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WILL THESE WORDS REACH YOU? THE RINGELBLUM ARCHIVE IN NEW YORK

INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE
"ROMA AND SINTI.
HISTORICAL
MEMORY AND THE
PRESENT"
CALL FOR
PARTICIPANTS

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We invite all of you to work closely with us. We would be grateful to receive information about events, projects, publications, exhibitions, conferences or research that we should share with our readers. We also accept proposals for articles.

Paweł Sawicki, Editor-in-Chief

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WILL THESE WORDS REACH YOU? THE RINGELBLUM ARCHIVE IN NEW YORK

Eighty years after the discovery of the first part of the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, the exhibition *Will These Words Reach You? The Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto* opened at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York. Prepared by the Jewish Historical Institute, the exhibition tells the story not only of one of the most important collections documenting the Holocaust, but above all of the people who, in the very midst of catastrophe, decided to record their own experience and pass it on to the future.

"And will these words reach you, who still remain? Faithful friend, will they bring them out into the light of day? For it is for you that I write."

These words were written on 28 August 1942 by Lejzor Czarnobroda, during the Great Deportation from the Warsaw ghetto. He did not belong to the permanent circle of Oneg Shabbat collaborators. His diary, however, was one of many testimonies incorporated into the archive being created in conspiracy. It is from his question that the title of the new exhibition was taken.

The exhibition opened to the public on 18 September 2026, exactly 80 years after the day when the first part of the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, known today as the Ringelblum Archive, was found in the ruins of Warsaw. The route of the Jewish Historical Institute's new travelling exhibition begins in New York. The exhibition was created in cooperation with the Museum of Jewish Heritage, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute in Poland.

Telling Their Own Story

When the Germans sealed the Warsaw ghetto in November 1940, more than 400,000 Jews were confined within a small area of the city. Hunger, disease, overcrowding, and German terror became part of everyday life. Yet it was not only people's lives that were under threat. The memory of their world, and the possibility of telling its story from the perspective of the victims themselves, were also endangered.

The historian Emanuel Ringelblum gathered around him a clandestine group of researchers, journalists, teachers, social and political activists, religious people, artists, and representatives of youth organisations. They usually met on Saturdays, hence the code name Oneg Shabbat, meaning "the joy of the Sabbath".

The network of collaborators numbered around 60 people. They were divided by political views, attitudes toward religion, social background, and visions of the future. What united them was the conviction that the experience of Jews under German occupation had to be described by Jews themselves. Under conditions of extreme danger, they collected testimonies, conducted social research, copied documents, gathered underground press materials, letters, drawings, notices, food ration cards, and children's writings.

Over the course of around three years, they collected nearly 35,000 documents. It is one of the most important surviving source collections concerning Jewish life during the Holocaust



Photo: Rebecca Greenfield

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deportations. The official language spoke of “resettlement to the East”. In reality, it meant transporting people to their deaths in Treblinka. Alongside this document, visitors can see, among other items, a page from Emanuel Ringelblum’s diary written in Yiddish.

As the deportations progressed, members of Oneg Shabbat realised that their own chances of survival were dramatically diminishing. The materials they had collected were therefore placed in metal boxes and milk cans, and then buried underground.

One of the original boxes in which the documents were hidden is today one of the most important objects in the New York exhibition. It is shown alongside original testimonies, diaries, letters, underground newspapers, children’s writings, artworks, food ration cards, and other traces of everyday life. The narrative is complemented by maps, infographics, animated projections, and film materials documenting the postwar recovery of the Archive.

Only a few of the people connected with Oneg Shabbat survived the war. Among them were Hersz and Bluma Wasser and Rachela Auerbach. It was the survivors who helped locate, after the war, the places where the documents had been hidden.

A “Treasure” Beneath the Ruins

The first part of the Archive was found on 18 September 1946 in the ruins of a building at the former 68 Nowolipki Street.

During a special preview presentation of the exhibition on 16 September 2026, Dr Michał Trębacz, Director of the Jewish Historical Institute, evoked the image of postwar Warsaw: an almost completely destroyed city in which Holocaust survivors searched beneath many metres of rubble for what they themselves called a “treasure”. They knew that somewhere under the ruins lay a testimony whose value extended far beyond the history of one group or one city.



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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE "ROMA AND SINTI. HISTORICAL MEMORY AND THE PRESENT". CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

"Roma and Sinti. Historical Memory and the Present" is the title of an international conference that will take place at the Auschwitz Museum on 24–25 November 2026.

The organizers are the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust at the Auschwitz Museum, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, the Council of Europe, the "Towards Dialogue" Foundation, and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, ODIHR.

The aim of the conference is to reflect on historical memory, in particular the genocide of the Roma and Sinti during the Second World War. The meeting will also be an opportunity to consider how memory shapes identity and how it influences the collective image of the past among Roma minorities in Europe. It will also serve as a platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience among experts dealing with, among other issues, counteracting prejudice and discrimination against the Roma minority, as well as education in this field.

