European Commission

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REMEMBERING FOR THE FUTURE

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2nd Networking meeting with organisations active in the field of Memory and Remembrance

26 & 27 April 2012 - Copenhagen, Denmark

Introduction

Almost 100 people active in the field of memory and remembrance gathered in Copenhagen, Denmark on April 26 and 27 of 2012. Their aim: to further debate what a European memory and European perspective on remembrance could consist of and whether it is something to strive for as well as discussing efforts to make a meaning of the past and translating it into the present. The participants came from 20 different countries with a wide variety of backgrounds ranging from those with very practical experience in their work on memorial sites, to representatives from academia and research institutions as well as members of teachers associations.

The conference was part of a process of networking events on European memory and remembrance initiated by the European Commission in the framework of the Europe for Citizens programme. The first event took place in Brussels and Mechelen in 2011. The networking event in Copenhagen was organised by the European Commission in cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Agency and Danish Institute of International Studies.

"It happened, therefore it can happen again: this is the core of what we have to say." *Primo Levi*

The objective of the networking process is to bring together organisations active in the field of remembrance and memory, Holocaust education and human rights education. More specifically the networking event in Copenhagen provided an opportunity to discuss and develop practical concepts for applying interactive holocaust and human rights education pedagogy at memorial sites; present methodology developed at the Mauthausen

Memorial's pedagogical department and discuss the practical implications of remembrance and memory in terms of pedagogical activities and transfer of memory; provide opportunities for networking, exchange of ideas and future cooperation among organisations active in the field of memory and remembrance and finally reflect on the concept of the European memory and key moments which define it.

The conference in Copenhagen also followed on the two seminars on Holocaust and Human Rights Education held in Terezin in 2010 and Amsterdam in 2011 organised by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) in cooperation with the European Commission.

"At a time where Europe and its member states face challenges of racism and anti-semitism, learning from the past to teach for the future is a wise insight"

Setting the scene

The first day of the meeting was officially opened by Nanna Hvidt, Director of the local Danish Institute of International Studies, Morten Kjaerum, Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and Jan Host Schmidt, Head of the European Commission Representation in Denmark.

"At a time where Europe and its member states face challenges of racism and antisemitism, learning from the past to teach for the future is a wise insight", observed Nanna Hvidt in her opening statement. The Director of the Danish Institute of International Studies (DIIS) went on to say:

"The founding fathers of the European institutions brought with them the experiences of the 2nd world war and the atrocities committed and one of their most basic ideas was that this should never happen again. So you might rightfully say that the horrors of the Holocaust and the need to prevent it from ever happening again are what we may call a constitutive factor in building the European Union. Holocaust did not take place in a – from our point - more remote part of the world. It happened here at the heart of European lands. What lessons do we take from this part of our history to todays fight against racism and antisemitism? This is what we call Active Remembrance."

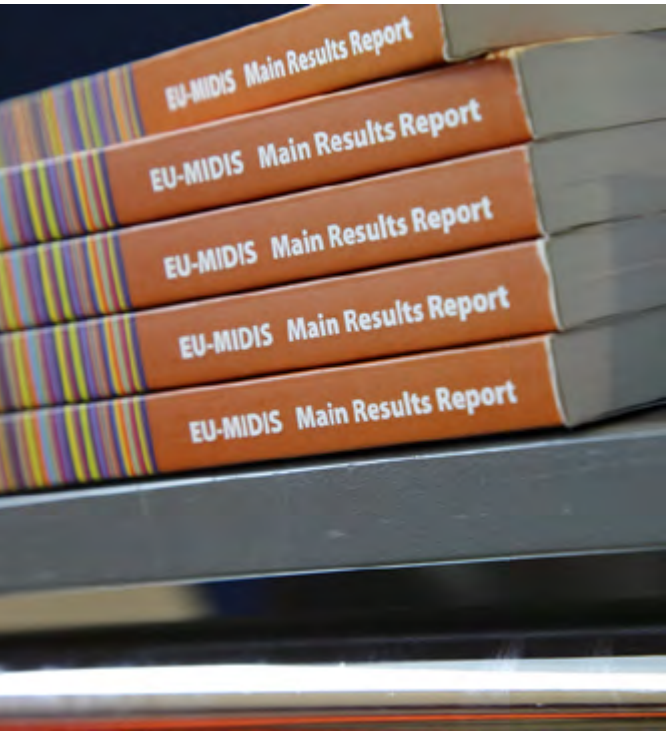
In this, she drew attention to the mandate of DIIS to "keep the memory of the Holocaust alive", which is done through educational and informative work on the subject. Referring to the persecution of Jews and the rescue operation in October 1943, in which around 7.000 people of the Jewish community were able to flee from Denmark to Sweden, she outlined the difficulty of making the right choice, "escape or no escape?" In addition, Hvidt emphasized another lesson to be drawn: "the importance of being able to trust your neighbour."

