Was it difficult to come up with ideas to combat anti-Roma racism?
    b. Do you think that some ways are more effective than others?
    c. Why do you think anti-Roma racism is still prevalent in our societies? When discussing this question, the teacher should help students think of power dynamics (who has power – legislative, economic, political – in a society and the ways in which stereotypes and prejudices are perpetuated). Special attention should be given so that students do not fall into the trap of blaming Roma themselves for anti-Roma racism. This can happen, especially if the students themselves have stereotypes and prejudices against Roma.
    d. Is there something that you can do, personally, to combat anti-Roma racism?
    e. Is there something you can do as a group to combat anti-Roma racism?

**Going further:**

- The students can research how the Roma Genocide was carried out in other European countries.
- The students can launch an awareness campaign to combat anti-Roma racism in general, or specifically related to anti-Roma manifestations that are present in their town/region.
- The students can write a letter to the public institutions in their town to ask them to take action to prevent anti-Roma incidents or contribute to Roma inclusion.
- The students can engage in a project focused on raising awareness about Roma history, about the forgotten or barely researched aspects of history, about Roma contribution to European societies.
- The students can research the ways in which Roma started to organize – culturally and politically – at the beginning of the 20th century and the ways in which these actions (or other actions such as ensuring their right to vote) prompted more anti-Roma racism. Parallels can be drawn with racism in the United States and the segregation laws imposed to limit African-Americans' access to power.
- The students can research local, national or international Roma organizations, share with each other the activities of these organizations and explore ways to support them.

# Annex 1 – Roma in Europe[6]

Roma people have emigrated from India to Europe throughout several centuries. The Romani language belongs to the Indo-Aryan language group and was influenced by other languages from the areas through which Roma people migrated. The reasons for the migration of Roma have not yet been clearly understood.

In Wallachia and Moldavia (historical regions who are part of present-day Romania and Republic of Moldova), Roma people were enslaved for five centuries by the state, the Orthodox Church and boyars (landowners, members of the nobility). In the 19th century an abolitionist movement, influenced by European revolutions, emerged and Roma people were liberated. Most of the slave owners received compensation for liberating their slaves, but Roma people themselves did not receive any support for their integration in the society.

In Central Europe, the fate of Roma was determined by political changes and by wars with the Ottoman Empire. Roma were often forced to live at the edge of towns or evicted, even though they paid taxes and fought in the army. Spain pursued policies of assimilation, while Portugal and later on the United Kingdom deported Roma people to the Americas. In the second half of the 19th century more and more regulations were issued by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in order to restrict opportunities for Roma to earn a living, including banning them from certain professions.

As early as the mid-1920s, racially motivated police checks on Roma were conducted in Germany and Austria. Nazi propaganda contributed to spreading the existing stereotypes and prejudices. In 1936 a central agency was formed to combat the "Gypsy problem" in Vienna. The Nuremberg laws of 1935 classified Roma as "inferior" and stripped them of their German citizenship. Similar laws were passed in other European countries. Afterwards, Roma were deported to concentration camps, subjected to forced labor and dehumanization. They were killed in ravines, forests, left to die in camps like the ones in Transnistria or gassed in camps like Auschwitz. The exact number of Roma people who perished in the Holocaust is unknown, but it is estimated to at least 250,000 people.

Anti-Roma racism did not end with WWII. After the war, there was no public interest in the fate of the Roma. Restitution or compensation payments for the Holocaust were issued very late, if at all. For many years, Roma were not considered victims of the Holocaust, especially in communist countries. Despite this history of persecution, discrimination and marginalization, Roma have a rich cultural heritage – one that is part of European culture and has contributed to its development.

[6] This text is an adaptation of the article published by Nicoleta Bitu on RomArchive: https://www.romarchive.eu/en/about/context-project/.

# Annex II

## A. Eugenics and Racist Theories

At the end of the 19th century, theories of racial hygiene or eugenics started to emerge in the intellectual community. These theories advanced the idea that criminal behaviors, mental illness, alcoholism and even poverty were generated by hereditary factors. Supporters of eugenic theory did not believe that these problems resulted from environmental factors (as it has later on been proved). The Nazis created an institute to produce "research" (in reality, it was not actual scientific research) that supported their racist ideology. Therefore, the institute used racist criteria for defining Roma and Sinti and for putting them in various categories. According to one of the several definitions elaborated by the Institute, if a person had one great-grandparent who was categorized as a "Gypsy" then that person was classified as belonging to the category of "mixed blood Gypsies" with "1/8 of Gypsy blood" and as such was to be subsequently subjected to repression. An estimate of 500 Roma and Sinti individuals were sterilized between 1933 and 1939 and an estimate of 3,000 were sterilized by the end of the war.

## B. Anti-Roma Legislation

Persecution of Roma preceded the Holocaust. For example, in 1899, the police of the state of Bavaria in Germany had formed the *Central Office for Gypsy Affairs* (*Zigeunerzentrale*) to coordinate police action against Roma in Munich and gather data on Roma and Sinti from Bavaria. In 1933, some Sinti and Roma were forcibly sterilized under the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring. In connection with the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, it was forbidden for Roma and Sinti to be married to "racially pure" Germans. In 1938, the *Reich Central Office for Combating the Gypsy Nuisance* was established, in order to centralize efforts to persecute Roma living in the Third Reich. In the same year, the *Decree for Combating the Gypsy Plague* ordered the creation of a nationwide database of all Roma living in the Third Reich. This database was later used to round up Roma and put them in forced labor and concentration camps. Similar legislation was passed in other European countries.

## C. Deportation and killing of Roma

In 1936 all Roma from Greater Berlin were deported to Marzahn, an open field located near a cemetery and sewage dump in eastern Berlin. Afterwards, in other parts of Germany both local citizens and local police detachments began forcing Roma into municipal camps. Later, these camps evolved into forced-labor camps for Roma. These camps represented a preliminary stage on the road to genocide. When the war began, German Sinti and Roma were deported in Poland and placed in Jewish ghettos, labor camps and death camps. Auschwitz was the main place of extermination. Probably the second largest center of the extermination of Roma was the Jasenovac camp, set up by the Croatian government allied with Nazi Germany, where approximately 16,000 Roma people were murdered. Approximately 25,000 Roma people from Romania were deported to Transnistria and only approximately half of them remained alive. Actions against Roma, including mass shootings, were taken in other countries as well. An estimate of at least 250,000 Roma people were murdered during the Holocaust and many of those who remained alive had their homes and properties destroyed or taken away.

# Laws and Rights

## Antisemitic Laws in European Countries

**Overview:**
This activity helps students understand the power of legislation, by studying antisemitic legislation passed in Nazi Germany and other fascist countries, as well as by analyzing present day legislation to combat antisemitism.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

**Number of participants:** 10-30 people

**Resources and materials:** Timelines of antisemitic legislation or access to internet for students to create their own timelines

**Duration:** The duration of this activity depends on the depth of the research process and whether the teacher chooses to give students ready-made materials or to engage them in their own research process, with an estimate of 3-5 hours.

**Tips for teachers:**
The teacher can decide how to conduct these activities, according to the students' interest and competences. If time allows, students can conduct their own research regarding antisemitic legislation passed during the Holocaust. Otherwise, the teacher can prepare handouts to speed up the process.

**Description of the activities:**

**Part I**

1. The teacher explains that, during the Holocaust, the rights of Jewish people were restricted gradually, by several countries in Europe. In a first phase, the class is asked to study the restriction of the rights of Jewish people in Nazi Germany. The teacher can provide students with a ready-made timeline on antisemitic legislation[7] or can engage students in a research process that leads them to discover this information. If the teacher chooses the latter, the students can work in groups of 4-5 people and each group is assigned to research the legislation that was passed in one particular year. Once they have a timeline, the students work in groups to answer the following questions:
    a. Why do you think such legislation was passed?
    b. What did Nazi Germany expect to achieve with such legislation? Did it work?

[7] The USHMM timeline on Antisemitic Legislation 1933-1939 can be used as a reference: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/antisemitic-legislation-1933-1939.

c. In what ways did these restrictions affect Jewish people?
d. What was the percentage of Jews living in Germany before the war?
e. Did anyone oppose such legislation? Why?

2. The groups are invited to share their answers and a group discussion follows based on the following questions:

a. Were you surprised by the amount of antisemitic laws passed before the war?
b. Were you all aware of the percentage of Jews in Germany before the war? If not, is this information surprising? Why?
c. Was it difficult to answer these questions? Which ones?

3. The teacher reminds students that opinions are important, but they must be based on solid knowledge, especially when it comes to complex questions like these. When we do not have enough information to answer a question, the best answer is: *I don't know, I need to gather more information before having an opinion about this.*

**Part II**

4. The teacher informs students that Germany was not the only country to pass antisemitic legislation in the 1930s. Several countries in Europe did that. Moreover, antisemitic legislation was passed in Europe throughout centuries, not only in the 1930s.
5. The teacher invites students to research the antisemitic legislation passed in their country or in one or more countries of their choice, from the end of WWI until the end of WWII. The teacher can provide students with a ready-made timeline on antisemitic legislation or can engage students in a research process that leads them to discover this information. The students work in groups of 4-5 to conduct their research and to answer the following questions:

a. Why do you think such legislation was passed?
b. What was the effect of such legislation?
c. Did anyone oppose such legislation? Why?

6. Each group presents their findings and their reflection and the teacher facilitates a discussion based on the following questions:

a. Is legislation important? Why?
b. Can regular citizens contribute to the passing of legislation? How?
c. What do you think the European society has learned from the Holocaust?
d. What do you think it still needs to learn?

**Part III**

7. In this part, students focus on what European society has learned from its past and how it is working to prevent such legislation from being passed again. The teacher guides the students to research present-day legislation that offers protection from violence, discrimination and hostility motivated by antisemitism at European level[8] or at national level. The students work in groups to study one document assigned by the teacher per group and prepare a presentation for the other groups, answering the following questions:

    a. What subject is this document addressing?
    b. What specific measures does it address, in order to combat antisemitic actions?
    c. Who must put those measures into practice?
    d. How was this transferred into national legislation in our country? (in case the document referred to European legislation)
    e. Do you think this legislation is effective? Why?
    f. Would other measures need to be in place to prevent antisemitic behaviors? If so, what should they address?

8. At the end of the process, after each group presents, the teacher engages the students in a reflection based on the following questions:

    a. Was it easy or difficult to analyze the documents? And to answer the questions?
    b. Did anything surprise you? What?
    c. Do you think it is important for regular citizens to be aware of the legislation that is being passed or discussed?
    d. Do you know how regular citizens can influence legislation at European and national levels?

**Going further:**

- The students research the wider context in which this legislation was passed and learn more about the history of antisemitism in Europe and about antisemitic legislation prior to WWI.
- The students analyze the antisemitic laws from the perspective of an individual. For example, they can read a diary[9] and compare the entries with the dates of various antisemitic laws that were passed. This exercise can help students to better understand the impact of legislation on individuals.
- This lesson can be a good starting point for an inquiry-based learning process. Such a process could start with questions like: Why was it that no one opposed the antisemitic legislation? Why did the Nazi and fascist governments choose the Jewish people as the scapegoats?

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[8] For a list of EU activities to combat antisemitism, including legislation, the teachers can consult this page: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-antisemitism_en.

[9] Such diaries could be:
Romania – *Journal 1935-1944* by Mihail Sebastian
Germany – *I Will Bear Witness. A Diary of the Nazi Years 1933-1941* (vol. 1.) and *1942-1945* (vol. 2) by Viktor Klemperer
Italy – *Si può stampare* by Silvia Lombroso.

## Human Rights Are Not Abstract

**Overview:**

The aim of this activity is to reflect upon different periods in history from a human rights perspective and to discuss instances of human rights violations: how they occur, what makes them possible, what are their consequences. The students are engaged in a process of analysis focused on the period of the Holocaust and on present-day realities.

**Competences to be developed:**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law
- Respect
- Civic mindedness
- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Annex 1 as handout

**Duration:** 3 hours, divided in sets of 1 hour, with two assignments in between of about 30 minutes each.

**Tips for teachers:**

This activity helps students understand that human rights are not abstract and invites them to think of concrete examples highlighting what human rights and human rights violations look like in practice. It is important to explain to students that the purpose of this activity is not to apply the standards of today to a period of the past without taking into account the context in which the past events took place. Moreover, it is important to discuss with students that when we make such comparisons, they are made from a conceptual perspective and under no circumstance should comparisons of suffering be allowed. Suffering is something very personal that should never be quantified.

By engaging in this activity, the students can better understand the concept of human dignity and the fact that people anywhere and everywhere, at any given time, always had human dignity. Therefore, even though the modern framework of human rights was not established until after WWII, people who lived before that moment nevertheless had human dignity, which was respected in certain situations, but not in others. At the same time, human rights were not invented after the Holocaust. The modern human rights framework is based on previous philosophical, legal, and political works.

