

## EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
<b>Participant:</b>	5 - The International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania – The International Commission
<b>PIC number:</b>	938247342
<b>Project name and acronym:</b>	Combating Holocaust Denial and Distortion through Active Citizenship, Remembrance and Education — CARE

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
<b>Event number:</b>	1		
<b>Event name:</b>	Learning from the Past, Acting for the Future		
<b>Type:</b>	seminar		
<b>In situ/online:</b>	in-situ		
<b>Location:</b>	Vilnius, Lithuania		
<b>Date(s):</b>	17-21 June 2024		
<b>Website(s) (if any):</b>	<a href="https://www.komisija.lt/en/the-new-project-care-combating-holocaust-denial-and-distortion-through-active-citizenship-remembrance-and-education-has-been-started/">https://www.komisija.lt/en/the-new-project-care-combating-holocaust-denial-and-distortion-through-active-citizenship-remembrance-and-education-has-been-started/</a>		
Participants			
Female:	27		
Male:	1		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 1 Lithuania:	25		
From country 2 Poland:	3		
Total number of participants:	28	From total number of countries:	2
Description			
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>			
<p>This 5-day seminar was organised in the framework of the project <i>Combating Holocaust Denial and Distortion through Active Citizenship, Remembrance and Education (CARE)</i>, coordinated by Intercultural Institute Timisoara (Romania), in partnership with The Jewish Museum of Greece, Fondazione CDEC (Italy), Documenta (Croatia), The Secretariat of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, the Big Picture Association (Poland) and Terraforming (Serbia), co-funded by the European Commission through CERV programme.</p>			

The seminar was co-funded by TOLI – The Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human Rights and by the The Goodwill Foundation.

A total of 28 teachers, librarians and museum educators – 25 from Lithuania and 3 from Poland, participated in the event. Lecturers and trainers from Lithuania, Poland, Romania and USA supported the teachers in their learning process.

**The aim of the seminar** was to contribute to increasing the quality of Holocaust and human rights education in Lithuania. The program provided a rich opportunity to integrate national and international approaches in teaching about these topics and in understanding the contemporary relevance of this important part of modern history.

**The objectives of the seminar** were to:

- Develop teachers' awareness of historical and current dialectical discussions concerning the Holocaust and other instances of social injustice;
- Develop teachers' understanding of the impact of stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination at individual, group and society level;
- Develop teachers' understanding of the Jewish life before and after the Holocaust;
- Increase appreciation for innovative, student-centered teaching methods, including extra-curricular activities and partnerships between schools and other institutions and organizations;
- Promote an interdisciplinary approach of Holocaust education and human rights education.

**The methodology of the seminar** was learner centered, based on the principles of experiential learning and a human rights-based approach in education. A variety of methods were used in order to stimulate the engagement of participants, their reflections and a high level of interaction: presentations, analysis, discussions, reflections, group work, videos, visits, guest speakers, survivors' testimonies, etc.

The seminar opened with a welcome session in which the Ambassador of Germany, the Ambassador of Israel, the Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy, the President of the Jewish Community in Lithuania and representatives of partner organizations addressed the teachers. The seminar continued with a session in which participants explored the meaning of identity and stereotypes, the role they played during the Holocaust and the role they play today in the relationships between people and in power dynamics.

The second day started with a presentation by Vadim Altskan, in which he offered an overview of the Holocaust, addressing the rise of the Nazis to power and focusing on three specific countries: Denmark, Greece and Slovakia. In the following session, participants had the opportunity to learn about ghettos established in the period 1939-1945 in different parts of Europe, with the help of maps, photographs and testimonies from the archive of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Afterwards, Lara Lempertiene presented Jewish customs and traditions, in a session organized around the Jewish calendar. She offered teachers the opportunity to explore Jewish holidays, celebrations, to understand the diversity of the Jewish community and the richness of its culture and heritage. The day ended with a guided tour of the Jewish Vilna, led by Ingrida Vilkiene.