The conference programme includes lectures on the persecution of Roma and Sinti in Nazi Germany, the memory of the genocide of the Sinti and Roma, and post-war narratives about this tragedy.

Several panel discussions are also planned, including on the image of the genocide of the Roma and Sinti in memory and culture, and on how the experience of genocide influences the contemporary collective and individual identity of Roma and Sinti.

Conference participants will also take part in a meeting with the authors of the monograph *Roma and Sinti in KL Auschwitz*, while a workshop session will be devoted to how to teach without reproducing stereotypes.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

We invite everyone interested in the subject to take part in the conference: educators, museum professionals, staff members of Memorial Sites, and all those for whom reflection on the history of the Roma and Sinti is important.

The conference languages will be English and Polish. The organizers will provide simultaneous interpretation for the entire conference.

Those wishing to take part in the conference are asked to complete the online registration form.

Applications are open until **11 October 2026**. The number of places is limited, and participation in the conference will be decided by the order in which applications are received. Information on the results of the recruitment process will be announced by **20 October 2026**.



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PROTECTING EVIDENCE, EXPANDING MEMORY: THE IHRA GRANT PROGRAM 2025

From endangered archives in Ukraine and forgotten burial sites in Eastern Europe to football museums, digital walking tours and educational projects in the Middle East, the projects selected in the 2025 Grant Call of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance illustrate how diverse the contemporary work of remembrance has become.

The IHRA announced the recipients of its 2025 Grant Program in August 2026. The selected projects involve partners from 17 countries and address several closely connected challenges: safeguarding historical evidence, developing new approaches to Holocaust education, strengthening knowledge about the genocide of the Roma, and responding to Holocaust distortion, antisemitism and anti-Roma prejudice.

The international dimension is fundamental to the program. IHRA grants are intended not simply to finance individual initiatives, but to encourage cooperation between institutions, researchers, educators and civil society organizations across national borders. Over the past decade, more than 150 projects around the world have received support from the program. For the 2025 call, organizations could apply for grants of up to €30,000 for projects lasting a maximum of 24 months.

Saving the historical record

Some of the projects begin with perhaps the most fundamental task facing institutions of remembrance: preserving historical evidence before it disappears. In Ukraine, the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center will work with archival institutions in Ukraine, Israel, Germany and the United States to digitize and catalogue more than 32,000 historical photographs documenting Jewish life before, during and after the Holocaust. The collection will ultimately be made freely available online. The project has particular urgency at a time when the continuing war places archives, monuments and other elements of Ukraine's cultural heritage at risk. Another project concerns a history that remains remarkably little known. On 15 May 1944, 878 Jewish men were deported from France aboard Convoy 73. Unlike most deportation transports from France, the convoy did not travel to Auschwitz but to the Baltic states. Yahad – In Unum, together with partners in France and Lithuania, will continue research into the fate of the deportees through archival investigation, testimonies and archaeological work. The project aims not only to establish individual stories, but also to preserve the memory of one of the least documented deportations from France during the Holocaust.

Historical evidence can also remain literally hidden in the landscape. The Polish Zapomniane Foundation, working with Bildungswerk Stanislaw Hantz in Germany, will continue its efforts to identify and document unmarked burial sites of Holocaust victims. Thirty additional sites are to be investigated through archival research, witness testimony and archaeological methods. An important element of the work is securing long-term legal protection for these places. Thousands of Holocaust victims across Eastern Europe still lie in graves that have never been properly marked or commemorated. These projects demonstrate that safeguarding Holocaust history is not limited to preserving

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Countering distortion

Other projects address a different but increasingly visible challenge: the circulation of inaccurate, manipulative or deliberately distorted representations of Holocaust history. The Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre will work with journalists, bloggers and media professionals across Southern Africa. Its project will develop training and practical resources intended to improve reporting on Holocaust-related subjects and help media professionals recognize and respond to distortion and misinformation.

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IHRA Grant Program

schools, museums and public discussion.

The organization Sharaka will similarly develop exhibitions, community events and educational programs in cooperation with partners in Morocco and Bahrain. The project will focus on Holocaust history, survivor stories and the Righteous Among the Nations while seeking to counter distortion and encourage dialogue in societies where systematic Holocaust education has historically been limited.

The projects share an underlying assumption: remembrance cannot depend exclusively on audiences already interested in Holocaust history. Reaching new generations increasingly means entering spaces where people already gather, whether a football stadium, an urban street, a media newsroom or a classroom thousands of kilometres from the principal sites of Nazi persecution.

Remembering the genocide of the Roma

A significant part of the 2025 Grant Program is devoted to strengthening knowledge about the persecution and genocide of Roma and Sinti, a history that remains much less widely understood than the Holocaust of the Jews.

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ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL COMPLICITY: REFLECTING ON MY FELLOWSHIP AT AUSCHWITZ

Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics (FASPE) promotes ethical leadership for today's professionals through annual fellowships, ethical leadership trainings, and symposia, among other means. Each year, FASPE awards 80 to 90 fellowships to graduate students and early-career professionals in six fields: Business, Clergy & Religious Leaders, Design & Technology, Journalism, Law, and Medicine. Fellowships begin with immersive, site-specific study in Germany and Poland, including at Auschwitz and other historically significant sites associated with Nazi-era professionals. While there, fellows study Nazi-era professionals' surprisingly mundane and familiar motivations and decision-making as a reflection-based framework to apply to ethical pitfalls in their own lives. We find that the power of place translates history into the present, creating urgency in ethical reflection.