**Description of the activities:**

**Part I**

1. The teacher invites students to discuss human rights and asks them to share what they know about this concept. The students' answers are collected on a board or shared document and, if not already mentioned by the students, the teacher brings into the conversation the fact that human rights are defined as **a set of minimum standards which allow people to live a life of dignity**. The concepts of minimum standards and dignity are discussed so that students truly understand them.
2. Each student receives a copy of the Summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Annex 1). They are asked to read it and underline one right that sparks their interest. Then, students are invited to group according to the right they have chosen (the groups should be no bigger than 4-5 people. If many students chose the same right, two or more groups can be formed with the same right). In groups, the students answer the following questions:
    a. Why is this right interesting to you?
    b. What do you know about this right?
    c. What else would you like to know about this right?
3. Each group presents the conclusions of their discussion and the teacher shares some general aspects about human rights that are relevant for the class – for example, the fact that human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and inalienable or the key values that lie at the core of the human rights idea[10]. The teacher can also share with the students how the modern framework of human rights was conceived and developed as a reaction of the international community to the atrocities of WWII.
4. The teacher explains that even though the modern framework of human rights was drafted after the Holocaust, people who lived before the Holocaust still had human dignity. The students' task is to identify concrete actions taken during the Holocaust in relation with two given rights. The students work in groups of 4-5 people. The rights can be assigned to each group in different ways: the teacher can assign the right in which the students already expressed interest, along with another one; the rights can be assigned randomly; or the students can choose themselves the two rights they want to study. Ideally, the different groups should not study the same rights. This task can be assigned as group work in the classroom or as homework.
5. The teacher presents one example to the students before they start working. For example, the teacher may choose the right to freedom from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment and discuss with the students how Jewish people, Roma, people with disabilities, LGBTQI people and members of other groups had to endure beatings, harsh medical experiments, forced sterilization, severe humiliation and degradation, lack of adequate food and water or proper sanitation, etc.

[10] Teachers can refresh their knowledge by reading Chapter 4 from Compass – Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People, published by the Council of Europe in 2020: https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/chapter-4.

**Part II**

6. Each group presents the concrete examples of actions against human dignity during the Holocaust, which they identified. After each presentation, the other groups are asked to comment or to add other examples that were not mentioned.
7. The teacher conducts a debriefing process based on the following questions:
    a. Was it difficult to identify these actions against human dignity? Why?
    b. Why do you think the Nazis and their collaborators took so many measures against human dignity?
    c. Why do you think it was so easy for them to take these measures?
    d. Why do you think almost no one reacted against these measures?
    e. Do you think that people who were living back then understood the importance of human dignity?
    f. Do you think that people who were living back then were empowered to act for their or other people's rights? Why?
    g. What can empower people to act for their rights? The teacher or a volunteer student makes a list of students' ideas.
    h. In what ways can the human rights framework be helpful in understanding certain historical events?
8. The students are asked to continue working in groups, focusing on the two rights assigned to their group and to identify concrete measures through which these rights have been promoted and protected after WWII and after the adoption of the UDHR. The students can refer to international conventions and covenants, national legislation/constitutions, EU or national strategies, Council of Europe recommendations, etc.

**Part III**

9. Each group presents the results of their research.
10. The teacher asks the students: "To what extent do you believe that these measures have been successful in ensuring that everyone can enjoy their human rights?" After a general discussion, the students are asked to work in groups and identify concrete violations of the human rights assigned to their group which are taking place in the present, in their country or in other countries.
11. Each group presents the concrete examples of human rights violations identified in the present. After each presentation, the rest of the class is invited to add other examples of which they are aware.
12. The teacher facilitates a discussion based on the following questions:
    a. Was it difficult to identify human rights violations in the present? Why?
    b. Were you surprised by some of the examples shared by your colleagues?
    c. Given that a number of mechanisms for the protection of human rights exist, like the ones you presented earlier, why do you think people still face human rights violations?
    d. Do you know what to do if your rights or other people's rights are violated?
    e. Do you think people are aware of their rights? If not, why not?

f. What could be done to make people more aware of human rights?

g. What can we learn from the Holocaust that can help us develop and strengthen our respect for human dignity and human rights?

13. It is important that students walk away from this activity with a clear understanding that the purpose was not to compare suffering. To ensure this, the teacher can explain that suffering is something very personal and it should never be compared because it is unquantifiable. Nor did these activities intend to trivialize the Holocaust by comparing it, in an indiscriminate way, to situations of discrimination experienced in the present. The purpose of the exercise was to gain insights into the concept of human dignity, to reflect upon concrete manifestations of human rights and the mechanisms for the protection of human rights.

**Going further:**

At a deeper level of analysis, students can be engaged in processes to:

- Examine various categories of people during the Holocaust: the perpetrators, victims, bystanders, rescuers and resistors, from a human rights perspective.
- Analyze Nazi Germany's (or other fascist government in Europe) removal of the mechanisms to protect human rights and reflect on the importance of such mechanisms today, on what could happen if they were not in existence.
- Discuss other mechanisms/laws that should be in place in order to promote and protect human rights.
- Research other historical instances of human rights violations on a large scale and follow the historical developments through the lens of human dignity (e.g. slavery of African-Americans in the U.S.A., Roma slavery in Romania, persecutions against LGBTQI communities, the effects of colonization against Indigenous populations, etc.).
- Choose a right/cause that interests them and create an awareness campaign about it or contribute to existing campaigns or actions.

# Annex 1

## The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Summary)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Article 1**<br>Right to Equality | **Article 16**<br>Right to Marriage and Family |
| **Article 2**<br>Freedom from Discrimination | **Article 17**<br>Right to Own Property |
| **Article 3**<br>Right to Life, Liberty, Personal Security | **Article 18**<br>Freedom of Belief and Religion |
| **Article 4**<br>Freedom from Slavery | **Article 19**<br>Freedom of Opinion and Information |
| **Article 5**<br>Freedom from Torture and Degrading Treatment | **Article 20**<br>Right of Peaceful Assembly and Association |
| **Article 6**<br>Right to Recognition as a Person before the Law | **Article 21**<br>Right to Participate in Government and in Free Elections |
| **Article 7**<br>Right to Equality before the Law | **Article 22**<br>Right to Social Security |
| **Article 8**<br>Right to Remedy by Competent Tribunal | **Article 23**<br>Right to Desirable Work and to Join Trade Unions |
| **Article 9**<br>Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Exile | **Article 24**<br>Right to Rest and Leisure |
| **Article 10**<br>Right to Fair Public Hearing | **Article 25**<br>Right to Adequate Living Standard |
| **Article 11**<br>Right to be Considered Innocent until Proven Guilty | **Article 26**<br>Right to Education |
| **Article 12**<br>Freedom from Interference with Privacy, Family, Home and Correspondence | **Article 27**<br>Right to Participate in the Cultural Life of the Community |
| **Article 13**<br>Right to Free Movement in and out of the Country | **Article 28**<br>Right to a Social Order that Articulates this Document |
| **Article 14**<br>Right to Asylum in other Countries from Persecution | **Article 29**<br>Community Duties Essential to Free and Full Development |
| **Article 15**<br>Right to a Nationality and the Freedom to Change It | **Article 30**<br>Freedom from State or Personal Interference in the above Rights |

## In Focus: Right to Citizenship

**Overview:**

The aim of this activity is to help students understand the significance of the right to citizenship by researching how citizenship was granted to and removed from Jewish people throughout history and what were the consequences of its removal.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law
- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Cooperation skills
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Access to internet

**Duration:** 2-3 hours

**Tips for teachers:**

In this activity students are required to conduct research in groups. The role of the teacher is to ensure that students feel comfortable working in groups and that they know how to do online research. If needed, the teacher can suggest a list of specific websites that the students can consult. If the information the students find in their research is not accurate, if it comes from sources that are not trustworthy, etc. this can be a good opportunity for the teacher to discuss with students the importance of critical thinking and help them further develop their competences to identify trustworthy sources, to differentiate them from untrustworthy ones, and to not take for granted everything that is published online.

**Description of the activities:**

1. The teacher informs the students that the topic they are going to address is the right to citizenship. They discuss what it means and the teacher can share Article 15 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: *Everyone has the right to a nationality. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.*
2. The students engage in a research process to learn how the right to citizenship was granted to Jewish people and how it was removed by Germany and other countries in Europe. The teacher can choose to assign students the countries to focus on or to allow them to select the countries that interest them. The students will work in groups of 4-5 people to engage in a research process in order to find the answers to the following questions:
    a. When did Jewish people get the right to citizenship in this country?
    b. Why were they not granted citizenship before?
    c. What contributed to the granting of this right? You can refer to intellectual movements, socio-economic aspects, etc.

   d. When was it removed? Why?
   e. What were the effects of the removal of this right? What other rights did it affect?

3. Each group prepares a presentation with their research findings for the entire class.
4. After the presentations a debriefing discussion follows:

   a. Was it difficult to find the answers to the questions for the group work?
   b. How did you collaborate in your group?
   c. Were you surprised by the information you found?
   d. Has this process helped you enrich your understanding about the Holocaust? How?
   e. Has this process helped you understand better the right to citizenship? How?
   f. Is everyone able to enjoy this right today?

**Going further:**

- The students can read United Nations reports on statelessness and compare the situation around the world, in different decades or compare the situation in a given period, in different parts of the world.
- The class can study the European Convention on Nationality, signed in 1997.
- The right to citizenship, along with rights such as the right to work or the right to property can be studied in relation to the history of antisemitism / anti-Roma racism in order to identify the impact that denying such rights had on Jewish / Roma people and on their possibilities for integration in the societies in which they lived.

## In Focus: Right to Freedom of Expression

**Overview:**

This activity helps students understand the importance of freedom of expression by analyzing ways in which it was restricted during the Holocaust and by discussing about freedom of expression today, including about ways in which it is limited, without this being considered a human rights violation.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Respect
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Cooperation skills
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Access to internet or handouts prepared by the teacher

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Tips for teachers:**

According to the context in which they teach, the teachers can choose to give their students the task to find information about the events assigned, by searching online or to give them handouts with descriptions of these events.

**Description of the activities:**

1. The teacher writes on the board or distributes handouts with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and asks students to discuss the article in groups of four, to identify the reasons why freedom of expression is important.

*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*

2. Each group is assigned one event in Nazi Germany (or another fascist country in Europe) related to freedom of expression and asked to study that particular event and discuss:
    a. Why do you think the authorities wanted to limit people's freedom of expression?
    b. What were the consequences of this event/law?

    Examples of events in Germany are:

    - Burning of the books, 1933;
    - Incarceration of political opponents in concentration camps, starting in 1933;
    - Editors' Law, 1933;
    - Cinema Law, 1934;
    - Banning people from listening to foreign radio, 1939.

3. After each group presents their findings and reflections, the teacher guides a discussion based on the following questions:

    a. What can we learn from the limitations on freedom of expression imposed by Nazi Germany?
    b. Do you think that the right to freedom of expression means that anyone can say anything?
    c. Do you think there are or should be limitations on freedom of expression?
    d. Are you aware of any existing limitations to freedom of expression?

    The teacher explains that there are restrictions to freedom of expression in Europe, according to the European Charter of Human Rights. Restrictions refer to: incitement to violence; hate speech and racism; Holocaust denial and reference to Nazi ideology[11]. Restricting freedom of expression according to these grounds is not considered a human rights violation.

4. The students are asked to work in groups and share whether they are aware of any violations of the right to freedom of expression in present-day Europe. Each group presents the conclusions of their work and the teacher engages the students in a discussion based on the following questions:

    a. Why do you think freedom of speech is important?
    b. What could happen today if authorities imposed limitations on freedom of speech?
    c. What can we, as citizens, do when we become aware of human rights violations?

**Going further:**

- Students can explore the connection between propaganda and freedom of expression, during the Holocaust and in present-day Europe.
- Students can explore the topic of conspiracy theories, starting from the Protocols of the Elders of Zion to present-day antisemitic conspiracy theories.

[11] More details can be found here: https://rm.coe.int/handbook-freedom-of-expression-eng/1680732814.

# Culture and Communities

## Right to Cultural Life / Freedom of Belief and Religion

**Overview:**

This activity helps students learn about key events during the Holocaust related to two rights – the right to participate in the cultural life of the community and the right to freedom of belief and religion – and about concrete ways in which these rights are experienced and/or violated today.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing cultural diversity
- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices
- Respect
- Civic mindedness
- Empathy
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Annexes 1 and 2 and access to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Tips for teachers:**

This activity works better if students already have previous knowledge about human rights or at least access to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially for the part where they have to think about the connection between the two rights discussed and other human rights.

One of the events described in Annex 2 – The Copyists of Białystok is not so well-known. Teachers can find out more about the event on a dedicated website, which also includes ideas for educational activities: https://kopisci.org.pl/en/copyists/.