In her concluding remarks, Hvidt said: "As a former diplomat and with a professional engagement still in the UN, teaching about the Holocaust and other past atrocities is a way to avoid that future generations repeat past mistakes. Guarantees cannot be given, but we have an obligation to try, and one of our efforts is to teach about past mistakes, be that during the Holocaust or during the more recent genocide in Srebrenica."

"The past is not dead, it is living in us, and will be alive in the future which we are now helping to make." William Morris

Following on, Morten Kjaerum asked core questions on the advance of human rights, the link between the past and human rights today, learning from history as well as forgetting, questions on how remembrance is shaped and which past plays a role and lastly: "In essence, what do we want to teach each other and our children and our children's children about human rights, and about our shared history and identity?"

The Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) shared the insights from a FRA's project, which explored the link between education on the Holocaust and on human rights. Across European countries, the link between human rights and the Holocaust is often made, but "the practical tools and systematized approaches are still lacking". Therefore, it would be important to incorporate human rights education into the teaching of history. Kjaerum then outlined, how this would raise fundamental questions for today such as: "What sort of atrocities are we blind to today? What stories do we create to make unpleasant human rights problems fade from our radar?" and cited examples of the existence of slavery today, namely the plight of Nigerian sexworkers and men working in the fields, factories or building sites. Those examples would show "how greater understanding of human rights through history can empower us to act and try to make a difference to the lives of those who live close to us today."



The understanding of Human rights advancements can be enhanced through understanding history. And raising awareness about the Holocaust is connected to an education about human rights as well as learning and teaching for the future on issues of antisemitism and racism - issues which are still prevalent today. Kjaerum concluded with a quote of William Morris, a British craftsman, poet and utopist from the 19th century who said: "The past is not dead, it is living in us, and will be alive in the future which we are now helping to make."

Jan Host Schmidt from the European Commission provided further context to the debate by referring to the trial of Anders Behring Brevik, which opened in Norway a week before. Brevik´s manifesto of hatred appeals to some people. Therefore, "it was no co-incidence in this context that people of Muslim origin were being attacked in Oslo shortly after the explosion and told to "go home" before the identity of the culprit had been established and before it became clear that he was "one of us" – a white middle class man from a privileged background."

Schmidt cited this example to illustrate "that what we are going to discuss here today and tomorrow has a major impact for our societies and for our effort to safeguard Europe as a place of democracy and respect – a place which learned a lesson from its painful past for a better future. Tragic events such as Holocaust did not take place in a vacuum. They happened

"The critical reflection of Europe's recent past is often painful but we cannot turn a blind eye if we want to remain true to the ideal of a democratic Europe based on the respect to human rights."

at a particular time and place and to people who had to make moral choices whether to become bystanders, perpetrators or "righteous among the nations". They, of course didn't know that such a term would exist in the future and that their deeds would receive a moral sanction of an act of exceptional courage and moral lucidity."

"The critical reflection of Europe's recent past is often painful but we cannot turn a blind eye if we want to remain true to the ideal of a democratic Europe based on the respect to human rights."

"We, in the European Union institutions want to provide opportunities for a true European debate as this is needed in order to establish an understanding that goes beyond national perspectives. Europe based on trust among European citizens requires that we make an honest attempt to open the hidden closets and shed the light to what has been hidden until now."

"This meeting is a very good opportunity for such a reflection", expressed Schmidt and characterised it as "an evidence of the commitment, we in the European institutions made to support you in your effort to make a meaning of the past and pass the message on all generations of Europeans."

Schmidt then started to outline how the European Commission is continuing to support work in the field of remembrance and memory. "Starting with the call for proposals for remembrance projects within the Europe for Citizens programme in June this year we will provide funding for staff exchanges of memorial sites, museums and organisations active in the field of memory and remembrance." Furthermore, the negotiations of the future Europe for Citizens programme for the period 2014-2020 are currently taking place in the European Parliament and the Council. According to Schmidt, "both the members of the European parliament and the Member States have a very strong interest in further supporting remembrance activities in the future programme. Thus, our common effort to keep the memory alive has received recognition and support to sustain your activities in the future."

