



Skopje, 2017. © Mémorial de la Shoah.

Ljubljana, 2018. © Mémorial de la Shoah.

### Bulgaria/Northern Macedonia

Memory controversies between Bulgaria and Northern Macedonia are centred around the question of Bulgaria's responsibility in the deportation of Jews of occupied Macedonian territories. The bilateral dialogue launched in 2017 has been extremely successful at tackling such issues. Seminars shed a light on differences of opinion on national memories and offered a common historical framework based on the choice of terminology, the latter being a key point for the issues still opposing the two countries.

### Italy/Slovenia/Croatia

This partnership started in 2018 with a seminar in Ljubljana. It addressed questions of the state of Jewish communities in the region of the Adriatic Sea and considered other forms of violence in the region, in the aftermaths of World War II. The training was organised in partnership with the Italian Ministry of Education, the Croatian Education and Teacher Training Agency and the Slovenian National Agency for Education.

### Current and future work

The Memorial is currently considering implementing trainings in:

- Ukraine / Poland
- Russia / Belarus / Ukraine
- Cyprus
- Northern Ireland



# The Holocaust as a starting point

International teacher training seminars

# “The Holocaust as a starting point” is an international programme developed by the Mémorial de la Shoah since 2015. It comprises regional and multinational teacher training seminars. It strives to develop cooperation on a regional basis.

Since 2005, the development of the Mémorial de la Shoah’s international relations policies forms an important part of its activities. Its actions include welcoming a diverse public in France, organising training sessions in target countries and universities across Europe, and participating in the main networks and think tanks on the Holocaust. “The Holocaust as a starting point” programme is one of its most important activities.

## An answer to pressing issues

Today’s Europe is seeing a rise in nationalistic, anti-Semitic, racist and xenophobic sentiments as well as a rise in far-right and Islamic radicalisation. Part of these discourses are often based on distortions of historical events connected to World War II. Education is one of the most efficient ways to combat these trends. For this reason, the Memorial focuses on teachers, for their role in passing knowledge on to future generations.

## Programme goals and approach

The Memorial has developed multilateral teacher trainings, regrouping teachers from countries with conflicting memories.

The programme aims at creating a space for dialogue between these neighboring European countries with divergent national narratives connected to World War II or the aftermath of World War II. It pushes a reflection on one’s own national history, encourages crossed perspectives and tackles sensitive issues through a scientific approach that builds on the common European heritage of the history of the Holocaust.

In concrete terms: starting from the history of the Holocaust, which is what countries have in common, trainings aim to tackle sensitive issues of local and regional history that still divide them 70 years after the war. Trainings do not however only deal with the past but also tackle contemporary pedagogical challenges such as antisemitism, antigypsyism, conspiracy theories, etc.