**Description of the activities:**

1. Students work in groups of 4-5 people. Each group receives the Handout in Annex 1, and their task is to discuss concrete ways in which people are or could be enjoying these rights today. In other words, they should think about what this right means in practice.
2. Each group presents the conclusions of their discussion. If a group already presented certain aspects, the following groups do not have to repeat, only to add if they discussed some aspects that were not mentioned. After the presentations, the teacher facilitates a discussion based on the following questions:
    a. How do you participate in the cultural life of your community?
    b. Do you think everyone in your community, including migrants and people belonging to non-dominant groups, can fully enjoy the right to participate in the cultural life of the community? Why?
    c. Are you aware of any violations of the right to participate in the cultural life of the community?

   d. Why do you think the right to participate in the cultural life of the community is a human right?
   e. Do you feel you can enjoy your freedom of thought and religion? Why?
   f. Do you think everyone in your community, including migrants and people belonging to non-dominant groups, can fully enjoy the right to freedom of thought and religion? Why?
   g. Are you aware of any violations of the right to freedom of belief and religion?
   h. Why do you think freedom of belief and religion is a human right?

3. The students go back to their groups and discuss the events in Annex 2.

   a. Why do you think this action was carried out?
   b. Are you aware of other situations during the Holocaust which arbitrarily limited people's freedom of religion and belief or participation in cultural life?

4. Each group presents and the teacher guides a discussion based on the following questions:

   a. Do you think events like this inspired articles 18 and 27 of the UDHR? In what way?
   b. In what way are these rights connected with other human rights?
   c. What could be done so that everyone can fully enjoy these rights?

**Going further:**

- Students research present-day examples of violations of these two rights or other events from the Holocaust period related to these rights and prepare a school exhibition about it, with photos, texts, drawings etc.

# Annex 1 – Handout

## Universal Declaration of Human Rights

*Article 18*

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

*Article 27*

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

# Annex 2 – Events which occurred during the Holocaust

***Burning of the Books***

In 1933 the Nazis conducted a campaign to ceremonially burn books which they considered "un-German". On May 6, the Institute of Sexology, an academic foundation researching sexuality and advocating for homosexual rights was occupied by Nazi-supporting youth and several days later its entire library was burned. On May 10, German students carried out a country-wide campaign which led to the burning of tens of thousands of books from libraries, synagogues and private homes, many of them works of internationally acclaimed authors.

***Kristallnacht***

On 9-10 November 1938 the Nazis instigated violence throughout Germany, annexed Austria and areas of the Sudetenland (currently part of the Czech Republic). Hundreds of synagogues, Jewish institutions and cemeteries, as well as thousands of shops were destroyed, looted, set on fire or desecrated. The firefighters received orders to intervene only to prevent the fire from spreading to other buildings. The German government blamed Jews themselves for this incident, made them pay for the damages, clean the streets and publicly humiliated them.

***The Copyists***

In Białystok, Poland, a German officer had the idea to take advantage of a large group of talented Jewish painters and forced them to copy works by master painters. The copies were sent to German art dealers, who sold them in Germany and other countries. The artists had no choice but to obey the orders, as they were living in the ghetto and their lives depended on it. They did not receive additional remuneration for their work or increased food rations, the officer did not see prisoners as artists, but free labor. Izaak Celnikier, the only survivor from this group, who did not paint at that time, but was a helper at the studio, explained that the artistic painting studio in the Białystok ghetto operated for almost two years, from August 1941 to 1943. Within 24 months, a group of about 20 artists, probably working six days a week, created an estimate of thousands of works of art that were basically stolen.

## Life Before and After the Holocaust

### *The Heritage and the Void*

**Overview:**

This activity helps students comprehend the void left by the Holocaust. Students learn about the Jewish heritage of their town and reflect upon the impact of the Holocaust on individuals, on communities and on the future of a given society.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing cultural diversity
- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Autonomous learning skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- Cooperation skills
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Access to internet

**Duration:** 3 hours, with tasks assigned between the three parts.

**Tips for teachers:**

Many students in Europe are not aware of the Jewish heritage in their town and they might not have met a Jewish person. In many parts of Europe, which used to be inhabited by large Jewish communities, there are now very few or no descendants of these Jewish communities. As students learn about the Holocaust, they think about Jewish people in the past, but this activity helps them understand that a past genocide has an impact on the present and on the future of the world we inhabit. The activity is designed in 3 parts. At the end of parts I and II the students have tasks to complete which can be assigned as homework. Depending on the age and competences of the students, teachers might need to dedicate more time to prepare students to do the homework, such as assigning a specific task to each group, ensuring that the groups are able to carry out the task in the timeframe assigned, etc. For activities such as archival research or meetings with the Jewish community, the teacher might need to help the students get in touch with the right people.

**Description of the activities:**

**Part I**

1. The teacher asks the students to work in groups of 3-4 people and research the number of Jewish people present in various countries in Europe before and after the Holocaust. The teacher can name the countries or let students choose the countries they want to research. If students do not have access to the internet, the teacher can prepare graphs beforehand and distribute them in class. Then, the students research the number of Jewish people present before and after the Holocaust in their home town (if no Jewish people lived in their home town, another relevant town is chosen by the teacher or by the students themselves).
2. The teacher explains to the students that when we talk about such high numbers it is usually very difficult to visualize them and to understand what these numbers really mean. The students are asked to come up with ideas of how we can better understand the magnitude of these numbers. The students might come up with ideas to compare (e.g. the number of Jewish people from Poland who were murdered is similar to the population of today's Madrid), draw, calculate percentages, create graphs, etc.
3. The teacher reminds the students that each of these people who were killed had a family, relatives, friends, colleagues, most of whom were also killed. This means that not only individuals were wiped out, but entire communities, as well as the possibility of creating new life – children and grandchildren. The students are asked to calculate the percentage of Jewish people in their hometown before the war and to calculate how many Jewish people would live today in their hometown if this percentage was the same.
4. The students are asked to work in groups and continue their research about the Jewish community in their hometown. This time they should not focus on numbers, but on the Jewish contribution to the life of the town: businesses, arts, buildings, education, personalities, cuisine, etc. The teacher may choose to allow each group to research whatever they find of interest or to assign each group a topic of research regarding Jewish heritage. The students are encouraged to interact with the Jewish community, to conduct research in the archives, in the libraries, to visit museums, to interview historians, etc.

**Part II**

5. The teacher invites each group to present their findings and facilitates a discussion based on the following questions:
    a. Was it easy or difficult to find this information about the Jewish community?
    b. Were you aware of some of these aspects? If not, why do you think that is?
    c. Was there anything that surprised you in this research?
    d. Do you think the other citizens living here are aware of the Jewish heritage of our town? Why?
    e. What do you think could be done so that more people become aware of the Jewish heritage of our town?
6. The teacher invites students to reflect on the fact that the murder of individuals, entire families and communities left a void. The students are asked how they would define a void and to think how something that does not exist can be represented or "seen". The students work in groups of 4-5 people and come up with a definition of the void left by the murder of Jewish people.

7. After each group presents, the teacher asks students to create, individually or in small groups, representations of the void. These could be drawings, poems, songs, graphic art, etc.

**Part III**

8. The teacher invites the students to present their work – to show it, read it, perform it and, if needed to provide details and explanations.
9. After each group/student presents, the teacher facilitates a discussion based on the following questions:
    a. Was it easy or difficult to represent the void?
    b. How did you choose the medium to represent the void (drawing, poem, etc.)?
    c. How did you choose the content of your art piece?
    d. Do you think your artwork is respectful of human dignity? In what way?

**Going further:**

- The students can create a school exhibition with their representations of the void and organize discussions with other colleagues.
- Using the project-based learning methodology[12] the students can focus on studying certain aspects of the Jewish community in their town, such as buildings, people and personalities, life stories, legislation – discriminatory or inclusive, neighborhoods, cuisine, cultural specificities, and traditions. They can research archives, interview people, invite representatives of the community to the school, create a graphic novel, photo exhibition, booklet, etc.
- The students engage in activities that contribute to the preservation of Jewish heritage such as contributing to the cleaning and maintenance of Jewish cemeteries, writing petitions for renovation of synagogues and other buildings, organizing, in partnership with the Jewish community if there still is one, events to commemorate the Holocaust, to remember victims and survivors, events to promote Jewish culture and traditions, etc.

[12] For details see the chapter Methodological Considerations.

## *Exploring Jewish Culture*

**Overview:**

This activity aims to familiarize students with certain aspects of Jewish culture and increase their appreciation of cultural diversity.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing cultural diversity
- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices
- Respect
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Autonomous learning skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Annex 1; preparation of the meeting with a member of the Jewish community.

**Duration:** 3 hours, at certain intervals and an estimated duration of 1-2 hours for individual work (at home) in which the students write their essays.

**Tips for teachers:**

The best way to learn about a different culture is to interact with people who identify as members of that culture. Unfortunately, in many parts of Europe there are very few Jews left. However, even though the Jewish communities are small in most towns, they still keep their traditions and can help students learn about them. Should meeting a member of the Jewish community in person not be possible, an online meeting can be organized with someone from another town or even from another country.

In order to prepare for the visit, the teacher can address certain aspects of Jewish culture and Judaism with the students. The teacher can choose what to explore with the students before the visit, depending on their knowledge. This activity proposes some of the major holidays as a starting point. Maybe the students are already familiar with the holidays described in the annex. In that case, the teacher can choose other aspects of Jewish culture. Maybe the students have very little knowledge about Jewish culture and the teacher might need to explain some of the aspects mentioned in the annex – for example, what is Yiddish. In order to engage the students in these activities, the teacher does not have to be an expert in Jewish culture. If the students ask questions that the teacher cannot answer, the class can discuss where the answers to those questions can be found and which sources of information are trustworthy. The teachers can also show photos or videos that depict the holidays presented in the Annex. The holidays in the Annex are listed in chronological order, according to the Jewish calendar.

As always, when talking about general aspects related to a culture, it is important to remind students of the diversity that exists within Jewish culture: not every member of the Jewish community is equally observant; some traditions are specific to a certain part of the world, but not to others, etc.

**Description of the activities:**

**Part I**

1. The teacher informs the students that they are going to engage in a series of activities to learn about Jewish culture and at the end of these activities they will write individual essays. The purpose of the essays is not to test the students on the information they learn, but they are a way for students to further explore their understanding of Jewish culture and to reflect upon what they learned, what more they would like to learn and how this process influenced their worldview. The students should therefore take note of what they find relevant during the activities.
2. The teacher starts by asking the students what they know about Judaism, Jewish culture and traditions. A mind map can be created on a board or shared document.
3. Afterwards, the students work in groups. Each group has the task to study one of the holidays described in Annex 1. If they have access to the internet, they can further research that holiday and prepare to present it to their colleagues. Each group presents the holiday they studied to the whole class. If the colleagues have questions, they write them down as they will be discussed after all the presentations.
4. The teacher engages the class in a discussion based on the following questions:
    a. Were you aware of these traditions? Which ones?
    b. Did anything surprise you in what you learned today?
    c. Is there something that resembles some of your cultural practices?
    d. Is there something you did not understand? What?
    e. What else would you like to know about Jewish culture?
5. The students are encouraged to write down the questions they have and to think of other things they would like to know about Jewish culture in order to prepare for the meeting with the member of the Jewish community.

**Part II**

6. A meeting with a member of the Jewish community is planned in advance by the teacher. The speaker can be invited to school or the students can visit the Jewish Community and attend the presentation there. The format of the meeting can be: presentation followed by questions and answers or it can start directly with questions from the students, in which case the speaker can add things that were not mentioned by the students at the end or throughout the discussion. This can be a good opportunity to also visit the synagogue and learn more about how the service is conducted in the synagogue or about different Jewish movements.
7. At the end of this meeting the teacher reminds the students about their task to write an essay with their reflection on Jewish culture. Each student will have the opportunity to read his/her/their essay in the next part of the activity.

**Part III**

8. The students are invited to read their essays in groups of three people. After a person reads his/her/their essay, the others give feedback. If students are not familiar with giving constructive feedback, the teacher should encourage students to focus on the positive aspects and suggest that they use sentences like these:

    a. What I heard while you were reading your essay is that…
    b. One aspect I really liked in your essays is…
    c. I understand that you wanted to focus your essay on…? Am I correct?
    d. If you would further develop your essay, I think it might be interesting to detail more the aspect of…

9. The teacher engages the class in a reflection based on the following questions:

    a. How was it for you to learn about Jewish culture?
    b. What was the most interesting part?
    c. What else would you like to know about Jewish culture?
    What can you do to get this information?
    d. Who else do you think should learn about Jewish culture? Can you help them learn?

