ADDRESSING
HOLOCAUST DISTORTION
ON SOCIAL MEDIA

GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR MEMORIALS AND MUSEUMS

COUNTERING HOLOCAUST DISTORTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

This publication has been developed in the framework of the project "Countering Holocaust distortion on social media. Promoting the positive use of Internet social technologies for teaching and learning about the Holocaust" (IHRA Grant Strategy 2019-2023, line 2 "Countering distortion", IHRA Grant #2020-792), https://holocaust-socialmedia.eu.

The aim of the project is to provide insights and recommendations on how Holocaust museums and memorials can play a key role in safeguarding the relevant historical record and provide factually correct information. In this sense, rather than focusing on how social media can amplify distortion, antisemitism and hate speech, we have adopted a perspective according to which social media is a positive technology that may contribute to expand Holocaust knowledge and memory especially among the younger generations.

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FOREWORD
by Simonetta Della Seta

Both as future Chair of the Memorials and Museums Working Group in IHRA (the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) and as past Director of the National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah (MEIS), I am particularly pleased to introduce to our readers this set of guidelines and recommendations for Holocaust memorials and museums to develop appropriate counter-strategies to distorted Holocaust narratives on social media.

I am also proud that this project is the result of an initiative taken by an important Italian institution, the Institute of Educational Technology, Italian National Research Council, and that it has been jointly carried out by Italian and German experts and educators. I am grateful to all of them.

The subject is very hot, since social media are increasingly spreading and disseminating hateful contents, including antisemitism, and Holocaust denial and distortion. Action is therefore urgently required and Holocaust memorials and museums are a perfect arena to help reduce the impact of Holocaust distortion, especially on social media channels.

Holocaust museums are one of the pillars of Holocaust education and remembrance. Through exhibitions, conferences, seminars, educational activities and social media strategies, Holocaust museums - often connected with Jewish communities and with Holocaust survivors - play a major role in explaining and documenting the Holocaust to a vast audience, and especially among the youth.

Holocaust museums and memorials already hold several tools: they provide correct knowledge about the Holocaust; they use technology and communication and know-how to be professionally active on social media; they have the knowledge to identify distortion. Museums can also invest in educational activities and in their staff's professional development and update; they also act in international networks and can strengthen cooperation and exchange with other memorials and museums.

As explained in these guidelines, "On one hand, museums and memorials can play an essential role in safeguarding the historical record of the Holocaust and, on the other hand, they can counter Holocaust distortion by engaging their social media followers, not only through promotion of their cultural activities and initiatives, but also by producing good practices of social media adoption as a means for disseminating accurate historical information and minimizing trivialization and distortion"... As good "gatekeepers in digital communication [they] may become increasingly prominent in promoting educational and counter-distortion actions".

Holocaust distortion has recently become a concern for all those who know the facts about the Holocaust and who want to remember and transmit the truth, thus paying respect to survivors and to all Holocaust victims. Museums' directors and staff are certainly part of this group. As reported in these guidelines, "in recent surveys that involved users and museum staff in two countries – Italy and Germany – it was found that museum staff highly rated the use of social media to counter Holocaust distortion regardless of the size of the organisation".

Thanks to the recommendations included in these guidelines, and particularly by following both the 'proactive' and 'reactive' measures suggested by this study in order to counter distortion, Holocaust memorials and museums will help create a culture of collaboration both with administrators and moderators of social pages and their followers, with a strong possibility of making an impact. The goal is to create a new community that is more aware, acknowledged and active, not only in Holocaust remembrance but also in protecting the facts.

Simonetta Della Seta
Member of the Italian Delegation in IHRA
2023 Chair of the IHRA Memorials and Museums Working Group

Social media constitute today an elementary aspect of our private and public lives. Parts of those are "lived" in and through social media platforms. If the Holocaust should remain a significant part of our global memory culture, if the memories of the systematic murder of Jews and the persecution of other groups during the Second World War should be preserved for the future, and if we want to continue spreading knowledge about and awareness of this particular history, it needs to find a proper place in the digital environments provided by social media platforms. This study shows that the history and memory of the Holocaust is present on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. It also demonstrates that there is an interest in using these platforms for learning more about history and in particular about stories connected to these historical events. This is very good news.

Social media, however, do not only constitute a space for commemorating the Holocaust and actively engaging with history. They also offer manifold opportunities to deny and distort the history of the Holocaust, to spread misinformation, and, through hate and trolling, to attack and silence those who are dedicated to preserving the past. Holocaust memory on social media is a highly controversial field, especially when it comes to analogies between past and present events and the appropriation of Holocaust memory and imagery for political campaigns and denouncing political opponents. This study, however, demonstrates that it will not be possible to defeat hate, misinformation and distortion with technological measures, banning inadequate posts and counter-speech alone. We need to defend our spaces for teaching and

learning about the Holocaust by means of social media communication, and we need to develop new spaces for commemoration, information and education. This requires to be present on these platforms, and to demonstrate a collective willingness to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and the memories of those who experienced it, to continue telling the stories of those who were persecuted, to tell their names and show their faces, and to connect this to our present lives by turning history into stories social media users can engage with, can like and share, can adopt and co-create, in short: to create a participatory commemorative culture on social media that involves institutions, influencers, a variety of content creators and other users.

By doing so, this study teaches us, we - institutions and individual users alike - are not only becoming gatekeepers of Holocaust memory on social media. We are actively creating a community. Such a community provides the basis for effectively countering hate speech and Holocaust distortion and supporting the dissemination of trustworthy information, the engagement with authentic stories, and the possibility to actively contribute to historical storytelling and to the development of new, digital forms of commemoration. This means that institutions need to trust in their followers, in creators and users in the same manner those users and creators should rely on the resources and expertise provided by memorials, museums and other institutional agents in the field of Holocaust commemoration and education.

This also implies intensified communication. Off- and online collaboration between institutions about appropriate and effective social media practices as well as a constant dialogue with users, influencers and other creators is an important step towards vivid and simultaneously safe spaces for Holocaust commemoration and education on social media. An important aspect of this kind of mutual communication is to (co-)create a proper language for speaking about the Holocaust on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. How can we talk about the Holocaust in sixty seconds? How can we use hashtags to interconnect places, people and historical information? How can we adapt the social media structure of segmented narration to talk about the fragmented nature of a history that is characterized by trauma and loss? How can the multimodal structure of Instagram stories or TikTok videos reflect the complexity of Holocaust memory? What are engaging ways of addressing and actively involving users? How can social media platforms be utilized to reflect on historical sources, and to perform new ways of (media) witnessing?

Countering Holocaust distortion on social media and developing a space for Holocaust commemoration and education requires adopting the language of social media and aligning it with the expertise and effective educational approaches of Holocaust museums and memorials. Those institutions can learn from the media literacy of young social media users and creators, and those creators benefit from the knowledge and resources provided by institutions researching and educating about the Holocaust. This will hopefully provide the necessary space and also willingness to experiment on the basis of a mutual understanding that we all care about the future of Holocaust memory. Social media is a playground that can be very well adjusted to information

and education about serious topics and complex issues. By providing best-practice examples, institutions and individual creators alike can produce content that will become part of the social media lives of a variety of users. By utilizing the connective character of social media platforms, especially through hashtag campaigns and other commemorative activities, more and new virtual communities of memory will evolve. By collaborating with others, we can share experiences of how to best moderate our accounts and communities, how to engage followers, how to use social media for spreading historical awareness and simultaneously (new) media literacy. This might contribute to a new set of standards that adopt the best of the existing knowledge, expertise and innovative approaches of Holocaust education and research and adjust it to an active, participatory, democratic and co-creative digital memory culture. This study and its guidelines provide a solid basis for this journey.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHO ARE THESE GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR?