Each month one of our fellows publishes a piece in *Memoria*. Their work reflects FASPE's unique approach to professional ethics and highlights the need for thoughtful ethical reflection today.

"When evaluating something as horrific as the Holocaust, it is very easy and even comforting to imagine yourself as one of the victims. Indeed, you may make parallels between what happened to the Jewish population during this period and injustices you have personally suffered or witnessed. During our time together, I encourage you to instead see yourself through the lens of the perpetrator, which is usually a much more difficult approach to take."

That was the challenge laid out by Thorsten Wagner, Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics' (FASPE) principal scholar on my first day in the program. Along with a few dozen fellow graduate students and early-career professionals across business, design & technology, and law, I embarked on a two-week excursion to Germany and Poland. There, I had the opportunity to learn about the history of the Holocaust, discuss the ethical failures of professionals who designed and executed Nazi policies, and draw insights for our own professional journeys.

As we learned, the progression of ethical lapses began gradually at first until they all seemed to happen at once. The Nazi regime, although racist throughout its history, was gradual in introducing its ideals and policies after it took power—what started as economic and social limitations eventually led to mass killings within a decade. Visits to various German and Polish museums, labor camps, euthanasia centers, and death camps provided a visceral and emotional backdrop to our experience. Images and testimonials from Auschwitz survivors left a particularly harrowing impression, made all the worse by the realization that the stories we heard were from the "lucky" ones who made it out alive.

As we grappled with real situations that German businesses addressed in the 1930-40s





continuously questioned our own ethical assumptions and foundations. The FASPE Fellows had a high degree of professional influence and autonomy compared to most individuals, and almost all of us could draw a direct line from our career to one that existed in Nazi Germany. After all, bankers, lawyers, engineers, consultants, managers, and executives were notable and influential then as well. We examined the period from this perspective.

FASPE emphasized a powerful feeling: “that could have been me,” which not only applies to those who suffered but also to those who caused the suffering. It’s easy for one to believe “I would have refused to work with the Nazis” or “I wouldn’t have taken part in designing the gas chambers.”

These views, however, are naive and unverifiable. We learned that often it wasn’t the case that anyone was even “forced” to do these things. Instead, people would win the honor and privilege of a prestigious government partnership or opportunity. While some chose not to work on these projects, the majority did.

These people weren’t directly running the concentration camps, rounding up prisoners or ultimately murdering millions of people. However, they did design, finance, insure, and

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These people weren’t directly running the concentration camps, rounding up prisoners or ultimately murdering millions of people. However, they did design, finance, insure, and consult on these Nazi endeavors. Additionally, they were well compensated for their services both monetarily and socially. The natural conclusion, then, is that these people were greedy opportunists profiting off the suffering of others, right? Well, not necessarily. Many individuals were not rabid



HISTORY EDUCATION AMID AN ONGOING WAR

What comes to mind when we think back to our childhood dreams? For most of us, it would certainly not be a dream of visiting the Auschwitz Museum. Yet one of the participants in this year's seminar for teachers from Ukraine had exactly that dream.

In the 1970s, Tetiana Shtonda's mother visited the Memorial and brought back a small guidebook. After reading it, the teenage Tetiana became interested in this history. It was not until 2026 that Tetiana, by then a history teacher in Dnipro, was able to fulfill her dream by taking part in this year's seminar.

The cooperation between the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust at the Auschwitz Museum and the Ukrainian Institute for Holocaust Studies "Tkuma" dates back to 2018. Despite interruptions caused by the pandemic and Russia's attack on Ukraine, five editions of the seminar for teachers from Ukraine have been held so far, including one online, as well as one seminar for teachers from Poland, who visited Dnipro and Kyiv in 2019.

This year's seminar took place on August 17–20. A group of 20 teachers from Ukraine took part in a study visit to the grounds of the former German Nazi camp, a series of educational workshops, talks at the Museum's Conservation Laboratories and Collections, a historical walk around Oświęcim, and a visit to the Auschwitz Jewish Center. Most of the program was conducted in the participants' native language, and it proved a source of inspiring impressions.

"I already knew a lot about the subject, but seeing it all with my own eyes changed my perspective," said Nataliia Ostrovska, who holds a doctorate in social communication and is acting head of the Department of Journalism at Zaporizhzhia Polytechnic National University.

"At Auschwitz, history stops being merely a page in a textbook. It takes on a human face, a voice, and a story," added Larysa Pyshna, a history teacher from Mykolaiv Oblast.

For people from war-torn Ukraine, a seminar at the Auschwitz Memorial is a particularly meaningful experience. "We fully understand that for you this is not just a journey. You have left your homes, your loved ones, and your students to come here and talk together about memory, history, and responsibility.

