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## **GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIVITIES ON REMEMBRANCE**

(developed by participants of the workshop "**Remembrance activities with young people based on human rights education**", held at European Youth Centre Strasbourg, 9-10 December 2019)

The analysis and exploration of the materials available around the training-seminar "Remembrance and learning from World War II", the discussions with experts at the Remembrance workshop, made it clear that this is one of the most difficult, challenging, complex, sensitive activities in the Youth Department educational pallet. The theme of war, history, remembrance in themselves are quite hard to talk about, and it becomes even more difficult, when people from various backgrounds come together to discuss and learn about it in these times of populism and extreme nationalism. It touches more than simply the minds of people, but deeply touches emotions, values and beliefs. The activities on the theme create a possibility to look at the past with a perspective and hope for future, open space to reflect on today, bridge past and present and give a chance to build a better future, to look at own role in this endeavour. It gives a chance to truly open to another view, understand the other, have "uncomfortable" dialogues, accept the presence of various approaches and backgrounds, listen to and hear a different story, meet views of the people who have been on the different sides. There are many sensitive issues which are brought forward, so the activity needs to be carefully planned and run, in order to make sure it is efficient, taking into account all the nuances, contributing to better understanding.

The discussions brought up several recommendations for the organisers and facilitators working with the Remembrance education which are utmost important for the success of educational activities and are to be carefully revisited and discussed before their planning and implementation between all the involved parties and trainer teams members.

### **General questions for reflection for teams and organisers before starting to work on the topic of remembrance**

What do we want to achieve?

What do we want to create and construct?

What are narratives we want to promote?

What do we want to do with our learning...?

### **Recommendations for the organising teams and partners in the preparation of the event**

- a) There is a need to clearly define and openly agree between all the partners on the aim and objectives, specific focus, expected results and methodological approaches for the activity. This will allow a shared vision for the content, participants, guest speakers, approaches, and orientation and give a chance for a coherent and comprehensive event. (e.g. for someone this is a HRE activity, for others it is a peacebuilding one, for the other it is seen as a some kind of propaganda event).
- b) It is essential to clearly define optimum work format and number of working days to be able to reach the set objectives. The set format needs to be compatible with the methodological choices as well (e.g. if the activity is mainly a training activity, it is not advised to have it for less than 4-5 days, should probably not have 60 participants, should have a rather advanced team of trainers who are

equipped to guide a deep educational process, not only facilitate sharing of experiences).

- c) Quality standards in education and training activities of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe should be respected and shared in the activity. This comprises considerations related to the work of the teams, work with participants, setting of goals, working environment etc.
- d) As for the profile and recruitment of the participants, the co-organisers need to strive to have as much as possible mixed and diverse groups of participants from various countries, who are involved in activities which touch the theme of remembrance in a wider range in various roles (e.g. often the participants are coming from ex-Soviet countries, or are immigrants from Eastern Europe and Caucasus to the western European countries). There is a need for a targeted and open dissemination of the call, efforts for diversification of participants in terms of countries, regions and backgrounds, possibility to target calls to journalists, politicians, parliamentarians, specific youth and working with you organisations dealing with the theme of remembrance, umbrella organisations who have in their remit work on remembrance, such as genocide, holocaust remembrance (ternYpe, EUJS, thematic museums' educational programme youth, INGOs who have done study sessions on the theme within the Council of Europe Youth Department programme, etc) could also be considered.
- e) As the theme is sensitive, it is recommended to not only make sure the methodological aspects are well and clearly defined in the call, but also that participants prepare before the event, so a certain brief basic preparation of the selected participants before the event could help people orient and find themselves in and in relation for the activity and its objectives.

### **Recommendations for the educational teams on methodological and educational considerations**

- a) Acknowledge of complexity and sensitivity of the activity both for the educational teams the participants. The topic touches all involved often on a very personal level, shaking beliefs and convictions.
- b) Acknowledge different backgrounds participants are coming from. People will see the same thing differently, people come with having read and studied different histories and having explored different interpretations of the same events. Exploration of different groups who have suffered (Jews, Roma, women, children, civilians, soldiers) has a different story and brings a different view. This is not to be seen as a problem. Differences do not always mean contradicting, but rather a piece in understanding of the whole picture. This is the reality and needs to be vividly and openly explored in a respectful and dialogical way. Enhance dialogical communication between the participants, no debates, no blaming, but more empathy.