# Annex 1 - Handout – Some of the main Jewish Holidays

## Shabbat

Shabbat marks the 7th day of the week. It is a day of physical and spiritual delights, in order to remember the purposefulness of the world and the role of human beings in it. As God rested after creating the world in six days, Jewish people rest from their work. Many Jews attend services in the synagogue on Shabbat. The arrival of Shabbat – just before sundown each Friday – is marked by a candle-lighting ceremony. Being together with family and enjoying distinctive Shabbat foods are specific ways in which this day is marked, along with singing, studying and celebrating together. A Jewish day goes from nightfall to nightfall, which means that Shabbat starts on Friday evening and lasts until Saturday evening. The traditional greeting on Shabbat is "Shabbat Shalom", meaning "Good Sabbath", or "Gut Shabbes", which means the same thing in Yiddish.

## Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah is Jewish New Year, celebrated on the first day of the Hebrew month of Tishrei, which typically falls out in early to mid-September. The holiday lasts for two days. Sounding the shofar at the service is a central part of Rosh Hashanah. In the afternoon of the first day, bread crumbs are thrown into a naturally running body of water, as a means of casting away their sins. On the second night it is customary to eat a new fruit, a symbol of newness or apples dipped in honey for a sweet year. The most common Rosh Hashanah greeting is "Shanah Tova" (Good year) or the longer version, "Shanah Tovah Umtukah" (May you have a good and sweet year).

## Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur or Day of Atonement is considered the holiest of Jewish Holidays. It is a somber day to contemplate life and ask for forgiveness, to separate oneself from the mundane world and to devote to the relationship with the divine. Jews fast on this day and pray in the synagogue. The evening of Yom Kippur begins with Kol Nidrei, a statement that is repeated three times, asking all vows and oaths be forgiven so one can start the new year with a clean slate. The day is seen as an opportunity to change attitudes and behaviors and to ensure a better world for everyone. The common greetings of Yom Kippur are "Have an easy fast" or "Gmar chatima tova" (may you be inscribed for a good year). Yom Kippur falls ten days after Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year).

## Hanukkah

Hanukkah is a holiday that honors the Maccabees's (Jewish warriors) victory over King Antiochus, who forbade Jews to practice their religion. For eight days and nights, candles are lit, songs are sung, children receive gifts and oily foods are eaten to celebrate one of the most joyous of Jewish holidays. Every night one candle is lit in a special menorah – a candelabrum with spaces for nine candles – one for each night plus a helper candle. Hanukkah is celebrated on the 25th day of Kislev (the ninth month of the Hebrew calendar), which is generally in late November to mid-December.

## Pesach

Passover, or Pesach, celebrates the freedom of the Jews from slavery in ancient Egypt. The festival of Passover is one of great joy and it is celebrated for eight days. A special meal called Seder marks the first and sometimes the second night. The most important food of the holiday is matzo, which is a bread made with only flour and water. It is unleavened, which means that it is flat and it looks like a large cracker. This is a reminder of the bread the Israelites took with them when they fled Egypt for freedom. They did not have time to let it rise because they were in a hurry to leave. Pesach takes place in March or April. It is also the Festival of Spring.

## Purim

Purim recalls the story of Esther who saved Jews in Persia from annihilation in the 5th century BCE. Haman, the king's chief advisers, persuaded the king that Jews were a threat to the kingdom. The king naively believed him and granted Haman the power to annihilate the Jews. The king's wife, Esther, was a Jewish woman, though she had hidden her heritage from the king. When she learned about Haman's plot, she arranged a meeting with her husband and revealed to him that she was a Jew and persuaded the king to stop Haman's plan. Purim is celebrated with family and friends, with sweets and pastries, by exchanging gifts and by giving alms to the poor. Children enjoy dressing up as characters from the Purim story and playing carnival games. Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of the Hebrew month of Adar, which usually falls sometime in March.

## *Exploring Roma Culture*

**Overview:**

This activity aims to familiarize students with certain aspects of Roma culture and increase their appreciation of cultural diversity.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing cultural diversity
- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices
- Respect
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Autonomous learning skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Annexes 1 and 2; preparation of the meeting with a member of the Roma community or for the visit to a Roma art exhibition, performance, etc.;

**Duration:** 3 hours, at certain intervals and an estimated duration of 30 minutes for individual work at home.

**Tips for teachers:**

This series of activities includes a meeting with a member of the Roma community or a visit to a Roma cultural event. The speaker can be invited to school, or the students can visit a Roma association and attend the presentation there. If the teacher chooses to take the students on a visit to a Roma cultural event, prior research about that event is needed. It is important to ensure that the event is indeed organized by Roma artists, and it is not a form of cultural appropriation (the term is defined in Annex 2). An important resource that can be used by the teachers to learn about Roma culture is RomArchive[13], an international digital archive for Roma arts and culture. While traditional archives often portray Roma in stereotypical ways, RomArchive focuses on self-representation. Through content created by Roma themselves, RomArchive creates a reliable source of knowledge that leads to the emergence of new narratives, reflecting the diversity of Roma identities.

Unfortunately, many people in Europe still hold various stereotypes and prejudices against Roma. These are preventing them from engaging in authentic dialogue with Roma people. The activities addressing stereotypes and prejudices, presented in an earlier chapter of this handbook, can help students overcome some of their stereotypes. An encounter with Roma persons who can present and discuss aspects of their culture gives students the opportunity to engage in intercultural dialogue and develop their appreciation of cultural diversity and respect for human dignity.

As always, when talking about general aspects related to a culture, it is important to remind students of the diversity that exists within Roma culture: not every person who identifies as Roma adheres to the same cultural practices and beliefs; some traditions are specific to a certain part of the world, but not to others, etc.

[13] RomArchive: https://www.romarchive.eu/en/.

**Description of the activities:**

**Part I**

1. The teacher informs the students that they are going to engage in a series of activities to learn about Roma culture.
2. The teacher starts by asking the students what they know about Roma culture and history. A mind map can be created on a board or shared document.
3. Afterwards, the students work in groups. Each group receives Annex 1 with the task to read the text and answer the questions. The students can search for the answers online if they do not know them already. After the students discuss the text and the questions in small groups, they are invited to share their answers with the entire class. If there are four groups, each group can share the answer to two of the eight questions, in order to cover all the questions and to not have students repeat what was already said.
4. The teacher engages the class in a discussion based on the following questions:

    a. Were you aware of some of the things we discussed today? Which ones?
    b. Did anything surprise you in what you learned today?
    c. Is there something you did not understand? What?
    d. What else would you like to know about Roma culture?

5. If the next part consists of:

- a meeting with a member of the Roma community, the teacher encourages the students to write down the things they would like to know about Roma culture and to formulate them as questions for the member of the Roma community they will meet.
- visiting an exhibition of Roma art, attending a Roma cultural event, etc. the teacher writes down what the students express they would like to know and prepares information to discuss with the students in the third part of the activity.

**Part II**

6. A meeting with a member of the Roma community is carefully planned by the teacher. The format of the meeting can be: presentation followed by questions and answers or it can start directly with questions from the students, in which case the speaker can add things that were not brought into discussion by the students at the end or throughout the discussion.
7. At the end of this meeting the teacher gives students two tasks to complete by the next meeting:

- to read Annex 2 and to underline aspects they would like to discuss during the next part of the activity;
- to research Roma cultural events in their town/country – theater, music, exhibitions, museums, events organized by Roma associations, etc.

**Part III**

8. The teacher engages the students in a debriefing discussion of the meeting (the questions are written with reference to a meeting with a member of the Roma community, but they can be adapted depending on the concrete activity that was done with the students):
    a. How did you feel during your encounter with [name of the person(s)]?
    b. What was the most interesting thing you learned?
    c. Did anything surprise you during our meeting?
    d. What aspects from the interview with Mihaela Dragan would you like to discuss?
    e. Is her view of the Roma culture similar with the one of [name of the person(s)]? In what way?
    f. Has your understanding of the Roma community changed after these activities? How?
9. The teacher asks the students to share the Roma cultural events/institutions they discovered in their research. After everyone shared, without repeating what was already said, the teacher engages the students in a reflection based on the following questions:
    a. What is the most interesting event for you, from the ones presented?
    b. Can you tell if these events are created by Roma artists or are a form of cultural appropriation?
    c. Have you attended Roma cultural events before?
    d. Do you think that when you will attend Roma cultural events in the future, your perspective will be different?
    e. What else would you like to know about Roma culture? What can you do to get this information?
    f. Who else do you think should learn about Roma culture? Can you help them learn?

# Annex 1 – Roma Congress[14]

In the 1960s the Roma movement started to be more active at the international level. In 1971 the First World Roma Congress was held in London. It was attended by participants from 14 countries, separated by the Iron Curtain, who travelled to this unique event to affirm their common ethnic identity. Tentative steps had been taken before the war, at a 1931 Congress in Bucharest. The Roma flag was adopted at the 1971 Congress, as well as the Roma anthem, *Gelem, Gelem*. The flag consists of a green and blue background (representing heaven and earth) and a 16-spike red chakra (symbolizing the itinerant tradition of Roma people and an homage to India). The song makes reference to the nomad tradition of the Roma, as well as to the persecution suffered during the Holocaust. The motto *Opre Roma!* became the political credo of the Roma movement and its fight for social justice and equality. Among the aspects discussed at the Congress was the need to challenge the use of words like *cigani, Zigeuner, gipsy*, which have signified for centuries denigration, marginalization, and exclusion. The usage of the word Roma was to replace these misnomers. To date, nine Roma Congresses have been organized in different parts of Europe.

1. What is a misnomer?
2. What does the word *Roma* mean in Romani language?
3. What words do you know in Romani language?
4. What does *Opre Roma* mean?
5. What are the words of the Roma anthem?
6. Why is there an homage to India on the Roma flag?
7. When is the Roma Nation Day celebrated? Why was this date chosen?
8. What was the Iron Curtain?

[14] This text is based on the Council of Europe's Roma Factsheets: https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/roma-history-factsheets and on the text written by Grattan Puxon as Harvard FXB Guest Writer: https://fxb.harvard.edu/2019/04/25/london-1971-the-first-world-roma-congress/.

# Annex 2 – Interview with Mihaela Drăgan[15]

*What do you consider the most important aspects of Roma culture?*

Roma culture is diverse, just like we, Roma people, are. Many people think that Roma culture is traditional, folkloric, that it is all about dancing in colorful clothes and joyful music, but in fact it is much more complex. Roma culture is also contemporary, modern, futurist and visionary, it is a culture that is under continuous development.

Roma culture is closely connected with our identity and history of oppression. For this reason, it talks about our experiences or about our fight against racism. Throughout history, Roma culture inspired the dominant culture in the countries in which Roma people have been present. Unfortunately, its contribution is seldom recognized and is either appropriated by the mainstream culture or presented in stereotypical ways, reduced to what is considered to be "Roma tradition" or to clichés about Roma.

*What made it possible for Roma people to maintain their culture despite prejudices, racism, exclusionism and pogroms which were – and to a certain degree still are – present in Europe?*

I think that culture kept us resilient. We have resisted and continue to survive and resist because in our culture you can find so much joy and love for life. We love our culture, we love to celebrate and gather together. The whole community is our extended family and we share everything. Even though there are hierarchies and even injustice within our communities, the essence of our culture has always been that of sticking together. We express our fight through our culture, and this is why I think Roma culture has persevered. Despite all the oppression we have faced, we are still here and we take pride in the culture which defines our identity.

*There is a lot of diversity within the Roma community, can you help us understand it?*

There is a lot of diversity because we are different groups depending on the craft our ancestors practiced in the past and some of our people are still practicing today. We are blacksmiths, goldsmiths and silversmiths, musicians, flower sellers, bear trainers, spoon makers, Kalderash and so on. We can speak different dialects of Romani language depending on the group we belong to and even the way in which traditional Roma people dress can differ from one community to another. Not all Roma people dress in traditional clothes and not all of them speak Romani. Nevertheless, they identify as Roma.

*You have created a new genre, called Roma Futurism. Please share with us what it means and how it is expressed.*

Roma Futurism is a cultural concept that I developed in 2018 when I realized that there is no Roma art that represents us in the future, that there is no science fictional Roma art. I worked on this new genre for a whole summer in a residency in Hong Kong and this is how I define it: Roma Futurism creates the interaction between Roma culture and technology and witchcraft. It combines science fiction elements, the history of Roma people, fantasy, Roma subjectivity, magical realism, creative technology with magical practices and healing rituals.

Roma Futurism looks at Roma history from a perspective that incorporates the healing of pain and transgenerational suffering genetically transmitted to the Roma by their ancestors, victims of slavery and the Holocaust. I have expressed Roma Futurism in different forms of art I produced, like the theater play *Romacene: The Age of the Witch*, the experimental movie *The future is a safe place hidden in my braids* and in the music album *TechnoWitches* created together with artist Niko G.