I want to tell you that we in Poland look upon the courage of the Ukrainian people with great respect. We admire your resistance, your fight, and your determination in defending your homeland," Andrzej Kacorzysk, director of the ICEAH, said during a meeting with the group from Ukraine.

"Being at this site of the greatest tragedy of the Second World War makes Ukrainians painfully aware of the parallels with the present," observed Tetiana Nikiforova, a history teacher and director of the Osvitnia Traiektoriia (Educational Trajectory) Center for the Professional Development of Teachers of the Dnipro City Council.

The connections between the themes of the seminar and the present day, seen above all through the individual experience of war, ran like a common thread through the participants' reflections afterward. "For me, this seminar is very helpful in developing my own ability to go



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ON SOVIET DISINFORMATION ABOUT SEPTEMBER 17, 1939

To mark the anniversary of the Soviet aggression against Poland on September 17, 1939, the Pilecki Institute held an expert debate on the propaganda mechanisms that accompanied the Soviet Union's armed attack on Poland, and on how those mechanisms continue in the policies of the Russian Federation today.

The panelists were Dr. Maria Domańska, former diplomat, former head of the Political Section at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Moscow, and an analyst and deputy head of the Russian Department at the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW); Prof. Andrzej Zawistowski, a historian and education specialist, professor at the Pilecki Institute, and vice-rector of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics; and Dr. hab. Damian Markowski, a historian and Sovietologist, professor at the Pilecki Institute, and head of the Institute's Department for Research on Soviet Occupation and Communism.

The debate was moderated by Dr. Paweł Sasanka, a historian of communism in the second half of the 20th century and assistant professor at the Pilecki Institute's Centre for Totalitarian Studies.

Dr. Domańska observed that the narrative about the September 17 attack on Poland is subordinated to the theme of the Great Patriotic War and the 1945 victory, which serves as a founding myth of sorts for Putinism: "To put it in general terms, today's Russia is, to a large extent, returning to Soviet narratives about that period. In Putin's vision, Russia is meant to return to that high point of its lost glory. And of course, the



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Dr. Domańska observed that the narrative about the September 17 attack on Poland is subordinated to the theme of the Great Patriotic War and the 1945 victory, which serves as a founding myth of sorts for Putinism: "To put it in general terms, today's Russia is, to a large extent, returning to Soviet narratives about that period. In Putin's vision, Russia is meant to return to that high point of its lost glory. And of course, the narrative about September 17, together with all the related narratives about that period, is today embedded in Russia's systemic conflict with the West. If we look at the aims and components of this narrative about September 17, we see a great many similarities to the narrative about Ukraine today."

In the OSW expert's view, the Russian narrative sustains the image of an empire under constant threat, compelled to regain lost territories and to seek security by expanding its "strategic depth". Russia presents itself as "a good empire that only ever liberated, never wanted war, always wanted peace, was never aggressive, and came to the rescue," the former diplomat emphasized.

"This is a kind of permanent myth of innocence, a myth of victimhood, a messianic myth. It goes hand in hand with whitewashing repression, or leaving out altogether the repression that accompanied the attack on Poland and the occupation of Poland from September 17 onward—and also today's occupation of Ukraine," Dr. Domańska added.

Prof. Andrzej Zawistowski pointed out that Russia is not the only country that directly invokes the legacy of the Soviet Union; Belarus does so as well. In Belarus, this is particularly evident in the narrative that presents September 17, 1939, as the "unification of Belarusian lands" and liberation from Polish oppression. "It is exactly the same name as that of the Russian holiday celebrated in November, which commemorates the expulsion of the Poles from the Kremlin," the historian noted.

"In Belarus's domestic policy, Poland is enemy number one, because it meets all the criteria of an enemy. First, it is a member of NATO; second, it is a part of the West; third, it is a state that once encompassed part of Belarus's territory; and fourth, it has its own people there in the form of a national minority in Belarus," the Pilecki Institute professor said, listing the reasons.

Dr. hab. Markowski agreed that contemporary Russia is returning to the Soviet Union's narrative. "My impression is that when the propaganda of the Russian Federation speaks about history, it constantly invokes the myth of a supposed historical justice, delivered through various actions of the Soviet Union, of Stalin, and of the NKVD and NKGB—bodies that have been gradually rehabilitated over well more than a decade.

FROM SYMBOL TO HISTORICAL PLACE: AUSCHWITZ IN CROATIAN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

How textbooks represent the camp complex, mass murder, victims, perpetrators, and the choices offered to young readers.

Auschwitz appears in all four history textbooks currently available for grade eight and used in Croatian schools. The corpus is therefore complete rather than sampled. Yet the name does not perform the same historical or educational function in each book. Some presentations reconstruct a complex of camps through space, process, perpetrators, victims, and testimony; others condense it into an example of extermination or a symbol of Holocaust memory. This article examines what these representations make visible - and what they leave outside the frame.