Acknowledge diversity, but also find commonalities. There is a need to

acknowledge different narratives to hear, and there is not really a need for a common one, but rather a need to understand that these different narratives exist. A common understanding of relevance and importance of human rights is essential.

- c) A possible good start for the activity could be the actualisation and problematisation of why we are talking about remembrance and human rights now, what and why is urgent, what challenges are we facing today. This will help avoid getting into historical fights from the very beginning and make the theme quite personal. This will also help them see that the topic can be viewed and approached also from a different side, and not only from history and war perspectives.
- d) To open and guide a space where people can understand their own views and how they are shaped. Issues of identity and its building could be explored and integrated in the programme.
- e) To create safe, non-judgmental and brave space that can allow people to doubt, agree or disagree, reflect, transform or not, challenge themselves and others. If the space is not safe and open, there will be a little room for any possible transformation or dialogue, as people will tend to stay on a politically correct artificially shallow levels.

To create a space open and supportive of emotional reactions, feelings and invest in group dynamics.

- f) The methodological framework for remembrance education activities is rooted on human rights education (learning about, though and for human rights are the key elements). This means there should be a good link between the theme of remembrance and human rights, intercultural dialogue, peace, violations of human dignity, discrimination, justice, equality, solidarity, democracy, tolerance and respect, etc).
- a) To explore the links and bridges between past and present and raise the relevance of the work on the remembrance topic today, with its clear vision for building a different future. It is important to support participants in their search for own role and support the follow up work and projects.
- b) Learning through personal stories and experiences could be a good, safe, efficient entry point for understanding each other and each other's' views.  
To bring history to a personal level.
- c) Critical thinking should be in the core of learning to be able to understand the mechanisms of manipulation, falsifications, etc.

### **Methodological choices**

Non-formal educational exercises (simulations, role plays, etc), joint commemoration

actions, exploring archives and biographies , working in museums, through setting up own museums (including self-made on the spot), involvement of guest speakers/experts, visits to memorial site (including joint memorials of conflicting sides, e.g. Franko-German ones in Alsace), exploring testimonies of survivors and eyewitnesses, various artistic methods (painting, music, poetry), working with images and films (cinemology), visit to ECHR if in Strasbourg or other human rights protection institutions elsewhere, drama and theatrical methods, body conscious methods, research (participants could get a task to research and present at the event a specific topic in the broader theme, or a specific story or group touched by the war), remembrance in art, literature, music, films and photography. If the team decides to work with external speakers, guest speakers, survivors, veterans and experts, their intervention needs to be carefully prepared, agreed by and within the team, to avoid any mental attacks towards them and also to avoid that the event is perceived as indoctrination, propaganda or manipulation. If one of the focuses of the activity is the development of joint projects by participants, empowerment for actions, sufficient time and space for cooperation, specific methods and support measures need to be put in place in order to create conditions for this work on the spot. So, consultation tables, facilitated networking sessions, taking action sessions need to be included in programme and methodological choices. In general, the methodological choices need to ensure promotion of the culture of peace and avoid anything that disables it (victory-loss, victims-resistance, focus on the past – focus on the future, etc).

### **Trainer teams**

It is important that the teams are balanced and diverse in accordance with the quality standards of the Council of Europe Youth department, in terms of countries, genders, backgrounds, styles, languages spoken, etc. They need to also comply with the required competences set out by the Youth Department. Other than these rather hard criteria, there are also other relevant considerations in the team composition, which could make it easier to make an efficient and successful event. These aspects include good understanding the current context in different countries and in the Council of Europe, ability and interest to build on previous experiences the new editions, familiar with the contradictions, possible challenges, difficulties in working on the theme of remembrance, etc.