[15] Mihaela Drăgan is a multidisciplinary artist, playwright, actress and co-founder of Giuvlipen Theatre Company, the first independent Roma feminist theater company in Romania.

*What could non-Roma people do to contribute to the understanding and promotion of Roma culture?*

Unfortunately, there is an abundance of stereotypical art products about Roma culture and people should just stop consuming it. People can be more pro-active in learning about Roma culture beyond stereotypes and in understanding that no one has the right to speak in our name – especially after an entire history of silencing – and that no one has the right to appropriate* our culture. Non-Roma people working in art and culture and who are in a position of power can and should give more space and visibility to Roma artists and promote Roma contemporary art.

* Cultural appropriation takes place when members of a dominant group adopt cultural elements of a non-dominant group in an exploitative, disrespectful, or stereotypical way. For example, when members of a dominant group are profiting financially or socially from the culture of a non-dominant group; when they are oversimplifying that culture or treat it like a joke; when they are separating a cultural element from its original meaning.

# Victims, Survivors, Resistors

## Individual Stories – A Starting Point for Understanding History

Individual stories help students understand history from a human perspective, rather than a political, societal, cultural, religious or other perspective. Using testimonies in teaching is not only a powerful way to remember survivors and victims of the Holocaust, but also to develop students' empathy and deeper understanding of the impact of unjust and inhumane actions. In history learning, testimonies are usually included towards the end of the educational process, as a way to supplement what was learned from history books, archives and other sources. The approach presented in this Handbook proposes a process that works the other way around: students start from an individual story and then carry out research in order to understand the more general social and historical context in which the story unfolded.

Two stories are presented in this chapter, one of a Jewish Holocaust survivor and one of a Roma survivor. Starting from these stories the students research the local context in which they took place. The teachers can use the same approach by choosing other stories, depending on their students' interest. For example, the teacher can choose a story from the country where the students live or from a different country in Europe. If the teacher is engaged in international collaboration[16] with a teacher from another country, he/she/they might decide to choose a story from that particular country. The teacher can even ask the students which story to study or from which country.

### *Assia Raberman*

**Overview:**

In this activity students explore the way in which the Holocaust unfolded in a specific part of Europe, starting from the testimony of a Holocaust survivor.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Respect
- Empathy
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of history

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:**

- One handout with The Story of Assia Raberman for each student
- Access to the internet

**Duration:** 2 hours

[16] A booklet on national and international collaboration among Holocaust and human rights educators is available at: https://www.intercultural.ro/en/booklet-collaboration-holocaust-human-rights-educators/.

**Tips for teachers:**

This activity has at its core the testimony of a Holocaust survivor which can have a profound impact on the students. Teachers need to pay special attention to the emotional wellbeing of the students. The activity is a good opportunity to help students understand the connection between personal stories and general history. Learning only about facts and figures cannot lead to an empathetic understanding of the past. At the same time, learning about individual stories without knowledge of the general context can lead to a limited or distorted understanding of the past.

**Description of the activities:**

Students receive the handout with The Story of Assia Raberman. They are asked to read it and then, in groups of 4-5 people, engage in two processes. Firstly, to research Assia's context and then to reflect upon her story.

1. Research Assia's context:
    a. What was life like in Mizoch and Rivne before the war?
    b. What historical events are relevant for this part of Europe during the war?
    c. What measures were taken against the Jews in Mizoch and Rivne and when were they taken?
    d. How was Assia affected by these measures?

    The findings are presented by the students and discussed in the larger group.

2. Reflect upon Assia's story, based on the following questions:
    a. How do you think Assia felt when all her colleagues were ignoring her?
    b. Why do you think they were ignoring her?
    c. How do you think Assia's parents felt when they decided to give her to the Gabor family?
    d. Why do you think the baker agreed to help Assia?
    e. How do you think Assia felt when she was hidden inside the cabinet and heard the words of the Ukrainian collaborator?
    f. Why do you think the Gabor family decided to help Assia?
    g. Why do you think Assia and her brother decided to move to Palestine?

3. The groups present their reflections and the teacher guides a discussion based on the following questions:
    a. What has this activity helped you learn about the Holocaust?
    b. What has this activity helped you learn about human beings?
    c. What human rights / rights of the child were violated in Assia's story?
    d. What can we learn from personal stories that we cannot learn from academic history books? What can we learn from academic history books that we cannot learn from personal stories?

**Going further:**

- Students can watch a recording of Assia's testimony: https://youtu.be/lPopK4ehzGE
- Students can create a presentation about the Holocaust in the Mizoch area and about Assia's story.
- Collaborative projects can be developed between teachers from any country and teachers in the Mizoch area. In these projects, students in one country can study the story of a Holocaust survivor in another country and have exchanges with their peers from the region.

# The Story of Assia Raberman[17]

Assia was 11 years old when the Nazis arrived in Mizoch (currently, Ukraine), her hometown. She was living with her mother, who was a pharmacist, her father, who was an agricultural engineer and her brother, who was a University student.

She grew up in a liberal and open-minded household, filled with *"lots of love, education, humanistic values: to give, to understand, to behave and to take into consideration other people's feelings. Not to take for granted that you're right (…) not to blame others."* Her family was Jewish but did not keep kosher and was assimilated in the Polish culture.

Assia was a very popular girl in school, with many friends. That was until the end of June 1939, when rumors that something was going to happen started to spread through the Jewish community. By that time, all her colleagues were ignoring her.

Her parents decided that the best option for Assia to survive was to hide her with a Catholic family until the end of the war. Maria and Joseph Gabor were friends with Assia's parents and loved her very much. They had no children and offered to take her and raise her as their daughter. If her parents survived the war, Maria and Joseph would give her back to them. On October 10, 1942 Assia was supposed to move in with the Gabor family, 18 kilometers away from her hometown, but she did not want to go along with her parents' decision. She wanted to stay with them as long as possible. When the Gabors came to save her from what was obvious, even though she had her luggage packed, Assia decided that she would remain with her parents. She was crying and shouting, and they could not convince her to go. Nevertheless, her mother gave Maria Gabor one of the suitcases "*In case she changes her mind...*".

Two days later, the "cleaning action" started in the ghetto where she and her parents were living. *"We can't be the three of us together. You'll have to run away*" her mother told her. Fortunately, their house was on the very edge of the ghetto. Just across the street, where the "Aryan part" started, lived the baker's family who was friends with Assia's family. Her parents told her to run there, and she did. As she ran across the street, she heard loud shootings behind her. Immediately, the idea of her parents being shot crossed her mind, but she was powerful enough not to look back.

Just a few minutes after she entered the baker's house someone knocked on the door. The baker hid Assia in a cabinet and opened the front door. It was a Ukrainian collaborator, who was drunk and came to celebrate the arrival of the Nazis in Mizoch. From inside the cabinet, Assia heard the man saying: "*Finally, they're killing the Jews here and I'm so happy about this occasion. Give me vodka, we drink for this occasion that it finally came to Mizoch to kill the Jews."* Then he left saying he had a lot of work, to kill all the Jews.

Uncertain of what should be his next step, the baker hid Assia in a warehouse. He put her in an empty box which lay on top of two other boxes, about 2 meters above the ground. He gave her a bread and told her to lay still until he came back for her. Assia remembers that she thought *"What will be will be. I heard voices of young people that were thrown out from their houses and they had to go to the market and from there to the ravines (...) in Sosonky [Forest near Rivne]. That is where we used to go for picnics with families in the summertime".* She lay there for more than 48 hours and kept repeating one prayer that her mother had taught her in Hebrew, even though she did not understand it: *"One God for us all. Please help."*

[17] This text was compiled from the recorded testimonies that Assia Raberman gave at TOLI seminars in various European countries.

From the box, she heard the voices of the people that were taken to the ravines: "*I heard people, I even recognized one girl's voice 'Don't kill me. I want to live. Let me live. I want to live.'*" Even now, after so many years, Assia still hears this sometimes, in the night, when she can't sleep *"Please don't kill me!"*. Beside the sounds, Assia felt a specific smell too. *"I could smell a fire. The bodies were burned. It's peculiar. I can't explain it. It's like burning people."* After a few years, she found out that while she was hidden in the box, some of the Jewish families, rather than seeing their children being undressed and shot in the ravines, preferred to set their houses on fire. Entire families waited for their death surrounded by flames in the burning places that were once their homes.

Two days later the baker came back for her. He helped her get out of the city and pointed her in the direction of Buderazh, where the Gabor family was living. At only eleven years old, she managed to walk 18 kilometers through the night, by herself, and finally arrived at the place that was to become her new home. The cover story they made up, in case the Gestapo was going to ask, was that Assia was Maria Gabor's goddaughter and that her father was a Polish policeman who was sent to Siberia by the Russians.

But in order for this plan to work, the Gabors had to move to Rivne, a bigger city where no one would know Assia. In Rivne, Assia went to public school and Catholic church just like the other girls her age. In 1944, on February 2, Rivne was captured by the Red Army and remained under Soviet control. It was a hard transition. Assia remembers that there were bombings every night. She was fifteen years old. People were poor and one could barely walk the streets without getting robbed.

Robbers did not spare Assia's second family either. One day, when Maria Gabor was on her way from Rivne to Buderazh to get some food, her carriage was robbed and she and her driver were murdered. After finding out that his wife was dead, and before telling anything to Assia, Joseph committed suicide. "*I lost the second parents who were so good to me and I was alone in this house with the dog. (…) I was afraid. I thought that I was the only Jew left in the world."*

Eventually, Assia was found by her brother, who had been a student in Tashkent during the war and had managed to come back. They learned that their parents were murdered and tried to find a way to move to Palestine. They spent some time in a refugee camp in Austria, then one year in Italy and half a year in Cyprus. In this voyage, Assia met her future husband and they were one of the first couples to marry in Israel. They started their life together from scratch. Assia remembers about the food at their wedding "*We had sandwiches."* Both of them studied in Jerusalem and then moved to Haifa where they felt they made it. She remembers thinking "*We live in our own country. We are accepted, we are not guests and I am happy. I am here in my own home. I have a right to defend myself. I work, I am accepted and needed and can contribute my share to help children, to build our own country and to be finally accepted*."

Assia talks about the thoughts that have been following her throughout her life and made her ask herself: *"How can I be happy when so many people were murdered? I have to live with two «why» all my life. Why did the people hate so much the Jews that they were willing to kill them? Don't I have eyes or hands like all of you, am I different? And the second «why» is: Why am I here with you? After so many years, I am still alive, I was spared. They didn't murder me. Why?"*

In trying to answer the second 'why', Assia dedicated her life to working with children with psychological disorders.

## *Justinian Badea*

**Overview:**

In this activity the students explore the testimony of a Roma Holocaust survivor, as a starting point for exploring the persecution of Roma during the Holocaust.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices
- Respect
- Civic mindedness
- Responsibility
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Skills of listening and observing
- Empathy
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:**

- One handout with The Story of Justinian Badea for each student
- Access to the internet

**Duration:** 2 hours

**Tips for teachers:**

This activity has at its core the testimony of a Holocaust survivor which can have a profound impact on the students. Teachers need to pay special attention to the emotional wellbeing of the students. The activity is a good opportunity to help students understand the connection between personal stories and general history. Learning only about facts and figures cannot lead to an empathetic understanding of the past. At the same time, learning about individual stories without knowledge of the general context can lead to a distorted understanding of the past. Students might not know much about Roma history. For example, there may be a need to dedicate some time to learning about Roma slavery, which lasted for 500 years.

**Description of the activities:**

Students receive the handout with The Story of Justinian Badea. They are asked to read it and then, in groups of 4-5 people, engage in two processes. Firstly, to research Justinian's context and then to reflect upon his story.

1. Research Justinian's context:
    a. What was life like for Roma people in Bucharest / Romania before the war?
    b. What historical events are relevant for this part of Europe during the war?
    c. What measures were taken against the Roma and when were they taken?
    d. How was it possible that some Roma people were sent to fight in the Romanian army and others were deported?
    e. How was Justinian affected by the events and the specific measures taken against the Roma?

    The findings are presented by the students and discussed in the larger group.

2. Reflect upon Justinian's story, based on the following questions:
    a. How do you think Justinian felt when his father had to go fight in a war?
    b. How do you think he felt when he was forced to leave his home and live for three months in the alleyway of the Prefecture?
    c. Can you imagine how it was for him to ride the train where people had no food and water and many died? What must he have been thinking? What must he have been feeling?
    d. Why do you think Justinan's father left the army and went to join his family in Transnistria?
    e. What are Justinian's later reflections upon the events? Can he make peace with what happened?

3. The groups present their reflections and the teacher guides a discussion based on the following questions:
    a. What has this activity helped you learn about the Holocaust?
    b. What has this activity helped you learn about human beings?
    c. What human rights / rights of the child were violated in Justinian's story?
    d. What can we learn from personal stories that we cannot learn from academic history books? What can we learn from academic history books that we cannot learn from personal stories?