Plenary Debate: Elaborating on European memory

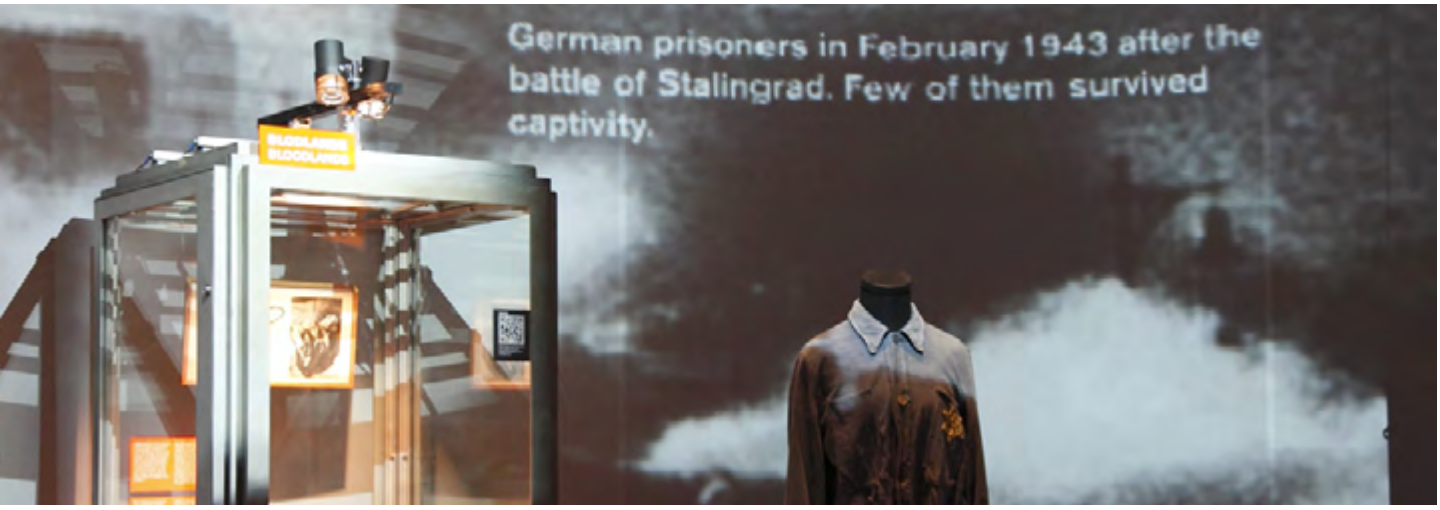
The question "European Memory – a Promise or an Illusion?" framed the following plenary debate.

Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke from the Danish Institute of International Studies alerted participants to the difference between European history and memory. "Memory relates to the way we remember, how history is being perceived in the present, it can change over time. And therefore, memory lives through generations. A European memory, be that as a promise or an illusion, refers to some kind of shared understanding of what constitutes Europe."

In this regard, she elaborated on three phases or waves of European memory, which she characterised as generational patterns. The "grandparents wave" from the mid 1950s to the mid 1980s consisted of a peaceful approach, an attempt to overcome the war and to establish a new vision of Europe. The "parents wave" from the mid 1980s to mid 1990s challenged the sole conception of the EU as an economic idea and

demanded that a cultural integration should follow the economic one and elicit some form of a European identity. In this phase, the idea of a "master narrative for Europe" emerged. But Stokholm Banke noted: "Only few references were made to Europe's bloody and violent past. It was all about overcoming past disputes and defining a new common denominator, that reflected positive sides of European civilization." And only during the mid 1990s, the "grandchildren wave", Europe started to recognise "the horrors that took place during the Second World War". But to confront the history of the extermination of Jews is challenging in Western as well as Eastern European countries as became obvious during the revelations of Jedwabne in Poland.

Stokholm Banke concluded that the moral message of "Never again" continues to be important. "It is by means of the 'other' that we can recognise all things European (Nabulsi and Stråth 2001).



"There is not necessarily A European Memory. But there are shared memories in Europe. Memory in Europe is certainly transcultural, distributed..."