This report aims to provide Holocaust museums and memorials with a set of guidelines and recommendations to counter the phenomenon of Holocaust distortion on social media channels. As these institutions are increasingly important bulwarks against Holocaust distortion, they have manifold opportunities for safeguarding the historical record and need help to face the challenges posed by those who distort the truth. In this light, the report highlights several actions that Holocaust memorials and museums can take to help reduce the impact of different forms of Holocaust distortion on social media.

WHY IS HOLOCAUST DISTORTION A CONCERN FOR CIVIL SOCIETY?

Abuse, excuse, misrepresentation and manipulation of the history of the Holocaust can be found at all levels of society. This is far from a fringe phenomenon: examples may be found in governments that seek to minimize their historical responsibility, conspiracy theorists who accuse Jews of exaggerating their suffering for financial gain, and online users who make use of imagery and language associated with the Holocaust for political, ideological, or commercial purposes unrelated to its history. Regardless of its form, Holocaust distortion and its potential direct or indirect effects – antisemitism, Holocaust denial, conspiracy myths and extreme nationalism – have an international dimension and relevance, and require an international response. As for social media, while their rise has enabled individuals and groups to connect on a global level and to have instant access to information and knowledge, they have also allowed spread and dissemination of hateful content, including antisemitism and Holocaust denial and distortion at an unprecedented rate.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO COMBAT HOLOCAUST DISTORTION?

Unlike Holocaust denial – the attempt to erase the Holocaust from history - Holocaust distortion excuses, minimizes, or misrepresents the Holocaust in a variety of ways and through various media which are not always readily identifiable. While there is broad agreement that Holocaust denial is fuelled by antisemitism, Holocaust distortion is either considered a form of secondary antisemitism or manipulation of Holocaust history and its memory for various purposes. Although irresponsible and abusive history may affect any historical event, today the number of mutations and distortions

of Holocaust history are growing and are progressively assuming diverse rampant forms. As there are no single, general measures against all forms of distortion, several specific actions will have to be implemented depending on the geographical or social context.

WHAT CAN MEMORIALS AND MUSEUMS DO TO COUNTER HOLOCAUST DISTORTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

Addressing the issue of the measures that museums and materials can put in place for this purpose requires a complex holistic approach. Although none can solve or limit the problem, it is important to stress that museums and memorials have several measures at their disposal: to help expand knowledge about the Holocaust especially among young people by adapting provision of content and tone of communication to their media habits; to actively involve the fan/follower community in creating a safe and cooperative environment; to focus on national or local specificities of Holocaust distortion; to identify the difference between intentional distortion and distortion resulting from lack of knowledge; to invest in staff's professional development and continuing education; and to strengthen international cooperation and exchange by developing networks between memorials and museums and with other Holocaust agencies.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a comprehensive focus on Holocaust distortion on social media and supplies a set of guidelines and recommendations for Holocaust memorials and museums to develop appropriate counter-strategies. While other recent work has emphasised the role of social media platform technology and business models in the dissemination of antisemitic content (Hübscher & von Mering, 2022), this work highlights actions that Holocaust memorials and museums can take to help reduce the impact of different forms of Holocaust distortion on social media.

Social media such as Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube and Instagram have become the preserve of an increasing number of users, who are exposed to thousands of different types of textual and visual information on a daily basis. As of January 2022, 3.96 billion total social media users across all platforms have been counted, with an average person bouncing between seven different social networks per month and with 95 minutes per day as the average amount of time that adults spend on social media across all platforms. Among the various platforms, TikTok is found to be the fastest-growing social network, with a staggering 105% user growth rate in the US over the past two years (SproutSocial, 2022). This figure is particularly important considering that TikTok has become the platform of choice for children and young adults and that a growing number of Holocaust organisations, museums and memorials are entering the scene with the clear intention of reaching this target group. Despite an increase in hate speech and the alarming presence of antisemitic messages in the various media formats supported by the platform (video clips, songs, comments, texts, and pictures) (Weimann & Masri, 2021), experts have started to analyse ways of seriously dealing with the complex history of the Holocaust and with antisemitism on TikTok (Divon & Ebbrecht-Hartmann, 2022; Ebbrecht-Hartmann & Divon, 2022).

While social media have enabled individuals and groups to connect on a global level and to have instant access to information and knowledge, they have also allowed the spread and dissemination of hateful content, including antisemitism and Holocaust denial and distortion at an unprecedented rate due to the potential virality of content (Nahon & Hemsley, 2013; Wetzel, 2017). The phenomenon of online antisemitic hatred has acquired particular relevance because hateful comments made online result in more negative implicit attitudes towards the target population than neutral comments (Weber et al., 2019). In the case of Holocaust distortion, its forms are more ambiguous and more difficult to recognize but no less dangerous.

It is nevertheless important to emphasise that antisemitism and Holocaust distortion are more likely to surface on some platforms than on others. Platforms like TikTok, for instance, until recently were less open to regulation, public pressure and measures to defend users from hateful content or did not apply their own Terms of Service regarding hate speech or other offensive content. However, on Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2022, UNESCO and the World Jewish Congress (WJC) launched a new partnership with the platform to tackle Holocaust distortion and denial. Users searching for terms relating to the Holocaust will be redirected to verified information. In January 2021, Facebook had already reached an agreement with UNESCO and the World Jewish Congress to redirect users searching for terms related to the Holocaust or Holocaust denial to the website *AboutHolocaust.Org* (www.aboutholocaust.org). The website provides factual answers to fundamental questions about the Holocaust, presents the facts of the Holocaust, educates readers on the historical roots of the genocide, its processes and consequences, and now comprises 19 languages for social media users around the world. Today, both Facebook and TikTok users searching for terms related to the Holocaust, such as 'Holocaust victims' or 'Holocaust survivor', will see a banner at the top of their search results which invites them to visit the AboutHolocaust.Org website[1].

Another important initiative to address Holocaust denial and distortion as contemporary forms of antisemitism was promoted by UNESCO, the UN, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and the European Commission, which launched the campaign #ProtectTheFacts (https://www.againstholocaustdistortion.org) in January 2021. This international campaign, which is available in six languages, is aimed at raising awareness of Holocaust distortion and suggesting measures to recognise and counter it. Finally, The IHRA Toolkit Against Holocaust Distortion (https://againstdistortiontoolkit. holocaustremembrance.com/) is designed to help policy and decision makers and civil society take steps towards recognizing and countering Holocaust distortion. It provides leaders with practical tools, guidance and example activities to empower them to be ambassadors for change – in their institutions, governments, and communities.

Along with measures that can be implemented by joint international campaigns and social media companies, such as blocking some types of content automatically or through removal by content moderators, a number of actions can be taken by social media profiles and webpage administrators and moderators to counter distortion and trivialization. As a matter of fact, algorithmic detection of hate or antisemitic expression has been found to be limited as artificial intelligence needs to continuously adapt to linguistic forms in which problematic speech may occur. Moreover, algorithmic detection does not perceive the communicative intentions of the message, e.g., the difference between a message expressing antisemitic hatred and one using examples of antisemitic speech with an educational purpose. In the specific case of Holocaust denial, it has become apparent that educational content addressing this topic ended up being removed due to the inability to distinguish between Holocaust denial and Holocaust distortion (Sales, 2021). Therefore, in addition to expanding the current agreements with social media companies, which will have to become increasingly involved in monitoring antisemitic

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[1] For more information about policy actions taken by social media companies to address online antisemitism, see *Online Antisemitism: A Toolkit for Civil Society* (ISD, 2022).

or distortive messages, it will be important to create a culture of collaboration in which both the administrators and moderators of social webpages and their users (fans and followers) play an important role.