When a Textbook Says "Auschwitz"

What historical reality becomes available to a fourteen-year-old reader when a textbook uses the name Auschwitz? The question is less straightforward than it seems. The word may refer to a town, the main camp established in 1940, Auschwitz II-Birkenau, the entire complex of camps and subcamps, a centre of mass killing, a system of forced labour, the site of liberation in January 1945, or a general symbol of the Holocaust. Each of these meanings is historically relevant, but they are not interchangeable.

Croatian pupils encounter Auschwitz in the eighth grade, within narratives of Nazism, the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the persecution conducted by the Ustasha regime in the Independent State of Croatia. Four textbooks are currently available and used in Croatian schools: *Povijest 8*, *Klio 8*, *Moja povijest 8*, and *Vremeplov 8*. Analysing all four makes it possible to compare the full range of representations officially available to pupils, rather than drawing conclusions from a sample or from a single publisher.

All four textbooks mention Auschwitz and preserve the centrality of Jewish persecution. They also name other groups imprisoned or murdered there. Their main difference is therefore not simple presence or absence. It lies in the connections established among place, chronology, human agency, infrastructure, individual lives, and student activity. A textbook can provide several accurate facts and still leave Auschwitz spatially vague. It can show

a victim's face without giving that person

a voice. It can describe gas chambers without naming those who organised deportation, selection, and killing. It can offer a rich set of images but ask pupils only to recall a number.

The comparison below examines five related issues: the historical function assigned to Auschwitz; the distinction between Auschwitz I, Birkenau, and the wider complex; the visibility and individualisation of victims; the naming of perpetrators and the reconstruction of deportation, selection, forced labour, and mass killing; and the work that images, sources, and questions ask pupils to perform. The aim is not to rank the textbooks. A larger number of units is not evidence of higher quality. The purpose is to identify four different narrative logics and to consider their implications for historical understanding.

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WHAT WAS EXAMINED?

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A separate historiographical check compared numerical, chronological, spatial, and terminological claims with current information from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and



udžbenik povijesti za osmi razred osnovne škole



source block. *Vremeplov 8* distributes biographies across a longer sequence. *Moja povijest 8* repeats liberation in text, image, and summary. The appropriate question is not which textbook contains "more Auschwitz", but which relationships each presentation enables pupils to reconstruct.

What Was Auschwitz?

Current reference data describe Auschwitz as a complex consisting of Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II-Birkenau, Auschwitz III-Monowitz, and more than forty subcamps. Around 1.3 million people were deported to the complex and approximately 1.1 million were murdered there, including about one million Jews. The complex combined imprisonment, terror, forced labour, exploitation, starvation, disease, executions, medical crimes, and immediate mass killing. Auschwitz II-Birkenau contained the largest killing centre within the complex.

A historically concrete school representation must therefore hold together functions that the broad public label 'death camp' often compresses into one image.

Povijest 8 provides the clearest differentiation of the main camp and Birkenau. It identifies an original camp established in 1940, later presents Auschwitz II-Birkenau by name, and describes Birkenau's central role in mass murder (pp. 119-121). Its account, however, connects the beginning of Birkenau too directly to the decision on the Final Solution. Construction began in October 1941, initially for Soviet prisoners of war, before the Wannsee Conference; from 1942 Birkenau also became a central site in the murder of European Jews. The textbook correctly describes four large gas-chamber and crematorium buildings operating in 1943, but the spatial reference would be more precise if it explicitly said Auschwitz II-Birkenau rather than Auschwitz in general (p. 120).

Klio 8 and *Moja povijest 8* consistently use the compound name Auschwitz-Birkenau without explaining the relation between the main camp, Birkenau, Monowitz, and the subcamps (*Klio 8*, p. 118; *Moja povijest 8*, pp. 145-146). This is understandable as a concise public designation, but

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without romanticising the extremely restricted possibilities available in the camp system.

Who Made the System Work?

Auschwitz can easily be described through passive grammar: people "were deported", "were selected", "were sent" to gas chambers, and "were deprived" of their possessions. Such formulations record what happened to victims but can make the system appear to operate without decision-makers and agents. Historical responsibility becomes clearer when a textbook distinguishes those who formulated policy, organised transport, guarded prisoners, selected arrivals, administered labour, carried out killing, removed property and bodies, concealed evidence, or later denied their role.

Povijest 8 names Nazis and Germans as institutional actors and individualises Rudolf Höss as commandant through his postwar statement (p. 119). The source is valuable because it reveals perpetrator knowledge of the killing process, while the juxtaposition with survivor voices prevents the commandant's account from dominating the page. At the same time, some captions use passive constructions, particularly when describing the confiscation of victims' possessions (p. 120). The result is



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a mixed pattern: the general narrative identifies the regime, but certain material processes become grammatically detached from the people who organised them.

Klio 8 identifies Nazi Germany and its helpers in the overview of the Holocaust, but the detailed process of transport, gassing, removal of gold teeth, and cremation is largely written without individual or institutional agents (p. 118). *Moja povijest 8* clearly names the Ustasha authorities who prohibited Lea Deutsch from performing and sent her towards Auschwitz, yet the personnel who operated Auschwitz are not individualised (p. 146). Local responsibility is therefore more visible than camp responsibility.