It is through negative examples that we can become aware of the characteristics of Europe", she said. And in all of that, "the Holocaust acts as a benchmark for what Europe should be and as a sound of warning for what it must avoid becoming. With the Holocaust in mind, we can understand what European civilisation can give rise to and what an exclusionary view of a national community can spawn. It is within this frame that we shall understand the crucial role of the Holocaust within current European memory."

Tea Sindbaek from Lund University in Sweden started her presentation with a question "If there is such a thing as a European memory, should it not be transcultural?" A network of actors would now construct memories, which were previously constituted by nation states. A network exhibiting transcultural aspects, an increase of and different types of actors, characterised by more mobility and changing patterns of communication which have become faster and more accessible. In that regard, "transcultural memories are moved, mediated and remediated, and they cross cultural and political borders."

Therefore, Sindbaek recapitulated "There is not necessarily A European Memory. But there are shared memories in Europe. Memory in Europe is certainly transcultural, distributed, shared and negotiated – and, yes,

contended also – across Europe's borders, regions and cultures - and beyond. While recognising the uniqueness, importance, painfulness, of specific memories, we may also be able to draw mutual recognition and understanding from transmitting and sharing them."

Harald Wydra from the University of Cambridge, Britain echoed Stokholm Banke´s suggestions that memory lives and is reformulated by successive generations. "The construction of a 'common European memory' occurs within an on-going conflict of practices of the sacred." The multiplicity of victimhoods, specifically in Eastern European countries, challenges a pact of silence, the idea that there could be one `central´ European sacred around the Shoah and therefore also hegemonic discourse patterns. In that regard, a precise differentiation between perpetrators and victims is absolutely crucial but occurred only in the exceptional circumstances of post-war West Germany. The construction of EU memory could be based on constant contestation and would need to include those multiperspectives by focusing on diversity instead of unification. This could then give rise to a multiperspective memory.

The following plenary debate centred around questions on remembrance and the term of totalitarianism and its different ramifications during German fascism and Eastern European socialism. And questions continue to remain: Does it make sense to subsume these two different systems

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under the term of totalitarianism? How can the Holocaust be appropriately remembered, when Holocaust survivors have died? And how can the experience of socialism in Eastern European countries be correctly reflected in discourses on European memory?

Debating defining moments

The next plenary debate was opened by Pavel Tychtl from the European Commission who set the scene by stating that defining moments in the modern European History need to include different perspective and narratives instead of centralising the debate around one notion and creating a master narrative.

Robert Jan Van Pelt from the University of Waterloo, Canada raised the question of why January 27 as the European Holocaust Memorial Day or the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust actually came into being without the consultation of the Jewish community. This raises a core issue in that "It does not appear that the politicians who pushed for and then negotiated for the adoption of the January 27 date gave much thought to the question if that day would mean something for the Jews."

"As we have seen, in Europe the development was different. If in North America the Holocaust commemorations that are nationally scheduled on or around Yom ha-Shoah are rooted in Jewish communal practices, in Europe Holocaust Memorial Day emerged from initiatives taken by non-Jews at the highest political level—first in Poland, second in Germany, and third in Sweden. The result is a

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day that is marked on the Gregorian calendar, but that remains meaningless in the Jewish calendar. When the soldiers of the Red Army reached Auschwitz, it was the thirteenth day of the month of Shevat, which is in Hebrew Shlosha Asar be-Shevat. Remarkably it is one of the very few dates in the Jewish calendar that has no divine, historical, or liturgical association—a no-one's land in the Hebrew calendar. And even today, after the decision in 2005 by both the European Parliament and the United Nations General Assembly, the thirteenth day of the month of Shevat remains empty in Jewish calendars. It shows that the project to create a European and even global day of Holocaust commemoration is incomplete."