Encouraging and educating responsible administrators and moderators of social media pages and profiles is thus a priority in developing counter-narratives. Counter-speech, long identified as the usual practice for responding to antisemitic hate speech or Holocaust distortion, has proven ineffective in wiping out both hate and distortion. This is because, in addition to raising the profile of problematic contents, counter-speech can trigger mechanisms that create further inflammatory content in a potentially endless spiral. Counter-narratives, on the contrary, may contribute to reducing the negative impact of antisemitic and distorted messages that are not taken down through other external measures since they directly challenge antisemitic and distorted messages and call out the disseminators for their distorted rhetoric. Proactively, counter-narrative approaches involve disseminating positive narratives or non-biased facts about the history and memory of the Holocaust and the various groups of victims[2]. However, counter-narratives also face challenges. They are not only time consuming and labour intensive, but also need to reach the appropriate target audience and be convincing, while they should avoid engaging in potential counter-productive measures that may result in giving distorted or antisemitic messages even greater visibility. Finally, it should also be emphasised that the experience gained with the counter-narratives examined so far (Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, 2017) has shown that they are more effective with users who are willing to question their own limited or inaccurate knowledge rather than with those who are Holocaust deniers or tend to provoke on grounds of hatred or anger. Experiences of counter-narratives to antisemitism, for instance, have shown that tweets from Jewish organisations countering antisemitic content may receive more engagement, also in the form of user endorsements, than antisemitic content (Ozalp et al., 2020).

Among the recommendations developed to help address Holocaust distortion, the most significant are those contained in the IHRA Report "Recognizing and Countering Holocaust Distortion. Recommendations for policy and decision makers". However, while the IHRA report addresses countering Holocaust distortion as a broader phenomenon, these guidelines and recommendations specifically focus on how museums and memorials can address Holocaust distortion on their social media profiles.

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[2] Although the definition of Holocaust adopted by the IHRA ("The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and murder of Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945") and other well-known organisations (such as Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, and the Imperial War Museum in London) considers the term "Holocaust" be reserved for the genocide of the Jews alone, others also extend it to include other groups that suffered at the hands of the Nazis and their accomplices, such as Roma and Sinti, people with disabilities, Slavic peoples, political opponents, forced labourers, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Soviet prisoners of war (e.g., USHMM).

Holocaust museums[3] are among the main agents for Holocaust education, awareness-raising and memorialisation. Through online and on-site exhibitions, conferences and seminars, educational activities and social media strategies, Holocaust museums play a major role in disseminating awareness and knowledge of the Holocaust among broad segments of population (Oztig, 2022). One reason for their prominence is that they do not act as isolated actors but are embedded in Holocaust memorial cultures (re)constituted through the practices of international organisations, ceremonies and personal stories of survivors.

Holocaust memory has increasingly been relying on digital technologies to engage people in immersive, simulative, or counterfactual memories of the Holocaust (Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, & Reading, 2009; Kansteiner, 2017), thus helping define a global and universal memory of the Holocaust (Levy & Sznaider, 2006; Probst, 2003). As memory takes the form of both individual and collective processes (Erll, 2010), museums act as carriers of cultural memory (Assmann, 2016) or "lieux de mémoire" as a "symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community" (Nora, 1989, p. 7). Following the increasing convergence of historical knowledge and memory practices that characterises Holocaust musealisation trends (Assmann, 2016), different communities construct the cultural memory of World War II in several different ways and, likewise, contemporary history museums "reflect the historical knowledge and the cultural memory of their time" (Jaeger, 2020, p. 10). However, today's "transnational memory", which refers to a broad range of historical phenomena across national boundaries (Tyrrell, 2009), is what characterises most museum representations of World War II and the Holocaust (Jaeger, 2020).

At the same time, memorials and museums are increasingly important in contrasting Holocaust distortion. Since they can reach large sections of the population, their commitment to both commemoration and education may prove to be a major pillar against distortion. From this point of view, their role as gatekeepers in digital communication may become increasingly prominent in promoting educational and counter-distortion actions. Underpinning these recommendations is the idea that social media may be seen as a positive technology because it can empower social media users in expanding their knowledge of the Holocaust and can raise awareness of the many current forms of Holocaust distortion on social media. On one hand, museums and memorials can play an essential role in safeguarding the historical record of the Holocaust and, on the other hand, they can counter Holocaust distortion by engaging their social media followers, not only through promotion of their cultural activities and initiatives, but also by producing good practices of social media adoption as a means for disseminating accurate historical information and minimizing trivialization and distortion. At the same time, museums and memorials can use the potential of communication not only to build up a passive following, but also to activate a group of co-creators involved in user-generated content - thus moving on from being gatekeepers to gameplayers or part of a community learning together.

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[3] In this report, from time to time we will use the term "Holocaust museum" for brevity to refer to both museums and memorials, as defined by the Encyclopaedia Britannica: "any of several educational institutions and research centres dedicated to preserving the experiences of people who were victimized by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust (1933–45)" (Parrott-Sheffer, 2019: n.a.).

UNDERSTANDING HOLOCAUST DISTORTION

ARBEIT
MACHT FRE

KZ-GEDENKSTÄTTE DACHAU

Abuse, excuse, misrepresentation and manipulation of Holocaust history can be found at all levels of society even though there is ample evidence (documented by the German Nazi regime itself and its collaborators) of the crimes committed in the various countries involved in the Holocaust (Europe and North Africa) along with evidence provided by eye-witness testimony and research by academics from around the world. This is far from a fringe phenomenon. Regardless of its form, Holocaust distortion and its potential direct or indirect effects – antisemitism, Holocaust denial, conspiracy myths and extreme nationalism – have an international scope and relevance and hence require an international response.

However, unlike Holocaust denial (the attempt to erase the Holocaust from history), Holocaust distortion excuses, minimizes, or misrepresents the Holocaust through various media and in a variety of ways which are not always readily identifiable. While there is broad agreement that Holocaust denial is fuelled by antisemitism, Holocaust distortion is often considered a form of secondary antisemitism and manipulation of Holocaust history and its memory for various purposes (Gerstenfeld, 2009). Although irresponsible and abusive history may affect any historical event (De Baets, 2013), today the number of mutations and distortions of Holocaust history is growing and progressively assuming multiple rampant forms. Terms such as Holocaust Promotion, Holocaust Depreciation, Holocaust Deflection, Prewar and Wartime Holocaust Equivalence, Postwar Holocaust Equivalence, Holocaust Inversion, Jewish Holocaust-Memory Abuse and Universalization/Trivialization of the Holocaust have been suggested in the past to identify the various forms of distortion (Gerstenfeld, 2007).

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (2021) has extensively worked to provide a comprehensive catalogue of the many forms of Holocaust distortion. Since its 2013 Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion, the IHRA today identifies the following forms of Holocaust distortion:

> ❯ Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany

> ❯ Gross minimization of the number of victims of the Holocaust in contradiction to reliable sources

> Attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide

> Statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event suggesting that it did not go far enough in accomplishing its goal of "the Final Solution of the Jewish Question"

> Attempts to blur the responsibility for Nazi Germany's establishment of concentration and death camps by blaming other nations or ethnic groups

> Accusing Jews of "using" the Holocaust for some manner of gain

> Use of the term "Holocaust" to reference events or concepts that are not related in any meaningful way to the genocide of European and North African Jewry by Nazi Germany and its accomplices between 1941 and 1945

> State-sponsored manipulation of Holocaust history in order to sow political discord within or outside a nation's borders

> Trivializing or honoring the historical legacies of persons or organizations that were complicit in the crimes of the Holocaust

> The use of imagery and language associated with the Holocaust for political, ideological, or commercial purposes unrelated to this history in online and offline forums

Each of these different forms of distortion may be found more prominently in certain countries and less in others as they can be influenced by a country's experiences during and after World War II (i.e., a perpetrator state, an occupied country, a neutral state, or one of the Allies).