The third day started with a lecture by Saulius Suziedelis focused on the Holocaust in Lithuania. This session was followed by what can be easily considered the highlight of the seminar, Silvia Foti, telling the story of how she discovered that her grandfather, Jonas Noreika was a Nazi collaborator. For many people in Lithuania, Noreika is still seen as a national hero who fought against the Soviets and his crimes against Jewish people are largely ignored. Ms. Foti's story had a great impact on the participants, not only through the proof of the atrocities her grandfather committed, but also through the way in which she relates to the story and the impact of discovering the truth had upon her family.

In the afternoon, the teachers were first offered a guided visit of the Holocaust exhibition at the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum. Then, the teachers were prepared for the visit to Ponary. They were informed about the atrocities that happened there and about the efforts to document those events and to further develop the memorial. At the Ponary Memorial, Ingrida Vilkiene guided the teachers, providing details about the various sections and about Kazimierz Sakowicz, the journalist who was able to see from his window what was going on and to document the atrocities.

The fourth day started with a workshop in which Oana Bajka guided the teachers to discover the potential of an interdisciplinary approach to Holocaust and human rights education. The workshop highlighted TOLI's interdisciplinary methodology which uses the lens of human rights to understand how an event like the Holocaust was possible, how the propaganda functioned and how the rights of Jewish people – and other groups – were taken away one by one. At the same time, the lens of the

Holocaust is used to understand that today we need to take action when human rights are violated or at risk of being violated for members of any group living in our societies.

The day continued with the touching testimony of Faina Kukliansky, President of the Jewish Community in Lithuania and second generation Holocaust survivor. Ms Kukliansky shared the life stories of her family during the Holocaust and after the war. After being forced to live in the Grodno ghetto (currently Belarus) together with his father and siblings, they were afterwards forced to live in hiding in very harsh conditions, in the forest. They were able to survive with the support of local people. Her mother, together with her own mother and two sisters were in Siauliai ghetto and then deported to Stutthof concentration camp. Faina Kukliansky also reflected about the rise in antisemitism today and the need to learn the lessons of the past.

Afterwards, the teachers analyzed various attitudes of the majority population towards Jewish people and other groups who were persecuted during the Holocaust. The teachers had the opportunity to reflect upon various degrees of collaboration, to discuss about what it means and what it takes to be an upstander. Based on this analysis they were encouraged to think of concrete ways in which they can be better allies to people who are treated unfairly in the present. In the last session of the day, Ingrida Vilkiene invited the teachers to reflect on why and how to teach the Holocaust in the classroom and presented the International Commission's recommendations for educators teaching the Holocaust. A reflection process was then organized, in which the teachers wrote and discussed about what they learned, what impacted them emotionally and what questions they still had on the seminar-related topics.

In the evening, a kosher dinner was organized at the Jewish Community. The participants had the opportunity to discover Jewish food, learn about Jewish traditions and listen to klezmer music offered by violinist Boris Kirzner.

The fifth day of the seminar began with a workshop in which Katarzyna Łaziuk shared with the participants the life, work and teachings of Abraham Joshua Heschel, inspiring Jewish theologian and philosopher born in Warsaw, who managed to flee to the US shortly before the Nazis invaded Poland. One of his most well-known teachings refers to "indifference as the 11th commandment". The teachers were invited to reflect on ways to encourage their students to combat indifference and promote the respect of human rights.

In the last session of the seminar, the participants worked together to plan educational activities to implement with their students, based on what they learned in the seminar. In the evaluation part, seminar participants filled out a written questionnaire, shared their thoughts and feelings and discussed the best ways to stay in touch with each other and with the other teachers in TOLI Network, in order to share resources and approaches that can be used in the educational practice. The teachers were informed about the possibility to apply to TOLI Impact Grant Program, as well as of the possibility to engage in international cooperation with teachers from other countries.