Against the backdrop of this setting of days, Van Pelt went on to explain how Yom ha-Shoah (Shoah Day) in Israel "is celebrated on the twenty-seventh day of Nisan, which fell this year on Thursday April 19—that is exactly a week ago. The date was chosen as a half way point between the end of Passover, which begins on the fifteenth day of Nisan and lasts until the twenty-third day of Nisan, and the fifth day of Iyar, the day that, in 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed. It was also the day that marked the beginning of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which is a point of great pride to Jews." Therefore, "Yom ha-Shoah was meant to commemorate not only the depth of catastrophe, but at

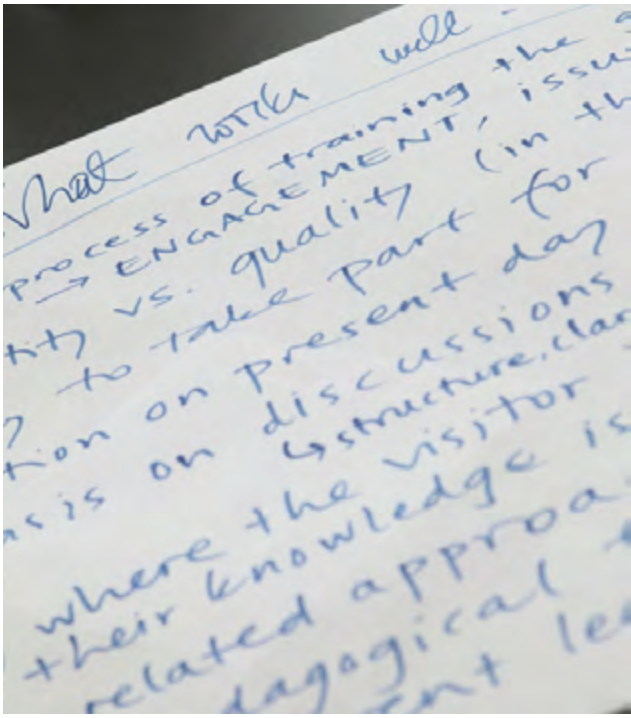
the same time one of the few points of light within the Holocaust. Its date is neatly spaced between a festival and a date that both commemorate and celebrate liberty—an ancient myth that speaks of freedom from oppression, and a modern myth that speaks of an almost miraculous political redemption in the wake of the greatest catastrophe the Jewish people ever experienced."

Van Pelt closed his presentation by stating that the 13th of Shevat, which fell in 1945 on January 27, is "one of the few days that are a void in the Jewish calendar, suggesting that it is a day without agency. Sometimes I think that this very lack of agency of that day in the Jewish calendar provides it actually with an enormous potential. After all, since the Eichmann Trial Jews have faced the question of "Why did you allow yourselves to be led like sheep to the slaughter." Some Jews, for example Imre Kertesz, have responded--in my view correctly-- with the answer: "out of dignity."

"For the left as well as for the right, 1989 in national debates is often still understood as a moment of betrayal, sell-out and regarded as unfinished..."

In other words, acceptance of one's fate, and not revolt against it, must have a place in our understanding of the Holocaust. And this, then, might suggest that the 13th of Shevat, which in 1945 fell on January 27, may acquire meaning for Jews after all."

James Mark, from the University of Exeter, Britain addressed the memory of the revolutions 1989 in Eastern Europe, and the reasons of why they are generally not commemorated. For the left as well as for the right, 1989 in national debates is often still understood as a moment of betrayal, sell-out and regarded as unfinished. For this reason, different approaches are needed to commemorate it, bypassing the national level by focusing on it as a story of the journey to overcome divides and attain European or global unity, i.e. what happened in Berlin might now happen in Cyprus and Korea. Therefore, 1989 would then be easier framed at the EU than on a national level, where it can be understood as part of a journey to European freedom and unity. Mark also noted that some regional commemorations – in Leipzig and Gdansk or instance, have commemorated 1989 by linking their experiences not to the national scene but to global attempts to fight for human rights, or unity, in so-called 'glocal forms'.



Discussions in Workshops

After the input from scholars, the participants grouped into three different workshops to seize upon their collective intelligence to further elaborate on crucial questions of remembrance, collective action and pedagogy. This framed the afternoon sessions of the 26th and the morning of the 27th of April.

Subsequent to the workshops, the participants visited the Danish National Museum in the afternoon of the 26th. The museum´s current exhibition entitled "Europe meets the world" provided further incentives to discuss European Memory and Remembrance. Conference members in fact often continued their debates in front of the showcases and objects on display. The day came to an end with a social dinner at a restaurant in the Tivoli Garden.