Vremeplov 8 provides the broadest perpetrator spectrum. Its contextual narrative includes the Wehrmacht, Einsatzgruppen, domestic helpers, the Nazi state administration, and Reinhard Heydrich. Within the camp narrative it names

a guard, a deputy commandant, SS personnel, and Karl-Friedrich Höcker. Höcker's biography

infer intention, evaluate a claim, or build an argument from evidence.

Four Models at a Glance

The table summarises dominant tendencies. Each textbook also contains counterexamples and internal variation; the labels identify narrative emphasis, not overall quality.

Conclusion: Teaching Auschwitz as a Historical Place

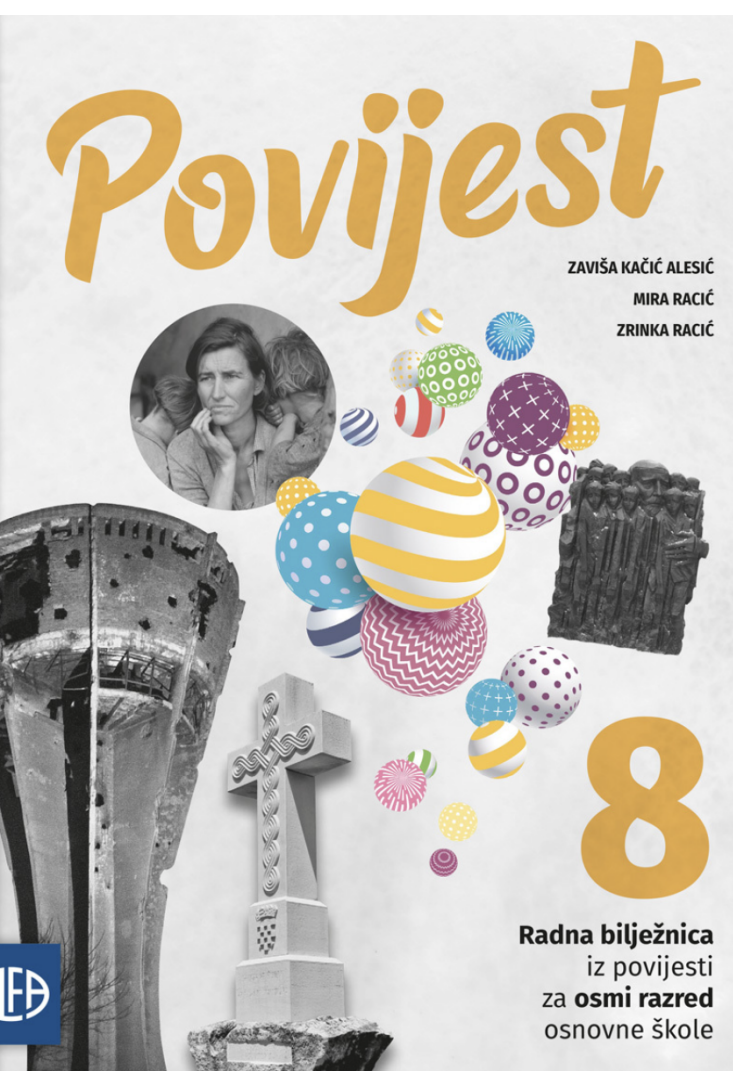
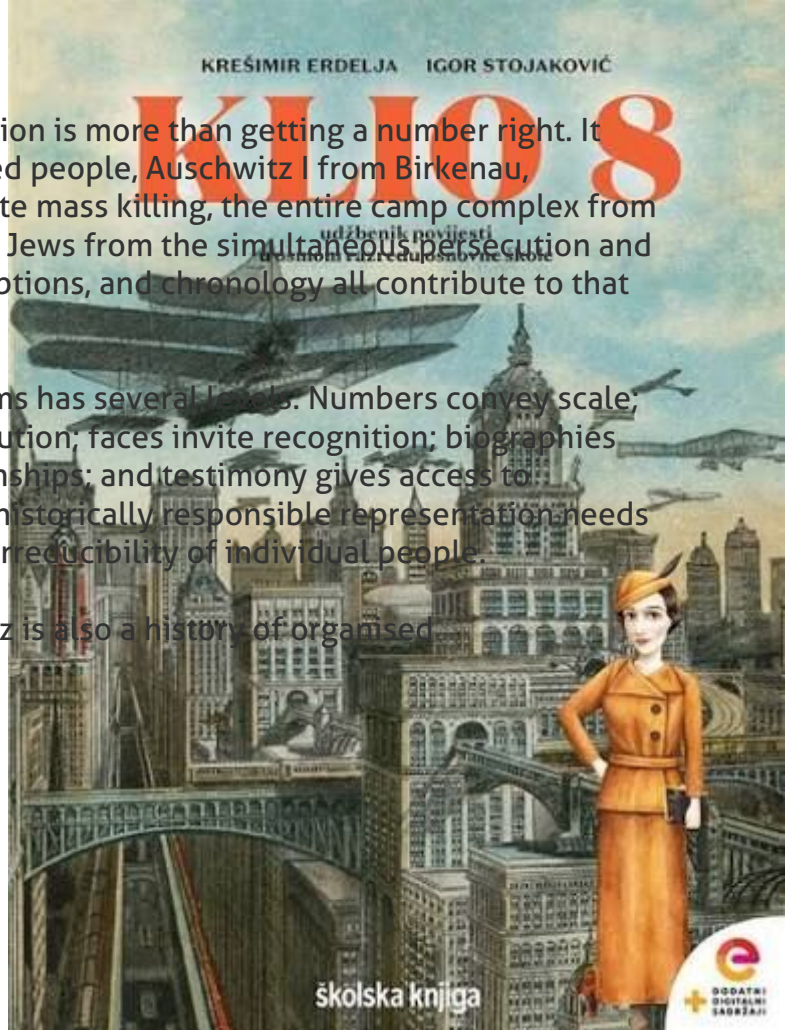
Auschwitz should not be reduced to a general symbol of evil. Its symbolic and commemorative importance is undeniable, but a symbol without spatial, chronological, and processual specificity can obscure the different parts of the complex, the different experiences of deportees and prisoners, and the human decisions that made persecution and mass murder possible.