Holocaust distortion may indeed be rooted in competing national narratives, ranging from those claiming supreme martyrdom or vying with each other in terms of degree of suffering (see Barna & Félix, 2017), to national identities that are still intimately tied to the narrative of victimhood in World War II and its aftermath, sometimes at the expense of full acknowledgment of Jewish victims (see Imhoff et al., 2017). Another recently revived form of Holocaust distortion, a sophisticated revisionist model known as Double Genocide, posits the 'equality' of Nazi and Soviet crimes and sometimes includes attempts to rehabilitate perpetrators and discredit survivors. This is particularly common among pro-Western governments and elites in Eastern Europe countries with records of strong collaboration with Western countries and occasionally enjoys the political support of major Western countries in the context of East-West politics (see Katz, 2016). In general, there are many forces at play (especially in Europe), some of which government-sponsored, which are busy distorting and whitewashing their past involvement in the Holocaust (see Rozett, 2019). Finally, a specific case of problematic use of Holocaust history regards memorials in former concentration

camps which were also linked to subsequent events, such as Soviet Special Camps or other prison camps. These memorials often face equations or parallels from online visitors or users.

Other forms of distortion comprise the use of imagery and language associated with the Holocaust for political and ideological gains. UNESCO has found, for instance, that "in Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, France, Italy and the United States, protestors have engaged in falsifications of the history of the Holocaust, donning yellow star badges reading 'not vaccinated' at demonstrations against COVID-19 measures"[1]. Today, one of the most widespread forms of distortion is precisely that which equates the crimes of National Socialism with the measures imposed by various governments to contain the COVID-19 pandemic (see Steir-Livny, 2022). Finally, the latest example of distortion concerns the appropriation of Holocaust memory in the recent propaganda battle conducted by both the Ukrainian and Russian sides with mutual accusations of Nazism and Russians troops committing Holocaust-type crimes to the harm of the Ukrainian population.

More generally, from a conceptual point of view, it is also important to highlight at least two challenges when dealing with countermeasures that seek to tackle apparent or actual manipulation of the history of the Holocaust. More specifically, we are referring here to the challenges of "cultural memory" and the long-standing debate about the Holocaust being a "unique" or "unprecedented" event.

The first challenge - "cultural memory" (Erll & Nünning, 2008) - revolves around the many contrasting forms that memory can take. It is important to stress that tensions are increasingly common in Holocaust memory, between a focus on global, transnational or universal memory and a focus on local, national, agonistic (Cento Bull & Hansen, 2016) or multidirectional memory (Rothberg, 2009). Even though Holocaust memory has today become one of the strongest Western collective memories and identities (Pakier & Stråth, 2010), it was a profoundly geographical event, rooted in specific physical spaces, times, and landscapes, which affected the whole of Europe and North Africa. In this sense, historical events may be viewed at various geographical levels, with the presence of national and local memories that are still very strong, if not in opposition to each other, as in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe (de Smale, 2020; Katz, 2016; Ray & Kapralsky, 2019) or in the countries of the Asian-Pacific war theatre (Allen & Sakamoto, 2013; Hatch, 2014), where contested memories are still active. What characterises the prevailing forms of distortion in Eastern European countries, for example, is the pursuit of certain common objectives, including the attempt to hide or minimise the role of local collaborators, to advocate the equivalence between Nazi and Communist crimes (the Double Genocide argument), and the need for heroes in these new democracies which were former collaborators or

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[1] https://en.unesco.org/news/rising-threat-holocaust-distortion-requires-urgent-international-response

perpetrators in the Jewish genocide[2]. This is also reflected in the museum landscape of all post-socialist EU member states, where conflicting narratives shape history museums (Radonić, 2017)[3]. However, even in Western Europe, national memories of the events of World War II may still differ and focus more on some aspects rather than others, if only because of the diversity of historical events that marked those countries (Echikson, 2019). In this sense, although social media may be considered the main arena of mediatized memory which is increasingly globalised and transcultural, it is still possible to appreciate tensions between national and transnational cultural memories of the Holocaust (Jaeger, 2020) on these social platforms.

The second challenge lies in the long-standing scholarly debate about the Holocaust as a "unique" or "unprecedented" event in the history of mankind. While every historical event has unique aspects as well as aspects that are not, and this is certainly also true of the Holocaust, and there was no full or even majority precedent for the Holocaust in the way it unfolded[4], a stormy debate between two pillars of Holocaust research has been underway over the past decades, with an impact on society at large. The question of "whether Holocaust was a unique historical event—meaning, an event possessing unique attributes that are characteristic of it alone—or a genocide that, although extreme, should nonetheless be located on the continuum of genocides that occurred before and after it" (Porat, 2021, p. 275) has divided generations of scholars in the attempt to make one school of thought prevail over the other.

The implications of each of these approaches have also been underlined, such as the view that uniqueness is an obstacle to real understanding since a unique event in history does not allow any lessons to be drawn from it. Critics of the uniqueness approach have emphasised the need to be able to draw insights from the history of the Holocaust in order to make comparisons with other genocides, for example, and to find parallels in understanding other "similar" recent events. Comparability, which is one of the pillars on which Genocide Studies are based, seeks precisely to overcome the concept of uniqueness that makes the Holocaust irrelevant except as

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[2] One of the best known is the Ukrainian nationalist leader Stepan Bandera, who led the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, whose men killed thousands of Jews and Poles, including women and children, while fighting alongside Nazi Germany against the Red Army and communists. Still a controversial symbol of Ukrainian nationalism, in 2010 he was posthumously awarded the title "Hero of Ukraine" and on January 1st his birthday is celebrated in Kiev, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stepan_Bandera.

[3] Some museums aim to prove their Europeanness by adopting international museification trends, while others demand that "Europe" recognizes their suffering under Soviet rule as the greater evil (Radonić, 2021).

[4] "It is crucial to highlight the unprecedentedness of the Holocaust also to understanding how people responded to it. In fact, when some people in real time tried to draw from partial precedents, like calling the first six months of mass murder in Vilna a pogrom, they misunderstood what was happening to them and where it might lead. Pogroms were paroxysms of violence that came and went, but that is not what they were experiencing" (thanks to Robert Rozett for pointing out this, personal communication).

a specifically Jewish tragedy, and to make comparisons possible[5]. In this sense, the framing is the difference between drawing parallels (which don't hold up between events) and contrasting and comparing, which is how we learn. Unfortunately, for some the comparability and universality of the "lesson" from the Holocaust that can, paradoxically, open the way to hazardous or undue comparisons[6].

The boundary between what is comparable with the history of the Holocaust and what is not may seem difficult to define and identify precisely, and even more so on social media, where people tend to make equivalences with other genocides with greater ease. But this is exactly the context in which educators, teachers and educational programs initiated by museums and memorials can make a significant contribution by suggesting approaches and limits to comparisons. In this sense, some scholars have advocated, for example, the role of Holocaust museums in creating connections "between Holocaust memory and the traumatic pasts of many nations and cultures in pursuit of a multidirectional museology of relevance that reflects the diversity of American society and exemplifies the museums' collective function as moral institutions in the United States" (Sievers, 2016, p. 284). Finding a balance between how to address the subject of modern genocide and the maintenance of a distinct emphasis on the Holocaust is at the core of multidirectional museology in many countries.