## The format

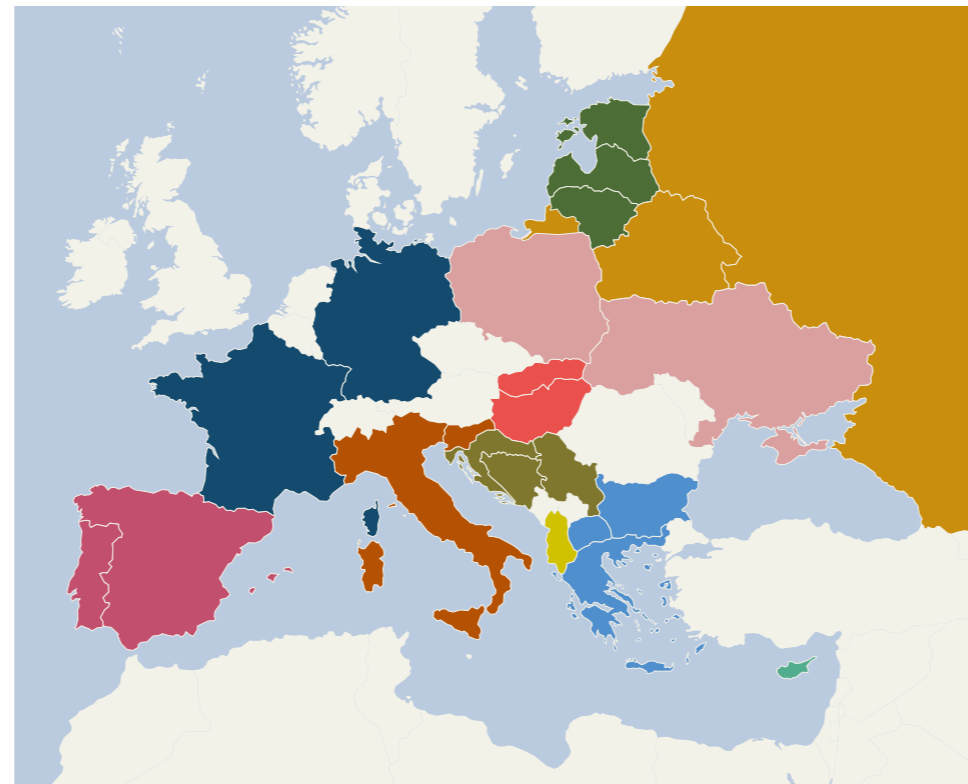
Trainings usually last 2.5 days. They rest upon a careful balance between conferences, pedagogical workshops and onsite learning. All speakers are experts in their fields and we aim to strike a balance between local and international experts. Open participation, debate and the sharing of experiences is greatly encouraged.

## A programme that fosters regional cooperation

The programme mobilises national public authorities, such as ministries of Education and ministries of Foreign affairs and pushes them to cooperate with each other. Only this kind of high-level engagement can guarantee the durability of the multilateral dialogues. This also fosters greater ownership of this regional dialogue, which should become autonomous in the long run. Civil society organisations, such as teachers’ associations or museums, are closely associated to the programme.

## A large geographical coverage

- Trainings are held in 20+ European countries, with a focus on Eastern Europe and the Balkans.
- An average 10 trainings are organised yearly by the Memorial.



### Non-exhaustive list of seminars (2019):

- |                        |                              |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Spain/Portugal         | Greece/N. Macedonia/Bulgaria | Baltic States          |
| Italy/Slovenia/Croatia | Hungary/Slovakia             | Russia/Belarus/Ukraine |
| Croatia/Serbia/Bosnia  | Albania/Serbia/N. Macedonia  | France/Germany/Poland  |
| Ukraine/Poland         |                              | Cyprus                 |

# The Holocaust as a starting point: examples of seminars and success stories



Belgrade, 2019. © Mémorial de la Shoah.

## Serbia/Bosnia/Croatia

The partnership between Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia is the oldest of the programme. Launched in 2015 in Zagreb, it brings together the respective ministries of education as well as civil society, including the Historical museum in Sarajevo. Seminars were held in Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb.

Taking the Holocaust as a starting point, seminars tackled sensitive topics such as Jasenovac camp, the opposition Chetniks/Ustahis, interpretations of the 1990s wars and the links between World War II and these wars.

Over the years, they allowed for sustained dialogue and rapprochement between these neighbouring countries with memory divides.



Thessaloniki, 2017. © Mémorial de la Shoah.

## Greece/Northern Macedonia

The Greek and Northern Macedonian partnership dates back to 2017 and includes the respective ministries of foreign affairs and education as well as civil society. Bilateral relations between these countries have been tense for the past 50 years, including over questions of the interpretation of the Greek civil war. The history of the Holocaust is taken as a starting point to facilitate a bilateral rapprochement.

The 2017 seminar that took place in Thessaloniki was described as “historical” by the ministries of education. It proved the feasibility of the rapprochement between the two countries. The second edition, which took place in Skopje in 2018, was very successful despite the tense political situation surrounding the name of Northern Macedonia. The September 2019 seminar took place in Thessaloniki and tackled themes such as memory divides linked to World War II.