**Going further:**

- Students can watch recordings of other Roma survivors on https://iwitness.usc.edu/home
- Students can create a presentation about deportations to Transnistria.
- Collaborative projects can be developed between teachers from two different countries. In these projects, students in one country can study the story of a Holocaust survivor in another country and have exchanges with their peers from the region.

# The Story of Justinian Badea[18]

Justinian Badea was born in Bucharest, on December 21, 1931. His father was drafted to the army in 1941. A few months later, the authorities gathered his mother and brothers, along with other Roma people and interned them in a big alleyway, in the prefecture, with barely anything to eat. From there, they were taken to the train station and put in cattle cars for two days without water, food and barely any air. Many people died during these two days. In Tighina[19] the train stopped for a couple of hours and the gendarmes opened the cars to allow air to enter, but they did not let anyone get off the train. The train continued to Grigoresti and from there the Roma were taken to Bogdanova in carriages.

The winter was harsh and they had no wood to make fire, no clothes, nothing. Many people died of cold and hunger. In the spring, Justinian's father was able to find them. He had heard they were deported and left the front to be with them. Everyone was forced to work the lands from dusk till dawn and those who could not work were shot by the Romanian gendarmes. In the fall, when agricultural work was not needed anymore the people were taken to Varvaloca, near Bug river. From there, they were forced to march from village to village. Those who could not walk fast enough were beaten by the gendarmes and many of them were killed.

Eventually they reached Tiraspol where they were interned in a camp. One day, Justinian's father found a pair of shoes and, even though none of his family members had any shoes, considered it was better for them to sell the shoes and use the money for food. One night, he tried to climb over the fence to go out and sell the shoes, but the night guard saw him and shot him.

After four years in Transnistria Justinian and his mother were freed and were able to go home with the help of local people from Bessarabia who gave them money and rides to the train station. When they reached Bucharest and tried to go home, they realized that their house had been destroyed. His mother spent the rest of her life mourning her husband and her children. Justinian Badea forgave the perpetrators, but he can never understand why he had to suffer like this, for the simple reason of being a member of a certain ethnic group.

[18] This text is based on an interview with Justinian Badea published in 2000 by the Intercultural Institute Timisoara, in the collective volume *Minorities: Identity and Coexistence*.

[19] A small town, also known as Bender, currently in the Republic of Moldova.

## Resistance

**Overview:**

This activity helps students reflect upon their understanding of resistance and learn about various forms in which Jewish people resisted during the Holocaust, including armed and unarmed resistance.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Respect
- Civic mindedness
- Responsibility
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Empathy
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Annex 1

**Duration:** 2 hours

**Tips for teachers:**

When learning about the Holocaust, students might be left with the impression that Jews were just helpless victims who had no courage or means to fight back. The following activities help students move away from the idea that Jews were mere passive victims. In reality, people found the strength to resist in various ways. It is important to remember that Jewish people were not aware of the intentions of the Nazis and their collaborators from the beginning. Many people even found it difficult to believe the rumors which were circulating about the extermination camps. A few people had the option to engage in armed resistance, but resistance also occurred in forms that did not include weapons. The students might find it surprising in the beginning to talk about unarmed resistance, but through a reflection process their understanding of resistance can become more refined.

**Description of the activities:**

**Part I**

1. The teacher asks the students what does the word "resistance" mean to them. The word is written on the board or a shared document and the teacher or a volunteer student writes the ideas expressed by the students around it.
2. The teacher divides the class into four groups. Each group receives, from Annex 1, one example of armed resistance and one example of spiritual resistance (two groups receive: 'Uprisings' and 'Education, culture, religion' and the other two groups receive: 'Partisans' and 'Documentation'). The students' task is to read the handout, discuss the examples and prepare to present them to another group. Two groups which studied different handouts come together and each group presents their examples of resistance.
3. All the groups come together and the teacher guides a discussion based on the following questions:
    a. Were you aware of these forms of resistance during the Holocaust?

b. Did anything surprise you in these examples? What?
c. Why do you think people chose to resist?
d. Do you think they believed their armed resistance would be successful? Why?
e. Why do you think people engaged in spiritual resistance?
f. Why was it so difficult for people to resist?
g. What aspects facilitated resistance in some situations?
h. Are you aware of other forms/examples of resistance than the ones we discussed? Which ones?
i. What can we learn from Jewish resistors?
j. How can we apply this learning into everyday life?
k. Going back to our initial understanding of resistance, would you add/change anything?

**Part II**

4. The students are asked to go back to their groups and, based on the updated definition of resistance, to think of concrete examples of resistance in our present-day societies or from recent, post-Holocaust history. The teacher can assign this task as an activity during the class or as homework between part I and II. Each group presents 1-2 examples and explains:

    a. Why do you consider this a form of resistance?
    b. What do you think the people engaged in this resistance are trying / have tried to achieve?
    c. Do you think it was/will be successful? Why?

5. After each group presents, the teacher guides a discussion based on the following questions:

    a. Was it easy or difficult to come up with examples of present-day or recent history resistance?
    b. What values do these resistors stand for? Are they the same for all the examples presented by the groups or are there differences?
    c. What can we learn from these resistors?
    d. How can we apply this learning into everyday life?
    e. Going back to our definition of resistance, would you add/change anything?

**Going further:**

- Students research other forms of resistance, such as:
    - Attempts to preserve Jewish heritage: books, torahs and religious objects, family photos. An interesting example is the "Paper Brigade" in Vilnius.
    - Intellectual resistance from Jews and non-Jews, such as White Rose Resistance, the Female Couriers of the Underground Youth Movement
    - Jewish Parachutists of Mandatory Palestine
    - Resistance through letters
- Students research other examples of resistance from the categories discussed during the lesson.

# Annex 1 – Forms of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust

## A. Armed resistance

### 1. Uprisings

Armed resistance was organized in more than 100 ghettos. The largest uprising took place in the Warsaw Ghetto. More than 400,000 Jewish people had been in the Warsaw Ghetto. Tens of thousands died of disease and starvation, hundreds of thousands were deported to Treblinka and other camps. In April 1943, when Jews resisted deportation and started to fight, the SS and the police were caught by surprise and resistance fighters were able to shoot dozens of them. The uprising lasted for four weeks. Over 7,000 Jews were killed and the rest were deported to various camps as the Warsaw Ghetto was liquidated and a small concentration camp was established in its place.

Resistance took place even in Nazi camps, including in the Treblinka, Sobibor and Auschwitz-Birkenau killing centers. On October 14, 1943 around 22 SS men and Ukrainian guards were killed in Sobibor. Around 300 prisoners were able to escape. Most of them were caught and killed soon afterwards and it is estimated that between 50 and 70 people survived to the end of the war.

### 2. Partisans

Approximately 20,000-30,000 Jews throughout Eastern and Western Europe fought back during the Holocaust as Jewish partisans. The majority were regular people – many of them teens – who had escaped the ghettos and work camps. They joined non-Jewish partisan groups, often having to hide their Judaism, due to antisemitism, or in places with high levels of antisemitism they formed all-Jewish partisan groups. While non-Jewish partisans could sneak back to their homes for security and safety, the Jews had no place to go. They lived under harsh conditions – without real shelter to protect them from inclement weather.

The partisans fought and survived by forming organized groups. They had few arms and little ammunition, but were able to make significant contributions to fighting the Nazis because they knew the lay of the land and how to use the terrain to their own advantage. Most successful partisan activities took place at night, under the cover of darkness and with the help of the local population.

## B. Spiritual resistance

### 3. Education, culture and religion

General education, through regular schooling, was banned for Jews in most of Eastern Europe. But in some ghettos, despite deplorable conditions, secret schools were established, often disguised as soup kitchens or other social institutions. Jews smuggled books into numerous ghettos and opened underground libraries. Activists established a 60,000-volume library in the Theresienstadt ghetto, near Prague.

Most children who lived in ghettos could not attend school, because they were forced to work or they had to care for their younger siblings. Some children were taught by adults behind closed doors in the secrecy of their own homes. Finding teachers, suitable locations, books, writing materials were only some of the problems faced. Starvation, lack of heating, forced labor made education a difficult task, but one that was seen as an affirmation of life, as an expression of survival.

Despite hunger, overcrowded living spaces and suffering, Jewish people in the ghettos did not give up on culture and religion. They organized concerts, lectures, theatrical and other forms of artistic productions. Religious services were forbidden in most ghettos, but many Jews prayed and held ceremonies in secret. These activities helped people maintain their cultural and religious identity, providing spiritual comfort and sustaining morale.

## 4. Documentation of the events and experiences

Jewish people tried to document what they experienced or saw during the Holocaust in various ways: by keeping diaries, by writing poems, by drawing and painting, by taking clandestine photos, etc. In most cases this documentation was individual, but in some cases, it was organized. For example, in the Warsaw Ghetto, Emanuel Ringelblum organized a collection of documents, together with other historians, writers, rabbis and social workers, dedicated to chronicling life in the ghetto. The discovered part of the archive (code-named Oneg Shabbat, meaning Joy of Shabbat) contains over 6,000 documents which include essays, diaries, drawings and other artefacts, collected between September 1939 and January 1943.

# Upstanders, Bystanders, Collaborators

## Upstanders

**Overview:**

This activity aims to inspire students to become upstanders by engaging them in a process of reflection upon action taken by people displaying moral courage.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Empathy

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Annex 1

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Tips for teachers:**

In this activity students explore examples of moral courage. In order to better engage with this activity, the students should have prior knowledge of the Holocaust. The activity is a good starting point for a project-based learning activity which explores human rights from an activist perspective and guides students in addressing a topic of their interest and raising awareness about it.

**Description of activities:**

1. The teacher asks students to form groups of 4-5 people and distributes handouts with one or more stories about rescuers and activists to each group, making sure that every group has different examples. The teachers can use examples from Annex 1 or prepare other examples that are relevant for their students. The students are invited to read the handouts and then discuss the persons involved and their actions, based on the following questions:

    a. What did this person value?
    b. What did this person want to achieve?
    c. What did this person do in order to achieve it?
    d. What was the impact of the actions of this person?
    e. Did the person risk anything by taking those actions? If so, what do you think motivated her/him to assume these risks?

    If the teacher wants to dedicate more time to this activity, the students can be asked to collect more information about the rescuers/activists before discussing the questions.

2. Each group will share with the rest of the class some information about the rescuer(s)/activist(s) assigned to their group and their reflection on the questions.

3. The teacher facilitates a discussion based on the questions below. The answers to some of the questions or some key words can be written down on a board or a shared document:

   a. What can we learn from the persons that decided to take action to protect other people?
   b. How much of a difference can one person make?
   c. What competences does a rescuer/activist need?
   d. What examples of present-day human rights activists do you know?
   e. What are the barriers human rights activists may face?
   f. How can you act in order to promote and to protect human rights?

**Going further:**

- Starting from this lesson, the students can continue to explore the topic of rescuers and activists. They can also start taking action to promote and protect human rights. Using the project-based learning approach, the teacher can guide the students in the following process:

1. *Selection of the topic*
   - Students choose one social issue they would like to focus on. The process of choosing the topic should be adapted to the age and previous experience of the students. For example, the process could look like this:
   - Each student proposes a topic anonymously and the topic that has been proposed by most students is the one that will be studied.
   - Students work in small groups, each group proposes one or more topics, then a voting process takes places in order to select the final topic.

2. *Research*
   - Students research the topic selected:
   - Students work in groups and each group researches a different aspect or uses a different medium for research (archives, media, experts, regular citizens, etc.). The role of the teacher is to ensure that everyone gets an assignment with which they feel comfortable.
   - Each group shares their findings so that the entire class becomes knowledgeable on the topic selected.

3. *Action*
   - Students identify ways in which they can contribute to raising awareness and/or solving this issue addressed. They can choose to do an online campaign, a campaign in their school, to write a petition, to organize a fundraising, to mobilize the community to do voluntary work, etc. It is important that the students decide what they want to do, not the teacher. The role of the teacher is to guide the process, not to decide or control the results.

4. *Public presentation*
   - Students organize a public presentation of their project, in order to present their work. They can invite to the presentation other students and teachers from the school, parents, other members of the community, and experts with whom they interacted in the research phase.

5. *Reflection*
   - Students are engaged in a reflection process based on the following questions:
     - Questions related to the process:
       - How was the group work organized?
       - How did you find the information you needed?
       - How did you present the information to the rest of the class?
       - How did you organize the part about raising awareness/solving the issue addressed?
       - How did you collaborate with the members of your group?
       - How did you prepare and organize the public presentation?
       - What did you like most?
       - What did you not like?
       - Was there anything that surprised you?
       - What would you do differently in a future project like this?
     - Questions related to the product/results:
       - How do you feel about the results of your work: the action part?
       - How do you feel about the results of your work: the public presentation?
       - How do you feel about the results of your work: the effects of your project on other people?