There are further implications in the pursuit of an extensive program of genocide and human rights, and in the attempts to include other genocides in Holocaust memory in a spirit of comparison and inclusion of other atrocities. Since this phenomenon arose (in the 1990s), there has however been an evolution in the way Holocaust

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[5] See, for instance, Bauer (1979): "If what happens to the Jews is unique, then by definition it doesn't concern us, beyond our pity and commiseration for the victims. If the Holocaust is not a universal problem, then why should a public school system in Philadelphia, New York or Timbuktu teach it? Well, the answer is that there is no uniqueness, not even of a unique event. Anything that happens once, can happen again: not quite in the same way, perhaps, but in an equivalent form" (p. 5).

[6] The debate between proponents of uniqueness and those in favour of a historicized approach to the Holocaust has seen neither winners nor losers, although recently there have been attempts to reconcile the two positions. See, for example, Dina Porat: "There is no necessary contradiction between the research of the Holocaust as a unique phenomenon and the research of other murders, but rather completion and cross-fertilization, or synthesis. […] Depicting the Holocaust as a unique event does not necessarily encompass a view of the event on a religious, ethical, metaphysical, or mystical level, […] but rather is the outcome of its examination as a historical event, which, like all historical events, has its own characteristics" (Porat, 2021, p. 289). Also the Council of Europe has recently made the following statement: "The particular challenge in passing on remembrance of the Holocaust is highlighting the unique nature of the event, without neglecting the link between the Holocaust and the other crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity [...] Consider the history and remembrance of the Holocaust and crimes committed by the Nazis, their accomplices and collaborators as both an area of study in itself and a starting point for developing values, attitudes and aptitudes through a resolutely comparative approach" (COE, 2022).

museums pursue a balance between relevance and memorialization of the Holocaust. From initially focusing on other genocides only, they have later shifted their attention towards issues such as immigration, violence against women and refugee crises. Still, this practice of extending the boundaries of Holocaust memory is not without critique. As highlighted above, according to some (Rothberg, 2009) when the Holocaust is linked to other atrocities, it becomes "universalised" or "global" in a way that its historical integrity is somewhat threatened. Others, on the contrary, stress that the efforts by Holocaust museums to create local and global relevance do not result in a dilution of Holocaust memory but are an expression of the diversity of certain societies (e.g., the American society), within which Holocaust museums also function as moral institutions to provide a bridge with the traumatic past, such as that of African-Americans and Native Americans in the United States (Sievers, 2016).

This so-called "Americanization" of the Holocaust (see Krasuska, 2018; Rosenfeld, 2011) and its insistence on the moral lesson have promoted the emergence of a new global phenomenon called "moral remembrance", which prescribes standards for "proper ways of remembering" (David, 2020). Moral remembrance refers to a standardised and isomorphic set of norms of remembrance which are based on human rights principles that have become universal, such as those of 'dealing with the past', 'the duty to remember' and 'justice for victims'. Moral remembrance has become the worldwide preference for standardisation of remembrance, institutional homogenisation and imitation of norms, at the intersection between memory and human rights. Such standardisation, which is accompanied by a process of ideologisation, has proved not only ineffective but even counterproductive in some cases: constructed on specific historically grounded events, these "de-contextualised memorialisation efforts produce a long list of false premises that [...] in the long run end up enforcing divisions on the ground" (David, 2020, p. 2)[7]. Moral remembrance may result in the production of new social inequalities and may not make people more appreciative of human rights values.

The brief explanations provided in the previous section demonstrate the importance of keeping all these phenomena clearly in mind when dealing with the issue of Holocaust distortion: globalisation processes, comparison with other mass atrocities and genocides, and standardised memorialisation practices make it possible to preserve the significance of Holocaust memory even today, in particular for younger generations; on the other hand, they can pave the way for memory wars as well as politicised and ideologised forms of distortion. Museums and memorials, as we shall see, can operate responsibly in dealing with the different forms of distortion they encounter on their social media channels if they are fully aware of the complexity of the whole scenario.

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[7] For a clash of values in European culture wars over identity, nationalism and history and a state-sponsored memorialization agenda over the memory of the Holocaust, see the case of Poland (Michlic, 2021; Ray & Kapralski, 2019). For an overview of antisemitism in the Visegrad Group countries, see the report "Addressing Antisemitism through Education in the Visegrad Group Countries" (ENCATE, 2022).

ADDRESSING HOLOCAUST DISTORTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MAHN -UND GEDENKSTÄTTE RAVENSBRÜCK

Among all the challenges and the different forms of manipulation or trivialization that Holocaust organisations must confront, Holocaust distortion is a major concern both for users and museums' staff. In recent surveys that involved users and museum staff in two countries – Italy and Germany – it was found that museum staff highly rated the use of social media to counter Holocaust distortion regardless of the size of the organisation (Manca et al., 2022). When investigating users' interests in Holocaust-related content, it was found that social media users place interest in Holocaust denial and distortion at the top end of the interest scale. Attention remains high not only in the research literature and in statements from stakeholders and major international organisations, but also in the very actors that handle the publication and use of content on the social media profiles of museums and memorials.

These guidelines and recommendations have been developed on the basis of the literature and from the outcome of a number of meetings and focus groups involving experts and stakeholders, which were conducted in Italy and Germany following a holistic approach. Although these guidelines may contain some problematic issues, such as the idea of providing "acceptable or "legitimate" analogies with the Holocaust, they adopt a multi-perspective approach to the topic of distortion in the hope that these aspects may resonate with stakeholders.

However, before presenting recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness of actions taken by museums and memorials on their social media channels, we will briefly outline some current limitations that have been identified so far, which prevent the development of effective strategies to combat distortion. We will then present a number of strategies that can be implemented in the short and long term. As these guidelines and recommendations are specifically addressed to museums and memorials for their social media use, we will leave out actions that international organisations, NGOs, and organised stakeholder groups can further develop, such as global awareness-raising campaigns or agreements with social media companies.

CURRENT LIMITATIONS

MISMATCH BETWEEN SCHOLARLY DEBATES AND PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE

Studies have shown that there is a gap between historians' knowledge, which includes recent developments in the field of both local and international historical research, and widespread knowledge in the general population (see Lawson, 2017). In particular, it has been stressed that younger generations and students have very limited and partial, if not distorted, knowledge of the main events that marked the history of the Holocaust from 1933 to 1945. For example, it was found that in the UK students have a very limited grasp of the victims of the Holocaust, a limited understanding of its perpetrators and a compromised sense of its geography. Despite a plethora of Holocaust remembrance initiatives, parts of the young generations tend to consider Adolf Hitler as the sole agent and express a general lack of knowledge about other concentration and extermination camps besides Auschwitz-Birkenau. Misconceptions in the general public, including the adults, encompass the idea that there were gas chambers to exterminate Jews within every concentration camp, the Holocaust only happened in Germany and Poland, that German Jews were a large proportion of Germany's population, that Jewish people were the only victims of Nazi persecution, or that all Jews were killed by gas[1].

LACK OF BASIC COMMON KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORICAL EVENTS AND FACTS ACROSS DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Although Holocaust education has become a concern in the school curriculum of many countries (Carrier, Fuchs, & Messinger, 2015; Eckmann, Stevick, & Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, 2017; OSCE, 2006), teaching approaches and content selection vary widely from one country to another. This implies that knowledge, already limited and circumscribed, can vary enormously among social media users and therefore certain forms of distortion are more frequent among users in certain geographical areas than in others. For example, in some countries (United States and United Kingdom) that historically were among the Allies, there may be more emphasis on the role of the liberators than, for example, on the events experienced by the countries occupied by Nazi Germany. Similarly, the history of the resistance to German occupation in Western European countries, for instance, may be given more emphasis than the mass killings committed in Eastern Europe (the so-called 'Holocaust by bullets') (Lawson, 2017; Vice, 2019). Finally, it is important to remember that conflicting cultural memories within the same country can lead to approaching the history and memory of the Holocaust in different ways, possibly with distorting outcomes depending on the political or ideological agendas that may sometimes underlie a specific memory policy.