Textbook	Dominant model	Especially visible	Less developed
<i>Povijest 8</i>	Spatial-process multimodal	The complex, infrastructure, selection, forced labour, material evidence, multiple voices.	Individualisation is concentrated in one dense source block; some passive captions obscure agents.
<i>Klio 8</i>	Condensed symbolic-example	The Final Solution, Jewish centrality, a broad list of persecuted groups, surviving children as an emblematic image.	Spatial differentiation, named perpetrators, student inquiry, and multimodal precision.
<i>Moja povijest 8</i>	Geographical-biographical and commemorative	Deportation routes from Croatian territories, Lea Deutsch, liberation, and 27 January.	Selection, gas chambers, crematoria, and perpetrators inside the camp; several factual formulations need correction.
<i>Vremeplov 8</i>	Multi-voiced actor-process	Named victims, a survivor voice, perpetrators, selection, varied prisoner experiences, and postwar responsibility.	The functional distinctions among Auschwitz I, Birkenau, Monowitz, and subcamps could be more explicit.

The first general finding is that historical precision is more than getting a number right. It requires distinguishing deported from murdered people, Auschwitz I from Birkenau, imprisonment and forced labour from immediate mass killing, the entire camp complex from one iconic gate, and the Holocaust of European Jews from the simultaneous persecution and murder of other groups. Terminology, maps, captions, and chronology all contribute to that precision.

The second finding is that the visibility of victims has several levels. Numbers convey scale; group names preserve the specificity of persecution; faces invite recognition; biographies connect the camp with earlier lives and relationships; and testimony gives access to experience. None should replace the others. A historically responsible representation needs both the vast dimensions of the crime and the irreducibility of individual people.

The third finding is that the history of Auschwitz is also a history of organised



CALL FOR PAPERS. (VICTIMS) AND [PERPETRATORS]. CONFERENCE

We invite all participants for the international conference (Victims) and [Perpetrators of the Third Reich's Crimes in the Narratives of Historical Museums in Poland and Germany: Exhibitions, Monographs, Education held in 2027 within the framework of the Polish-German Memorial Sites Forum. The Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk is the partner and co-host of this project.

The conference is intended to inspire interdisciplinary reflection on the ways of presenting the tragic events of the Second World War. The event will concentrate on the topic of the victims and the perpetrators. Both of those categories – alluding to the triad that Raul Hilberg introduced into the scholarly discourse – are herein understood both at individual (biographies of particular individuals) and collective level (histories of various social, professional, national groups).

The primary aim of the conference is to provide a critical analysis of exhibitions presented in the museums that document Nazi crimes, though publications (especially syntheses and monographs) and educational programmes also remain within our sphere of interest. While the scholarly research reflects the current state of historical knowledge and the optics of studying the victims and their oppressors, it is the museum education that illustrates the essential direction of public and didactic engagement in Poland and Germany. That is where the memory politics of both countries and the strategies of various institutions do (or do not) overlap.

The conference hosts are particularly interested in comparative approaches to the topic. The event is intended not only to assess the existing narratives but also to foster the development of shared educational standards, analytic frameworks, and examples of good practice that could be applied in the future exhibition projects and the Polish-German museum programmes.