# Annex 1 – Handouts

**Viorica Agarici** (1886-1979) was the chairperson of the local Red Cross in the city of Roman, in Romania. In the summer of 1941, shortly after Romania entered World War II, she was often at the train station, caring for the wounded soldiers coming from the Eastern Front. On the night of 2-3 July, she heard moans and cries for help coming from the sealed railway cars, far from the station. Hundreds of Jews, survivors of the Iaşi pogrom, were crowded in the cars of the "death train", without food and water. After travelling under the hot summer sun for days up and down the tracks in the sealed metal cars, many of them died and the survivors were weakened. The Gendarmes, both local and German, were preventing them from accessing water and shot several of the ones who tried to procure it.

Viorica Agarici insisted that the Red Cross had to offer assistance to the passengers and convinced officers of the Romanian Army to open the cars. The bodies of the dead were removed from the train and the survivors received water, food and were allowed to wash. Thanks to Agarici's insistence and help, some of the passengers survived the trip to Călăraşi work camp. Moreover, hearing about her actions, other branches of the Red Cross gained more courage to act and offer support.

Four years after her death, Yad Vashem recognized Viorica Agarici as a Righteous Among the Nations.

**Irena Sendler** (1910-2008) was a Polish social worker, who during World War II offered assistance to Warsaw's Jewish citizens and helped smuggle Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto.

As soon as the Nazi occupation began, taking advantage of her position in the municipal Social Welfare Department, Irena, with the support of a few trusted friends, began making forged documents for Jewish families and finding safe locations for them. After the imprisonment of nearly 500,000 Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1940, Sendler continued her humanitarian efforts. As the Germans feared the spread of diseases on the outside, she managed to obtain a special permit that enabled her to enter the Ghetto, in order to inspect the sanitary conditions. Sendler and other volunteers managed to sneak in medication, clothing, food and other provisions and to rescue the orphans of the Ghetto and then other Jewish children. The older children were taught Catholic prayers and sneaked in a nearby Catholic church. Once in the building, they removed the yellow star from their clothes and exited through the front door as Polish Catholic children, with new identities. The younger children were hidden in toolboxes or in other ingenious ways and sneaked out of the Ghetto. Sendler travelled with a dog, so that if the hidden children cried around the guards, she would hit the dog's paw and he would begin to bark, alongside all the Nazi dogs.

Sendler helped save around 2,500 Jewish children and managed to hide the list of their names and locations. She never revealed anything about her work, even when arrested and tortured by the Gestapo.

She was recognized by the State of Israel as Righteous Among the Nations in 1965.

**Martha Sharp** (1905-1999) and **Waitstill Sharp** (1902-1983) were American Unitarians sent on a mission by their church to help rescue refugees in Europe, at the beginning of World War II. They travelled to Prague in February 1939 and engaged in both direct relief and emigration assistance. Czechoslovakia came under Nazi control on March 15, 1939 and, although the Sharps were targeted by the Gestapo's suspicion, they managed to stay until early August and assist refugees with immigration paperwork, distribute money and goods, and help refugee intellectuals find employment in the United States. Their exit visas allowed them to make short visits abroad and, on these occasions, they accompanied refugees, with considerable personal risks. It is estimated that they helped about 3,500 persons: men, women and children, of different professions, many of whom were Jewish. After they left Czechoslovakia, they continued to work for the refugee cause from the United States and from Western Europe.

In 2006, Yad Vashem recognized Martha and Waitstill Sharp as Righteous Among the Nations.

**Chiune Sugihara** (1900-1986) was a Japanese Consul in Kaunas, Lithuania. Japan was a possible route for the Jewish people who tried to escape Europe, but the Japanese government had some immigration criteria that most of the refugees would not fulfill. Knowing that the applicants were in danger, Sugihara issued ten-day visas to Jews who wanted to transit through Japan on their way to the United States. This was done against the strict orders of the Japanese Foreign Ministry to give visas only to people who already had a visa to a third destination to exit Japan, with no exceptions. Until 4 September 1940, when the Consulate was closed, he was reportedly spending 18 to 20 hours a day issuing visas, producing a normal month's worth of visas each day and he even issued blank papers with only the consulate seal and his signature. He knew that what he was doing was an act of disobedience, but he was able to save several thousand people.

In 1984, Yad Vashem recognized Chiune Sugihara as Righteous Among the Nations.

**Eleanor Roosevelt** (1884-1962) was the First Lady of the United States for twelve years. She advocated for Jewish refugees and for the establishment of the State of Israel. In 1939, Eleanor Roosevelt publicly supported the passage of a law that would permit the entry of 20,000 German refugee children under 14 years in the United States, but sadly this bill did not pass. The following year, she organized a meeting connecting government officials with social workers and with representatives of organizations that helped refugees, in order to develop a coordinated plan for rescuing children. As a result of this meeting, a special Committee was established and hundreds of orphaned and unaccompanied European children were brought to the U.S., including Jewish refugee children.

Eleanor Roosevelt served as the chairperson of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and played a major role in the drafting and adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## Individual Decisions

**Overview:**

The aim of this activity is to support students in understanding that being an upstander or a bystander is an individual decision. In this activity the students are also invited to commit to new behaviors that will develop their competences to be upstanders.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices
- Respect
- Civic mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Autonomous learning skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Empathy
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Annex 1

**Duration:** 2 hours

**Tips for teachers:**

This activity invites students to reflect upon values and emotions as enablers or blockers of certain behaviors. When learning about the Holocaust, the students might have the tendency to think only of the more obvious "good and bad" behaviors, like the Nazis who gave or executed orders to kill on one side, or Righteous Among the Nations who risked their lives to save other people. However, there are many other behaviors that have contributed, in one way or another, to the unfolding of the events. Through this kind of activities students can move beyond central figures of the Holocaust, like Hitler, and reflect upon the attitudes of regular people, of civil servants etc.

During the activity, the teacher should not expect specific right or wrong answers, or categorize them as such, but rather allow students to take time to reflect upon moral responsibility and its various degrees and shapes. In our present-day societies, especially with the use of social media, there is a high tendency towards polarization and it can be very helpful for the students to learn to think outside clear-cut categories.

**Part I**

1. The teacher invites students to work in groups of 4-5 people, distributes Annex 1 to each group, explaining that it refers to various behaviors of people during the Holocaust. The students are asked to analyze each behavior presented in the handout and answer the following questions, referring to each person:
    a. What do you think motivated this person to act this way?
    b. Do you think the person was aware of the consequences of her/his actions? Do you think she/he/they cared?
    c. Do you think this person could have behaved differently? How? What would have happened if she/he/they behaved differently?
    d. What would have happened if more/fewer people behaved like this person?
2. The teacher can share that all these behaviors were present during the Holocaust, including people who refused to be part of killing units and they were not even punished for this, they were simply re-assigned to other duties. The last example in the Annex is based on a photo with a crowd of people out of which only one person is not giving the Nazi salute. The person in the photo was later on identified to be August Landmesser. No one noticed he was not giving the salute at the time, otherwise he would have suffered repercussions.
3. The teacher invites students to reflect upon the reasons why people, in general, choose to behave a certain way when they see other people are treated unfairly or are in danger. Each student receives two post-its of two different colors and is asked to list on one post-it the reasons why people stand up in front of injustice and on the other one the reasons why people stand by in front of injustice. The post-its are displayed on two sides of the room and a volunteer reads them for the class. The teacher summarizes the reasons for each side and engages the students in a discussion based on the following questions:
    a. Why do you think it is easier to stand by rather than stand up in situations of injustice?
    b. What are people afraid of? Is this fear justified?
    c. What competences do people need in order to become upstanders?
    d. How can these competences be developed?

The teacher can write down the students' answers to the last two questions and use them in the second part of the lesson.

4. The teacher invites students to write a short essay starting from Raul Hilberg's quote: "**At crucial junctures, every individual makes decisions and … every decision is individual.**"

**Part II**

5. The students are invited to read their essays in groups of three people. After a person reads his/her essay, the others give feedback. If students are not familiar with giving constructive feedback, the teacher should encourage students to focus on the positive aspects and suggest that they use sentences like these:
    a. What I heard while you were reading your essay is that…
    b. One aspect I really liked in your essay is…
    c. I understand that you approached this topic from the perspective of…? Am I correct?
    d. If you would further develop your essay, I think it might be interesting to detail more the idea that…
6. The teacher reminds students of the discussion regarding the competences needed to be an upstander and invites students to work in groups of 4-5 people and to think of some concrete things that they can do from now on in order to develop their competences and to start acting as upstanders. The teacher can engage students in a discussion to make sure that they do not perceive an upstander only as someone who reacts in a crisis. People who are committed to human rights and anti-discrimination can influence society even with their daily behaviors, with the way in which they speak, with the way in which they treat other people, with their work to prevent injustice.
7. The groups present the main aspects of their discussion and the teacher asks them to go back to their group and to make a more detailed plan – not only what they would like to do differently, but how they are going to act specifically. Changing our habits takes time and effort, at least in the beginning. That is why making a specific plan ("I am going to spend my first break / lunch break every Wednesday with people who I perceive to be different than me, in order to learn from/about them") is better than making a general plan ("I would like to know more diverse people"). The students can look at their list of actions – and can add some things, based on what inspired them from the presentations of the other groups – and decide when and how they will try a new behavior. They can also work together with a peer to help them remember or monitor their plan.

**Going further:**

- The teachers can guide the students to learn about the experiments on obedience carried out by Stanley Milgram starting in 1961 or the Stanford Prison Experiment carried out by Philip Zimbardo in 1971 to study the effects of context on behavior[20].
- The teachers can engage the students in a writing activity based on the quote by Edward Yashinski, a Yiddish poet who survived the Holocaust, but died a political prisoner in Poland: "Fear not your enemies, for they can only kill you. Fear not your friends, for they can only betray you. Fear only the indifferent, who permit the killers and betrayers to walk safely on the earth."

[20] Teachers can find information about these experiments in academic publications, educational videos and even feature films.

# Annex 1

1. A neighbor who watches as Jews are being rounded up and deported
2. A person who loots the house of a Jewish family that was deported
3. A person who hides Jewish people in her house
4. A person who denounces Jewish people to the Nazis
5. An engineer who designs a crematorium
6. A mayor who lies, saying that there are no Roma people in his village, in order to protect them from deportation
7. A person who refuses to be part of a killing unit (Einsatzgruppe)
8. A person who refuses to give the Nazi salute at a public event

## Refugees – Then and Now

**Overview:**

This activity aims to engage students in a process of learning about how Jewish refugees were perceived and treated during the Holocaust, as well as learning from this history in order to better understand the shared responsibility of various countries and the international community in protecting refugees.

**Competences for democratic culture addressed:**

- Respect
- Civic mindedness
- Responsibility
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Cooperation skills
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

**Number of participants:** 10-30

**Resources and materials:** Annex 1

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Tips for teachers:**

Students might have different perceptions about refugees in their country, especially if they live in places with strong populist anti-refugee propaganda. They might also have prejudices about people coming from certain parts of the world. If these come up, teachers should not let them slide, but address them in a way that helps students understand why prejudices are negative without making the students feel guilty. For more details please see the activities about identity and stereotypes.

**Description of activities:**

1. The teacher divides the class into four groups. Each group receives a handout with one of the events described in Annex 1. The students are asked to read the handout and discuss the following aspects:
    a. Why do you think this event happened like this?
    b. Who was responsible?
    c. What were the consequences?
    d. What could have been done differently?

2. Each group presents the event studied and the reflections to the questions. Then, the students are engaged in a class discussion, based on the following questions:

    a. Was there anything that surprised you in the events that you studied or in the ones presented by your colleagues? What?
    b. Do you think the reasons for rejecting refugees, expressed by different countries, were valid? Why?
    c. Were Jewish people seen as human beings with equal dignity in this process? Why?

3. The teacher asks the students if they know what the term "refugee" means. After the students respond, the teacher informs the students that according to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a key legal document, a refugee is defined as:

    *Someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.*

4. The teacher also shares that people who left their country and are seeking protection in another country, but are not yet legally recognized as refugees, are called asylum seekers. Seeking asylum is a human right, which means that everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum. People who are not refugees or asylum seekers but who are trying to enter or are living in a country other than their own are generally called migrants.
5. The teacher engages the students in a discussion based on the following questions:

    a. What is, in your opinion, the general attitude towards refugees and migrants in our country? And in Europe in general?
    b. Who cares about refugees?
    c. Who does not care about refugees?
    d. Are refugees seen as human beings with equal dignity? Who sees them like that and who does not?
    e. Do countries view some refugees as more deserving of support than others? Why? Is this in accordance with human rights principles?
    f. What has Europe (and the world in general) learned from the Holocaust with regards to refugees?
    g. What does Europe (and the world) still need to learn with regards to the refugees?