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[1]   https://holocaustlearning.org.uk/latest/holocaust-myth-busting-challenging-the-misconceptions/, https://mchekc.org/holocaust-history/misconceptions/

APPARENT FOCUS ON REMEMBRANCE AND COMMEMORATION RATHER THAN ON PROVISION OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Studies have shown a global tendency to emphasise commemoration practice over solid factual knowledge as a result of the rhetoric surrounding the prevailing culture and the purpose of Holocaust education in certain countries (Lawson, 2017); in line with this trend, in some countries Holocaust organisations and museums tend to privilege remembrance and commemoration events over the provision of historical content. Diversity of approach may depend on several factors, such as: the identity and mission of the museum or memorial (memorial museums, by their nature, focus more intensely on remembrance activities than museums dedicated to historical content; Jaeger, 2020); their geographical location (in some countries, the greatest emphasis may be placed on universal respect for human rights or on comparison with other genocides as a moral lesson); the specific local history that the institution intends to commemorate. In all these cases, the unwanted result may be partial or uneven knowledge, with special emphasis on specific historical events or on the way they are remembered, which may lead to greater risks of distortion.

MATERIALS NOT GENERALLY SUITABLE FOR YOUNGER GENERATIONS

Recent studies have shown that the main users of major social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) are adults, mainly female and with a medium to high level of education (Manca et al., 2022). It is easy to imagine that museums and memorials would be aware of the socio-demographic characteristics of their average user and would thus prepare materials or announcements of events targeting this audience. The communicative style, lexical register and tone used for communicating generally make the material more suitable for an adult audience, while neglecting to address teenagers or young adults, who are more used to receiving content through very short videos or short texts and are accustomed to more informal communication styles. This trend has also been highlighted in recent surveys, which show that Germany's 16-25-year-olds are much more interested in the Nazi era than their parents were and tend to draw analogies from that period to today's racism and discrimination and are eager to examine the motives of perpetrators. However, they also want more "snackable content," or information in digestible doses, and a "fusion of digital and analog" offerings, like digital follow-up visits to memorial sites (Axelrod, 2022)[2]. Current experiences with the use of TikTok by museums, organisations and survivors, for instance, highlight the importance of adopting communication styles and media formats appropriately tailored for a younger audience (Ebbrecht-Hartmann & Divon, 2022).

LIMITED BI-DIRECTIONAL INTERACTION WITH SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

The management of contentious contents is still a complex and delicate issue for Holocaust museums, which are mainly preoccupied with limiting cases of denial,

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[2] For more information about this study, see https://enc.arolsen-archives.org/en/study/

distortion, misuse, and superficial representations. However, scholars have also emphasised the "passivity" of Holocaust institutions, resulting from fear of trivialization or distortion and the risk of harbouring conflicting memories, which might in turn have brought about an over-cautious attitude by Holocaust agencies in soliciting users' interaction (Manca, Passarelli & Rehm, 2022; Walden, 2021b). Holocaust organisations seem to prefer one-directional communication and the broadcasting of a "carefully shaped, widely acceptable message via social media" (Kansteiner, 2017, p. 324). This 'passivity' translates into a lack of participation on social media in terms of publishing further content or comments on other users' posts, while there is a tendency in users to favour interaction made up mainly of 'likes' and shares/retweets (Manca, 2021a).

LACK OF SPECIFIC EXPERTISE IN ADDRESSING ISSUES OF DISTORTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Although museums and memorials devote efforts and energy in their educational programmes to addressing the issue of distortion, the format of social media requires that materials be suitably packaged to be conveyed through these media. This calls for appropriate forms of communication and means activating various attention and awareness mechanisms that require social media literacy skills (Manca, Bocconi, & Gleason, 2021). Yet, museums' staff often lack the relevant training, expertise and experience to deal with all facets of social media communication. This constitutes a challenge and, paired with chronically understaffed communication departments, calls for caution in responding to online communication incidents with instigating individuals and crowds. Additionally, despite some general rules and structural similarities, all social media platforms involve nuanced differences in usage. Consequently, communication staff are also required to acquire specific knowledge and skills for each platform they are using, such as tools to measure social media impact and search engine optimisation. As socio-technical systems, social media offer a series of user affordances, constraints and expressive as well as interactive possibilities which users are obliged to master both globally as a technological category and locally according to the characteristics of each platform (van Dijck, 2013).

LIMITED STRUCTURED AND LONG-TERM INTERACTION WITH OTHER LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST ORGANISATIONS

Although there are associations or organisations that connect different museums and memorials both nationally and internationally, smaller institutions generally act individually and not in synergy with similar institutions. This leads to fragmentation of experiences and expertise, even after many years of activity, which cannot be coordinated to generate good practices to be shared with others. While acknowledging the oftentimes understaffed Holocaust museums and the resulting lack of time and resources to fully engage with (inter)national cooperation, coordination would greatly benefit the overall cause of combatting distortion and could also distribute the work and burden across the parties involved.

PROACTIVE MEASURES

EXPANDING HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLOCAUST

One of the most important measures in this respect is the preparation of further study or education materials to be distributed on social media in order to broaden user knowledge (both in adults and young people). This can be done by drawing on the historical and educational archives held by individual institutions and by providing fact-based material in collaboration with Holocaust scholars and experts. Due to the short-lived nature of social media, there is a need for a repository where short posts based on historical facts could be assembled and embedded within a broader context. One possibility could be to provide an external link, e.g., to museum websites. Since each museum has its own history, it will provide specific content devoted to that history. One way to do so is, for instance, building up digital glossaries with important facts referring to that museum and its history. It will be important to address the various phases that may characterise the history of one place (e.g., it might have also been an internment camp for prisoners of war, a transit camp for Jews, a refugee camp, or might have been transformed, even only in part, into a camp for German prisoners of war or civilians accused of Nazism after the defeat of Germany). This will help to commemorate the different 'lives' of the place and prevent some from being forgotten and becoming the subject of memory conflicts.

ADAPTING AND TRANSLATING AVAILABLE MATERIALS AND TOOLS

The IHRA, UNESCO, and major national and international Holocaust agencies have developed reports, teaching guidelines and toolkits to address the issue of distortion and, more generally, to teach and learn about the Holocaust. This existing body of knowledge and guidance constitutes a set of resources that can be appropriately adapted and translated into national languages. Expanding the materials and toolkits provided by IHRA and other major governmental organisations and NGOs will allow the development of new tailor-made applications. UNESCO, for instance, produces technical guidance materials for education stakeholders who seek to implement or substantiate the study of the Holocaust, of genocide and atrocity crimes and of antisemitism more broadly in education systems (https://en.unesco.org/themes/holocaust-genocide-education/resources). Other examples of useful material are #ProtectTheFacts (https://www.againstholocaustdistortion.org), the report "Understanding Holocaust Distortion. Contexts, Influences and Examples" and the "Toolkit Against Holocaust Distortion" (https://againstdistortiontoolkit.holocaustremembrance.com/) by the IHRA. The short film "Holocaust Distortion: A Growing Threat" (https://youtu.be/ovdF4pGhew8), in which international experts explore what Holocaust distortion is, how it manifests itself and why it poses such a threat to the legacy of the Holocaust, is currently available with subtitles in English, German, Hungarian, Italian, and Slovenian. Resources that focus on providing historical content and fact-based data can be found at the websites of major Holocaust organisations (see "Fact-checking resources: USHMM, Yad Vashem, Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum").