WORKSHOP 1 – Pedagogy through partnership

MODERATORS: YARIV LAPID, MAUTHAUSEN MEMORIAL; EVA SOBOTKA, EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

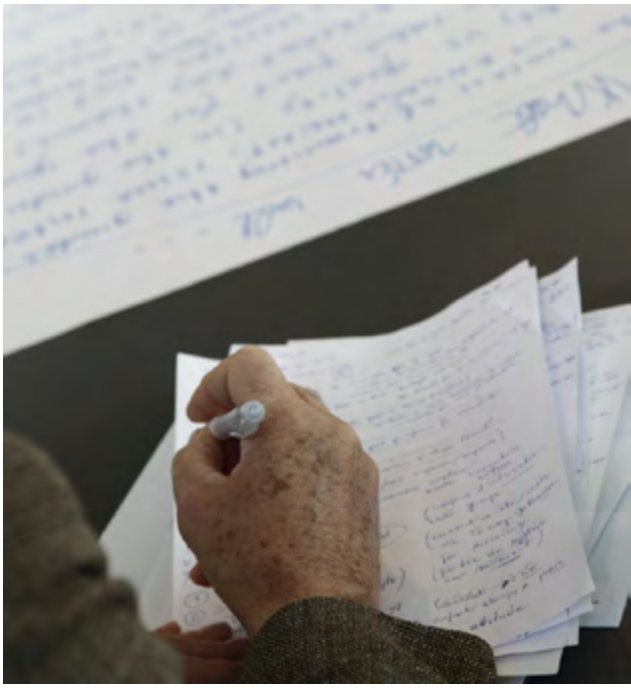
Following on a presentation of the Pedagogical concept developed by the Pedagogical Department of the Mauthausen Memorial, the workshop participants elaborated further on concept's enhancement.[1]

The Pedagogical concept stresses three basic elements, which are further detailed in practice during the guided visit of the Memorial: topography, history and the visitor with his/her actual awareness. Awareness of being at the very place where the crimes were committed reinforces people's receptiveness to historical information. Next to the topographical orientation and historical explanation, the visitor with his/her actual and potential degrees of understanding of what happened than and how it relates to his/ her present context. Through an open, non-deterministic narrative form, through questions, discussions, observations, activities – in short, through interaction – visitors are meant to be drawn more closely into the interpretation process, which includes reflection on human rights. Materials also have an essential role to play in the attempt to

1 At the end of March 2012, the FRA brought together leading practitioners from other memorial sites and museums, social psychologists and pedagogical workers, to a workshop held in partnership with the Memorial Mauthausen. The objective there was to develop the pedagogical concept further on-site.

reach the visitor's self when interpreting history on a guided tour. Texts, photographs, maps and, above all, autobiographical and biographical testimonies can assist in the attempt to view the perspective of victims, perpetrators, bystanders and their environment. The human rights in history is brought home in the interplay between identification with the human rights values (equality, non-discrimination etc.) and better understanding of individual responsibility through insight into 'historical roles': perpetrator, bystander.

The participants viewed also a film produced by the Memorial Mauthausen and further engaged in a discussion.



What works well in the concept?

- creating a professional framework and setting up professional standards for guides and teachers is key
- focus on quality of the exchange
- An empowerment process of participation works well.
- Room for reflection and discussion is vital.

Room for improvement?

- focusing on more groups and on different ones, apart from teachers and pupils
- on the issue of communicating, re: importance of preparing teachers better in advance
- taking up the idea of peer-teaching as practised by the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, re: youngster teaching youngster on key issues
- integrating modern media more as done by the Falstad Memorial and Human Rights Centre in Norway, re: translate the experience into everyday life and technologies
- even more of an integration of research into everyday pedagogical practices

WORKSHOP 2 – Acting together to remember the future

MODERATORS: MORTEN KJAERUM, DIRECTOR EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS; PAVEL TYCHTL, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Outcomes:

- interconnectedness of dealing with human rights violations in the past and their relevance for the present
- necessity to establish an improved access to databases for projects working in the field "While it is a fact and a necessity that human rights play into politics, they can and should not become party politics."
- within the EU a hierarchisation of victims should be avoided
- Constantly addressing the question of who has the right to commemorate?
- importance of drawing lessons from what happened in the past
- aim to overcome mental blocs and fears by sharing different perspectives
- highlight the differences in secular and religious contexts
- addressing the question of ownership on the issue of perpetrators, infrastructure, local and national administration and private companies
- opening up the programme to a broader perspective of including the Holocaust and authoritarian regimes is generally regarded as a good idea. In this endeavour, the national as well as the European perspective are relevant.
- importance of and value of networking
- commitment to continuing the process and facilitating staff exchanges