**Going further:**

- Students can research and analyze further one or more of these events or other events related to Jewish refugees attempting to flee from Europe.
- Students can identify organizations in their area who are supporting refugees and volunteer with them.

# Annex 1

## Évian Conference

Delegates from 32 countries met from July 6-15, 1938, at Évian-les-Bains to address the issue of Jewish refugees trying to flee Germany and Austria. The meeting was also attended by representatives of 24 voluntary organizations as observers and hundreds of journalists. The delegates expressed sympathy for Jews under Nazism but no country, with the exception of the Dominican Republic, was willing to accept large numbers of refugees. France (and many other countries) claimed that it had already taken on too many refugees. Countries like Canada or Australia claimed that accepting Jewish refugees would create an internal "racial" problem in the country. Britain claimed that it was already fully populated and suffering from unemployment, so it could not take in a larger number of refugees. The United States refused to increase the annual admission quota of refugees even before the conference began. The Soviet Union did not attend the conference. It is believed that the reasons for which the Dominican Republic was willing to accept refugees were related to the fact that the leader of the country: (a) had ordered his soldiers to massacre thousands of Haitians the year before and he hoped that this would help him clear his image internationally; (b) hoped that inter-marriages between Jews and the local inhabitants would lead to "lightening" the population's skin complexion.

## St. Louis Ship

The St. Louis Ship, carrying 937 passengers, most of them Jewish refugees seeking asylum from Nazi persecution in Germany, sailed from Hamburg to Havana in May 1939. Even though passengers had legal tourist visas to Cuba, the ship was denied entry, as laws had been recently changed. Only a handful of people were allowed to disembark. After Captain Gustav Schröder tried, for a week, to persuade the Cuban authorities to no avail, he steered the ship towards the Florida coast, hoping for permission to enter the United States. However, the U.S. authorities also refused it the right to dock, despite direct appeal to the president. By early June, the captain had no option but to turn back towards Europe, docking in Antwerp, Belgium, with 908 passengers.

Only after Great Britain agreed to take 288 (32%) of the passengers and after much negotiation from Schröder, the remaining 619 passengers were allowed to disembark in Antwerp. France accepted 224 refugees (25%), Belgium 214 (23%) and the Netherlands 181 (20%). The ship returned to Hamburg without any passengers. The following year, after the Battle of France and the Nazi occupations of Belgium, France, and the Netherlands in May 1940, all the Jews in those countries were subject to high risk, including the recent refugees. Research has determined that 254 (29%) of those who returned to continental Europe were murdered during the Holocaust.

## Struma

The Struma ship sailed from Constanța, Romania, on December 12, 1941, with nearly 800 Jewish refugees who tried to reach Mandatory Palestine, via Istanbul. The ship was in bad condition and its engine failed several times until if finally reached Istanbul on December 15. There, she remained at anchor, while British diplomats and Turkish officials negotiated the fate of the passengers. The British government administered Mandatory Palestine and did not want a high number of Jewish refugees to reach the territory. British diplomats urged the Turkish government to prevent Struma from continuing her voyage. The Turkish authorities refused to allow passengers to disembark even though they ran short of food.

After two months, on February 23, 1942, the ship was towed to North Istanbul. On February 24, a Soviet submarine torpedoed the ship, after being mistaken for an enemy ship. This was the Black Sea's largest civilian naval disaster in World War II. Only one person survived.

## White paper of 1939

From 1920 to 1948 the British government administered a geopolitical entity called Mandatory Palestine, established under the terms of the League of Nations. The White Paper of 1939, issued by the British government, announced its policies on the future status of Palestine. It rejected the establishment of an independent Jewish state and limited Jewish immigration to 75,000 people for five years. In response to the British policy, Jews attempted to enter Mandatory Palestine illegally. People who were intercepted were interned in camps. The immigration policy was not relaxed during the war and it remined in force until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

# Exploring Memorialization through the Lens of Human Dignity

Exploring museums and other places of memory through the lens of human rights is a manifestation of the human rights culture. It means that our worldview is embedded in the human rights framework and we are able to analyze decisions of historical leaders, of every-day persons, of museum curators, etc. from the perspective of human rights.

When students visit museums and memorials as part of their educational process, they might be overwhelmed with information or emotion. Giving them a framework for reflection – and even action – is a powerful way to help them connect history with present-day societies and with their own lives. We propose that this framework is built around the respect for human dignity, as a way to help them develop a more nuanced and balanced understanding of the world and to inspire action towards building equal, democratic and intercultural societies.

Depending on the depth that the teacher intends to reach with the students, an interdisciplinary approach to education through memorialization and commemoration can take various forms. No matter what the teacher decides to visit with the students or how the visit is conducted, the process must be well prepared and coherently integrated in the larger educational process. Often teachers organize a visit at the end of the educational process, but that might not always be the best option. Visiting a museum or a memorial site earlier in the process can help students connect better with the information they learn and allows more time to process and reflect upon the visit. While visiting a museum can even be done in the beginning of a learning process and used as a starting point for learning about the Holocaust and human rights (depending on the museum, of course), the visit to a memorial site requires thorough preparation, both intellectually and emotionally. In order for the students to better connect with a memorial site, they need to have a good understanding of the general historical context and the context of the particular site before visiting it. After the visit, a meaningful reflection process is needed, with the aim to help students better understand what they saw, engage critically with the information provided and connect it with present-day realities.

The aim to develop respect for human dignity through visits of museums and places of memory can be achieved through activities such as the ones presented below.

### ❖ Exploring a museum exhibit through the lens of human rights

A visit to a Holocaust museum, Jewish history museum, Roma history museum, LGBTQ museum or any other museum can be done from a human rights perspective. An educational process that aims to start from human rights as a basis of understanding history could look like this:

1. After ensuring that the students have a good understanding of human rights, the teacher includes a museum visit in the educational process. The students are asked to work in groups or in pairs. Each group/pair has to focus on one specific right and "spot" instances where this right appears, either positively or negatively. The students can be assigned a right or they can choose the right they want to focus on. For example, the museum can show how Jewish people were not allowed to be part of guilds or to practice certain professions and this is connected to the right to work. The students can receive templates with the description of the specific right they are assigned and space to write down the information they find and their reflections during the visit.
2. After the visit, the teacher dedicates part of the reflection process to the exploration of the exhibition through the human rights lens. Each group presents the examples connected to the specific right that they identified during the visit and the class engages in a reflection process based on the following questions:

- Was it easy or difficult to identify instances related to the right you were assigned? Why?
- Were the examples you found connected with instances in which people enjoyed their right or in which their rights were limited?
- Did you identify other situations that can be connected with rights that were not assigned to any group? Which ones?
- Are you surprised by what you learned in connection with human rights?
- Has this activity helped you understand why the international community decided to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
- Have our societies made progress in respecting human rights? What kind of progress?

This approach can also increase the students' ability to focus on the visit, as having a specific task to accomplish makes them more engaged in the process.

### ❖ Exploring a place through the lens of an individual

Reading a diary or a testimony is a powerful way for students to learn about a certain period in history and to empathize with the people who lived through it. Being able to connect a story with the physical space in which it took place can further develop the students' abilities to understand the past in relation with the present. An educational process that aims to explore a place through the lens of an individual can start with reading a diary or a testimony and then visiting the physical space described in that diary/testimony. For example, if the students read the diary/testimony of a person who was deported during the Holocaust, the teacher can create the following educational process:

1. While reading the diary/testimony, the students write down the information related to specific places in the town, which are described. For example, where the person went to school, worked, met with friends, spent their free time, etc.; where the person hid, where the person was taken in order to be deported, what were the places in which the person was detained before deportation, etc.; what other places the person refers to after returning (if the case).
2. After reading the diary/testimony, the students share what they learned from it, ask questions, discuss with the whole class or in small groups, in order to process the material and to share their reflections with the colleagues. Then, they work in groups to identify the location of the different places mentioned in the material.
3. Based on the information gathered, the students can create a guided tour of their town, on the traces of the Holocaust survivor (or victim). The students can publish their tour online, they can create QR codes for people to take the tour on their own, they can organize tours for their colleagues, for their parents, etc.
4. The reflection can be conducted based on the following questions:

   - How did you feel during this activity?
   - What was the most difficult part?
   - What was the most interesting part?
   - Has the process of creating this guided tour helped you better understand the diary/testimony? How?
   - Did you know that these places have a memory related to the Holocaust?
   - Do some of the buildings/places described in the material still exist today? What are they used for?

- What can we learn from looking at a particular place/building and the way it was used during different times in history?

This approach can increase the students' interest in local history. Most probably they will discover that they have passed by some of the places that are connected to the Holocaust on a regular basis yet they had never given them any thought. This activity sheds a new light on the students' understanding of their town and can bring closer a part of history that might seem very distant for young learners.

### ❖ Reflecting upon the respect for human dignity in memorialization

The first activity proposed in this handbook focuses specifically on human dignity. If the teachers want to go deeper into the subject, they can engage their students in processes to analyze the ways in which human dignity is being valued and respected in everyday life, in the media, in books and movies, as well as in places that aim to preserve memory. While visiting a museum, the students can be given a few overarching questions upon which to reflect:

- Is the museum presenting Jews or Roma only as victims of the Holocaust or does it find ways to emphasize their dignity and agency?
- Does the exhibition include the names of Holocaust victims or only those of perpetrators? Why is it important to mention people's names?
- Is it ethical to present photos of (naked) people who are dead or emaciated? How would you feel if you saw your photo or your parents' / grandparents' photo like that?
- Has this visit helped you get a more nuanced understanding of human dignity? How?
- Do you think that other people who visit this museum will leave with an increased respect for human dignity and human rights? Why?

### ❖ Reflecting upon what is brought to light and what is kept hidden

Students whose competences for democratic culture and knowledge of Holocaust history are more advanced, can be engaged in processes of critically analyzing what is being memorialized and what is forgotten. The students can visit a museum or a memorial and pay close attention not only to what is presented, but also to what is left aside. For example:

- The students can look specifically for how the Roma genocide is being included in the exhibition, mentioned in a monument, etc. For a long time, the Roma genocide was not researched or commemorated. The situation is changing now, with more interest from researchers, from artists and even from some politicians. Nevertheless, there are many gaps in memory that the students can identify. They can discuss the reasons for them and come up with ideas for change.
- The students can make an inventory of memorial sites and museums dedicated to the Holocaust, to Jewish history, to Roma history, to LGBTQ history. They can compare how different countries choose to remember the past. This activity works well if the teacher is engaged in an international collaborative project. Students from two different countries can share different perspectives. Using the human rights lens and engaging students in critical analysis can help them overcome the tendency to try to present their country in a good light and be more objective in their analysis.

# Guidelines and Resources from Other Organizations

This is a non-exhaustive list of freely available resources for Holocaust and human rights educators:

- IHRA Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust[21]

https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/educational-materials/ihra-recommendations-teaching-and-learning-about-holocaust

- Yad Vashem Educational Materials

https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-materials.html

- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum – Holocaust Encyclopedia

https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/en

- European Union Fundamental Rights Agency – Excursion to the Past, Teaching for the Future: Handbook for Teachers

https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/1218-Handbook-teachers-holocaust-education_EN.pdf

- Council of Europe – Right to Remember. A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide[22]

https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/right-to-remember

- Council of Europe – Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People

https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass

- OSCE-ODIHR – Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: Teaching Aids[23]

https://www.osce.org/odihr/441146

- Facing History and Ourselves – Resource Library

https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library

- iWitness – Teaching with Testimonies

https://iwitness.usc.edu/activities

- Echoes and Reflections

https://echoesandreflections.org

- Eternal Echoes – Teach and Learn about the Holocaust[24]

https://www.eternalechoes.org/gb

21 Available in more than 10 languages.
22 Available in 5 languages.
23 Available in 9 languages.
24 Available in 7 languages.

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The interdisciplinary approach that we propose in this handbook combines the approaches and methods of Holocaust education, human rights education and intercultural education, with the aim to guide students to learn about the past, understand the way in which the past is connected with the present and contribute to the development of democratic and intercultural societies in which every individual can live a life of dignity.

When we look at the past through the lens of human rights, we can better understand how an event like the Holocaust was possible, how the propaganda functioned and how the rights of Jewish people – and people belonging to other groups – were taken away progressively. At the same time, through the lens of the Holocaust, we can 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 methodology develops students' critical thinking and their ability to challenge populist messages that are becoming prevalent in European societies and elsewhere in the world. It raises their awareness about the unfair treatment of various groups in their society and about the need to take action.

To share your feedback on this Handbook or to learn about teacher seminars and conferences based on the methodology presented in this Handbook contact us at:
onestian@tolinstitute.org

Institutul Intercultural Timișoara

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