Proposed thematic areas include:

- narratives focusing on victims and perpetrators in permanent and temporary exhibitions;
- narrative models used to represent the relationship between perpetrators and victims, including their cultural and ideological backgrounds;
- modes of representing individual biographies in relation to collective perspectives;
- processes of constructing collective identities attributed to victims and perpetrators;
- “perpetrators perspective” in museum narratives – between the absence of sources and interpretative reconstructions;
- visual and narrative strategies for representing violence and trauma in museum exhibitions, including the danger of repeated victimisation and of “fascination” with perpetrators;
- victims and perpetrators in historical monographs and museum educational programmes (the role of language, interpretative categories, individual and collective portrayals);
- comparative analyses of museum narratives within various cultural, social and national contexts;



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DIALOGUE FORUM

The 17th Dialogue Forum of the Mauthausen Memorial took place on September 18–19, 2026, under the title **Gusen: Shaping a New Memorial Site: Public Participation, Research, Education. Some 100 people from academia, memorial sites, education, and civil society came together to discuss the future of memorial sites, with a particular focus on the future Gusen Memorial.**

The first day was devoted to plans for redeveloping the grounds of the former Gusen concentration camp. After the welcome, participants observed a minute of silence in memory of Jean-Louis Roussel, who died unexpectedly on September 17. Roussel was vice-president of the French Amicale de Mauthausen and of the International Mauthausen Committee. This was followed by a presentation of the design for the new layout of the site and of current research conducted by the Mauthausen Memorial. A panel discussion addressed the particular challenges of transforming places with a difficult history. Afternoon workshops and interdisciplinary walks around the site focused on regional remembrance culture, future curatorial and educational work, and ways of presenting biographies.

On the evening of the first day, the documentary *Botschafter des Erinnerns* (Ambassador of Remembrance), directed by Magdalena Żelasko, was screened. The film portrays Stanisław Zalewski, a survivor of Gusen who, even at the age of 100, remains active as a witness to history and who visited the Mauthausen Memorial last year during the Dialogue Forum. In conversation with the audience, the director spoke about the making of the film, Zalewski's life story, and the role that such personal perspectives play in memory work.

The second day focused on the varied experiences and histories of persecution of individual prisoner groups, as well as international perspectives on the history and future of memorial sites. Parallel panels in German and English addressed, among other topics, the persecution of homosexual people, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Roma and Sinti. Other presentations dealt with prisoners of Austrian origin who were persecuted as "asocial" or "criminal." The perspective of the camp staff was also presented on the basis of historical sources.

International projects from Spain, Austria, France, Rwanda, and Argentina showed how diverse approaches to places with difficult past can be. New forms of commemoration and educational work were also presented.

The Dialogue Forum thus provided a space for discussing the further development of the Gusen Memorial and the ways in which its story can be told.



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A NEW SEASON OF THE EHRI PODCAST

The fourth season of the EHRI Podcast series *For the Living and the Dead. Traces of the Holocaust* features six new episodes around the theme Roma and the genocide. New podcast host Lovro Kralj – EHRI Research and Content Officer – interviews seven experts who share their insights while narrating the story of a person or object that really took their breath away.

Episode 1

In this episode, podcast host Lovro Kralj talks to Milovan Pisarri, who discovered the small document that is the centre piece of this episode. Milovan is a researcher at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory in Belgrade, Serbia. This paper slip contains a declaration, in Serbian, that a woman called Milica Glišić was removed from the “Gypsy list.” On the reverse of the slip, a four-word sentence in German accompanied by a date reads: “Aus dem Lager 12.II.1942 entlassen” (“Released from the camp on 12 February 1942”). It is signed by the camp commandant Andorfer, SS Untersturmführer.

Milica Glišić was a 25-year-old Romani woman with an eight-year-old son. Together with approximately 600 other Romani women and children, she had been interned in the Judenlager Sajmište in Belgrade in mid-December 1941.

The small note saved Milica’s life.

The document is preserved in the Yugoslav archives alongside other similar records that enabled numerous Romani women and children to be released from the camp and to return to their homes, places that were looted and empty. The men had been killed a few months earlier by the Wehrmacht in mass executions.

Episode 2

In this episode, we look at a memorial erected in 1977 at the local graveyard near Hrastina in northern Croatia. The memorial is dedicated to a group of Roma and Sinti victims who were killed by the local Croatian fascists, Ustašas, on the night of 24-25 April 1945. This is among the last mass killings of Roma and Sinti in Europe during the Second World War, as the massacre took place only days before the end of the war. However, for decades, the events in Hrastina, as well as the monument itself, were a subject of misremembrance since the identities of both the victims as well as the perpetrators were obfuscated. The monument was dedicated to those who were “racially and politically” persecuted without stating that they were Roma and Sinti, and the crime was attributed to the SS rather than the Ustašas. This episode unpacks the massacre in Hrastina and how the subsequent misremembrance of its victims and perpetrators evolved.

Episode 3

In this episode, we focus on the photograph of a wedding which, at first glance, captures a moment of joy. However, behind it lies

a far more complex and painful story. Through this photograph, taken in the Romanian town of Pitești in 1941, we uncover the story of a Roma family whose lives were shattered during the Second World War. The family was torn apart by war and deportations to Transnistria, the territory between the Dniester and the Bug rivers where tens of thousands of Roma were sent to die.

We are joined by **Petre Matei**, a researcher at the Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania. In his research, he has conducted numerous oral



For the Living and the Dead

Traces of the Holocaust

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Paweł Sawicki

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Agnieszka Juskowiak-Sawicka

EDITED BY

Bartosz Bartyzel
Marek Lach
Łukasz Lipiński

CONTACT

memoria@auschwitz.org