WORKSHOP 3 – Culture of remembrance: experiences of Holocaust remembrance days

MODERATORS: SOLVEJ BERLAU AND OTTO RÜHL, DANISH INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Outcomes:

- necessity to establish a link between knowing history and raising human rights issues
- But: The tight combination of Holocaust and Human Rights could run into the danger of excluding victims and perpetrators by simply focusing on the responsibility of bystanders.
- importance of linking remembrance and historical education
- Western European ignorance on differences between the Western and Eastern European experience still prevails
- The question exists on how remembrance will be designed in the future, after the survivors died.
- The EU could also support students in visiting Holocaust memorial sites across Europe.
- current tendencies of relating the Holocaust to the Israel/Palestine conflict. A need to develop actual tools for teachers to establish a difference between antizionism and antisemitism

1) How was the Holocaust commemorated in the European countries before the International Holocaust Memorial Day was implemented?

- necessity to distinguish between Holocaust remembrance and World War II commemorations, with the latter often being memorial days of national significance

2) What is the relation between national and international remembrance?

- necessity to make a distinction between honouring victims and instrumentalising the day to go into a human rights issue (re: genocides, crimes against humanity, etc.)

3) Who are the participants?

- victims and families
- governments and representatives of different organisations
- students

Closing and Opening

Pavel Tychtl started to close the two-day gathering with the following words: "We have a duty to pay tribute to the victims of the tragedies which ravaged Europe in the 20th century. But to do so and in order to find an individual and a collective meaning of these tragedies for us today, we need to try to understand what exactly happened and why it happened.

"... I believe, we can do so best through conversation stretching across national borders and going beyond the national history in the usual sense..."

I believe, we can do so best through conversation stretching across national borders and going beyond the national history in the usual sense. This is what we are trying to do in the Europe for Citizens programme and today's event is an example of such conversation".

Morten Kjaerum emphasised how the statement of "Never again" should refer to the Holocaust but could also be related to totalitarian regimes. While this constitutes a negative framework, EU values should centre on a more positive notion. In that regard, linking the Holocaust and human rights poses dangers and risks as well such as "Which lessons do you take away from the Holocaust? Which steps led up to it? How do we not miss the human rights opportunity but also do not overdo it?" Kjaerum mentioned that the FRA would also support staff exchanges, and closed the conference, thanking everyone for their active participation.

Cecilie Stokholm Banke praised the diversity of participants and highlighted "What a great pleasure it was to work with a group of people of so many different backgrounds." For her "research has to have a relevance in everyday life and when it succeeds to build a bridge between researchers and practices it is very fruitful."

Voices of participants

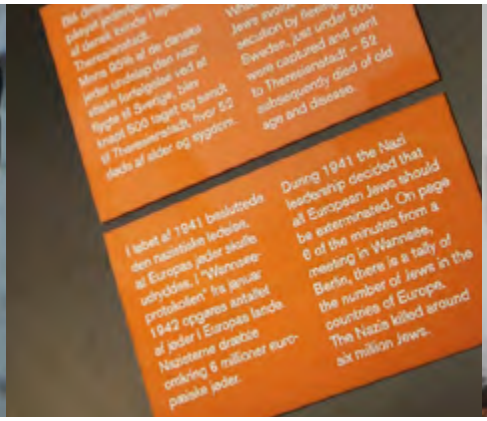


On the conference

"The conference provided an incredible opportunity for networking and exposure to new EU colleagues, which is great."

"The conference was really good for networking and contacts. It was especially enlightening on the difference between Eastern and Western European problems. But I was missing people who work with grassroots organisations and reach out to the general people more."

"For me the cup is half full and half empty: Half full due to the diversity of participants and general orientation of everyone to create a better world. Half empty since the conference was too short and there was not enough time allocated to discussions."

On the notion of a European perspective on remembrance

"It is still far from it. But this is a natural process. History, awareness and identity need time. I am concerned in this process on the status of the Holocaust and the memory on it due to the competition for attention and awareness of different victimhoods."

"There should be one. Commemoration is important for the present to consider human rights violations today to construct a better future. But every country has to develop its own approach. Silence is not a solution in this though and needs to be broken."

"It should not be forced. Different perspective and different memories are important. Otherwise it becomes a diluted, meaningless memory. So, acknowledge the differences, learn from each other and enjoy."

For the future

"It would be great to have more practical workshops and exchange more on cultures of commemoration. Something like a retreat."