INVESTIGATING USERS' PRECONCEPTIONS AND BIASES

Investigating students' preconceptions and biases when visiting museums and memorials is another useful means of combatting distortion phenomena since their attitudes may be reflected in their participation on social media. Museum operators tend to highlight that, in the preparation for a visit, the visitors' knowledge, opinions, doubts and curiosities regarding the themes and experiences to be covered should be sounded out in advance. Generally speaking, museum staff get pre-prepared for the school group they are going to meet, based on what has been communicated or reported by teachers. As important as this presentation may be, it is necessary for the encounter with history and related human issues regarding the Holocaust to be consolidated as learning. It is important for practitioners to gain a clear, articulate sense of what students think and know. Pedagogical reflection has revealed that knowledge, including disciplinary and humanistic knowledge, is a construction that is formed in many contexts outside the school environment (Coleman, 1990). In particular, encounters with themes regarding Holocaust history, facts, episodes, policies, etc. take place in many information and communication contexts, and increasingly in virtual and social contexts, where fake news and distortions are present, whether intentionally or not. In the construction of knowledge and prejudices, "social capital" is decisive in individual choices, so much so that in recent years there has been growing attention towards the role that small relationships, face-to-face relationships, local cultures and virtual groups play in favouring/obstructing the functioning of social systems that seem to be regulated by impersonal norms (Luciano, 2003). It is therefore important to identify which tools may be most suitable for building an initial bridge between students' knowledge needs and the educational initiatives carried out by museums. Social media platforms can therefore be exploited to establish contact with students by soliciting responses to questions that will be addressed during the visit. Referring to the opinions of students and taking up their point of view creates engagement, greater interest and opens up avenues for deconstructing false or distorted knowledge, or prejudices that are widespread in society. In this sense, museums and memorials should remain curious about opinions from society and consider which narrative forms and views are already visible on social media, as well as where they can engage in real dialogue.

PROVIDING RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXAMPLES FOR LEGITIMATE ANALOGIES OR COMPARISONS

Although Holocaust analogies and comparisons are usually perceived as dangerous by Holocaust educators, who "only" commit themselves to provide accurate content and fact-based material, "learning with examples" still remains a valuable pedagogical approach (Renkl, 1997). There are several examples of people being labelled as Nazis, Hitler, Gestapo, Goering by their political opponents, or of politicians from across the ideological spectrum, influential media figures, and ordinary people on social media casually using Holocaust terminology to bash anyone or any policy with which they disagree. In view of all this, it is important to provide "acceptable" analogies or comparisons to move beyond an oversimplified approach to complex history. Drawing

historical parallels to the current situation or to post-Holocaust events always involves illustrating similarities and differences between two events. It is precisely in identifying legitimate examples that it is also possible to point out profound differences through contextualisation work, so as to provide clear indications of the legitimacy of comparisons. Being proactive, in this case, has the undeniable advantage of providing acceptable "coordinates", as certified by experts and practitioners. A possible output could be, for example, a decalogue designed to avoid the error of denial and history manipulation, in a similar way to the decalogue for non-hostile communication adopted in some countries.

PROVIDING SUPPORT IN DETECTING FAKE NEWS AND DEVELOPING CRITICAL DIGITAL LITERACY FOR USERS

Fake news, (mis)information and post-fact culture are all societal developments that have been fuelled by the increased use and impact of social media on our everyday lives (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017). While these phenomena can be found in almost all types of content areas, their impact on Holocaust remembrance and commemoration is undisputed. The "COVID-19 Yellow Star" is one example of individuals using social media to propagate incorrect information and misused Holocaust remembrance for their own purposes[3]. Based on these developments, it can be argued that Holocaust memorials and museums can provide valuable inputs to counteract the sharing of this kind of information, not only by offering factually correct information, but also by contributing to the development of critical digital literacy among users. Digital literacy constitutes a variant of media literacy and can be divided into i) functional and ii) critical digital literacy (Polizzi, 2020). While functional digital literacy deals with practical skills, e.g., how to engage in online discussions, critical digital literacy is nested in users' understanding of societal developments and circumstances. It requires users to reflect and understand how social media has started to affect democracy and civic and political participation (Fry, 2014). Returning to the example of the "COVID-19 Yellow Star", scholars like Salzani (2021) among others, have referred to this kind of comparison as "triviali[zing] and dishonor[ing] the memory of those who suffered true persecution: it amounts to a banalization of both Nazism and its persecution of the Jews, diluting the truth of their horror and obscuring the comprehension of their historical reality and meaning" (p. 2). It is exactly in circumstances of this type that Holocaust memorials and museums can play an important role in contributing to individuals' critical digital literacy by informing them about the meaning of the yellow star during the Nazi regime, by highlighting significant differences between the situations and by adding relevant perspectives to this discussion. This might then initiate a process of reflection among individuals and possibly foster a process of more critical, careful consumption of information from social media.

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[3]   https://www.againstholocaustdistortion.org/news/debunking-inappropriate-holocaust-comparisons-the-covid-19-yellow-star

PROMOTING AND INCREASING THE DIGITAL CULTURE OF REMEMBRANCE

The culture of remembrance has long been present in the new media. The question of how to remember is at the core of public and scientific discourse as an ongoing discussion. Walden (2021a) speaks about a "still substantial tension" between official and non-expert interpretations of the remembrance culture. New ways of strengthening a remembrance culture include addressing new target groups and also connecting existing actors in the remembrance context. In the process, local remembrance practices should also be linked with digital remembrance formats. Live tours provide a good example of a synchronous link between the place of remembrance and the digital place of remembrance (Ebbrecht-Hartmann, 2021). Digital remembrance allows boundaries to be overcome, making the distance between the participants and the place of remembrance irrelevant. Social media technology also opens up new forms of interaction with the participants. 'Liking' and commenting could thus express one's own memory in combination with other forms of remembering. In view of the decreasing number of contemporary witnesses, digital formats with personal memories are extremely important (Hogervorst, 2020; Shandler, 2017).

KNOWING AND ADDRESSING (YOUNGER) TARGET AUDIENCES

A recent survey has found that before any educational treatment, 80% of teens had heard of the Holocaust, with almost half of them having read about the Holocaust on social media. They are also impacted by Holocaust denial: one third think that the number of Jews who died has been exaggerated, or question whether the Holocaust even happened (Lerner, 2021). Generally, as mentioned above, young generations are often subject to misconceptions or a general lack of knowledge about the Holocaust. Hence, Holocaust museums can greatly contribute to the fight against distortion and misinformation by directly targeting younger generations in their efforts. Social media channels can be instrumental in achieving this goal, as younger generations constitute a large portion of their usership. However, it is not sufficient to just share and distribute the same information across different platforms. Holocaust museums have to acknowledge that younger generations expect "snackable content" (Axelrod, 2022) on social media, or that "there is still substantial tension between officially accepted memory discourse as acknowledged and practised by Holocaust institutions and promoted by transnational organisations such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (the IHRA), and other forms of non-expert productions that become increasingly visible in digital spaces" (Walden, 2021a, p. 6). Additionally, any shared information also needs to adhere to the language of these contemporary communication channels (Jonsson, Årman, & Milani, 2019). In other words, if Holocaust museums want to engage with younger generations, they have to be aware and also be able to "speak their language" and engage in the social media spaces most relevant to them (Walden, 2021a). Prominent examples include, among others, the Eva Stories project on Instagram (Henig & Ebbrecht-Hartmann, 2022), the #Uploading_Holocaust project on YouTube (Ebbrecht-Hartmann & Henig, 2021) and the increased use of TikTok by Holocaust museums (Divon & Ebbrecht-Hartmann, 2022).

ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF THE FOLLOWER/FAN COMMUNITY

Placing greater focus on user activation and on the creation of a community brings a number of advantages to those who manage social media pages. Not only do users receive stronger gratification for the time spent on these pages, but the web pages themselves can represent a valuable resource in reducing distortions. This is because, within a group or a community, the norms of appropriate behaviour are collectively negotiated: users set the boundaries for appropriate discourse and behaviour through a number of social sanctions, reward and punishment typically expressed in terms of 'likes', reshares/retweets or negative emojis and sharp comments, or by reporting content to a community or platform moderator. Besides, social media users can influence the perception of others on a platform: research shows that exposure to user-generated "social corrections", such as comments countering false claims, is effective in lowering misperceptions especially if the comments are accompanied by a credible source. On the other hand, an active involvement of the fans/followers and the creation of a user community require ensuring safety for users, who should feel they can express themselves freely and receive support from both peers and the administrators/moderators of the social page or profile. An additional measure might be, for example, occasional invitations to users to discuss and debate certain related questions on social forums. Empowerment of the remembrance community is also aimed at strengthening the community itself, so that it feels that the culture of remembrance and the work of the memorials are important. They must be supported in their opinions and knowledge and also be given appropriate space.

ENGAGING INFLUENCERS TO EXPAND AWARENESS

Social media influencers are generally people who have large audiences of followers on their social media accounts and leverage this popularity to influence or persuade this following to buy certain products or services. In the context of Holocaust memory and education, using influencers to expand awareness of the problem and to reduce perceived unawareness of historical facts may be a great strategy. Influencers can increase content awareness and reach larger audiences, improve credibility and trust, and enrich content strategy with personalisation and storytelling. The use of an influencer to launch a social media campaign is one of the most common strategies to engage social media users and fast track a page's way to a bigger audience. Careful selection of potential influencers has the added advantage of harnessing the reach, authenticity and personality of individuals who have built up their own following in a specific niche with a particular target audience.

COLLABORATING AND WORKING TOGETHER TO INCREASE IMPACT AND EXCHANGE INFORMATION

Research has shown that museums already follow each other (Manca, 2021b; Rehm, Manca, & Haake, 2020), but stronger cooperation, e.g., in the context of commemorative days or joint actions, would open up further opportunities. Working with larger museums would allow "smaller" museums to attract attention and reach

more users. Campaigns and events can be planned and executed together[4]. The increasing presence and activity of museums on social media makes it sensible to exchange ideas and network more closely, for example in dedicated (digital) working groups. In this way, general problems and new developments can be discussed and strategies coordinated.

REACTIVE MEASURES

PROVIDING MATERIALS OR RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY BASED ON A DISTORTING EPISODE

Providing in-depth materials or resources upon request or in the event of distorting comments/posts is a reactive measure which has the undeniable advantage of addressing the users directly and giving them agency in the interaction. The provision of additional material to "correct" inaccuracies or gaps in knowledge can be handled either publicly, so that other users also benefit, or privately, e.g., if you do not want to demean that person in public.

BLOCKING OR REMOVING POSTS/COMMENTS WHEN THE INTENT IS CLEARLY PROVOCATIVE OR AN END IN ITSELF

Sometimes, when it is assessed that other, more positive measures cannot be taken, all that is left is to block or 'ban' the user guilty of hate speech or clearly distorting behaviour, or to delete the offending comments or posts. Although this is an extreme measure that should not be overused, it is an important tool in the hands of administrators and moderators, who are otherwise unable to manage online and remote communication, which, it should be remembered, lacks paraverbal and non-verbal communication.

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[4] A recent example of a cross-platform social media campaign conducted jointly by several institutions is #75liberation / #75befreiung.

BEST PRACTICE

FACT-CHECKING RESOURCES: USHMM, YAD VASHEM, AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM

If we take a quick look at the history of the adoption of social media by the three largest institutions at the international level - the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Yad Vashem and Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum - we will see that they all started using Facebook in 2008-2009, Twitter in 2007-2012 and Instagram in 2007-2012. When investigating their activity patterns on the three social media, it was found that they are more active on Twitter than on Facebook and Instagram, with the Auschwitz−Birkenau Memorial and Museum occupying a prominent position on Twitter (Manca, 2021). On Facebook, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum exhibits more interactivity with its fan community than the other two, while Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum displays greater degrees of interactivity on Twitter. In this sense, Facebook is considered the election platform for more detailed "historical narration" with lengthy description of events and people, while Instagram appears to be more appealing for live events and the sharing of pictures, stories and reels captured by Museum visitors, as in the case of Auschwitz (Dalziel, 2021), or by the institutions themselves. Twitter is preferred when engaging with other institutions but also for promoting online resources, such as virtual tours and educational resources. Despite these differences, their social pages are a treasure trove of information on a wide range of historical topics. Links granting access to their websites (each of which has a rich section of information on a wide range of topics) offer an opportunity to those users who are not satisfied with a brief description in a post or tweet: the Holocaust Encyclopedia (https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/), the digital collections of Yad Vashem (https://www.yadvashem.org/collections.html) with the Shoah Names Database (https://yvng.yadvashem.org/) and the Righteous Database (https://righteous.yadvashem.org/), and the Virtual Tour of Auschwitz-Birkenau (https://panorama.auschwitz.org/) are all valuable resources for students and teachers. Each of these institutions has adopted a different approach and philosophy to the commemoration of the Holocaust, which is also reflected in their choice of social media content (see Dalziel, 2021): USHMM is more confrontational and topical, Yad Vashem is more focused on Jewish issues related to the Shoah, and Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum on personal stories of the victims and the fate of individual prisoners.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum has been a pioneer in the use of social media by Holocaust memory institutions. The Museum uses social media to reinforce educational programmes and commemoration events by informing the online community about the everyday history of the camp and involving followers and fans in celebrations, events and anniversaries. On Twitter, for example, the Museum daily publishes a short note about an Auschwitz prisoner who was born or died on that day, in line with the common approach to teaching and learning about the Holocaust which is based on humanizing Holocaust statistics. Twitter is also the social media platform where the Museum has the largest following, with over 1.3 million followers, and where the mission to fight against forms of Holocaust denial, Holocaust distortion, misinformation and glorification is more apparent. For example, the Museum's Twitter campaigns against Holocaust denial and antisemitism have attracted notable response from social media users during some campaigns against Holocaust trivialisation by young users on other social platforms. Active engagement in combatting forms of distortion is not without risks and dangers, given recent attacks by Polish right-wing activists and politicians (Manikowska, 2020). However, the strength of the museum is its online community of users, who report distorting tweets and tweets that deserve the attention of the Museum, which is always ready to respond or "condemn" them. Validation of users' experience involves communicating with individual users directly or redistributing content shared by individuals on Twitter and Instagram (Dalziel, 2021). On Twitter, occasionally the Museum invites feedback and debate from its followers regarding representations of the former camp or, more generally, retweets content from other users and encourages others to follow the account. Surprisingly for an institution of this size and given the intensity of its social media activity, the Museum's accounts (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) are managed by a single person, press officer and former journalist Paweł Sawicki, who is almost entirely responsible for the Museum's social media management. The success of this intense activity on the various social media channels therefore lies not so much in a large pool of staff as in the active user involvement that the Museum has been able to generate. However, along with many strengths, there are also some weaknesses which have recently been analysed (Dalziel, 2021). The management of various social channels by a single person has the drawback that a single official representative of the Museum on social media will always be inclined to apply his or her personal slant both when evaluating cases of distortions and when taking a stance in the face of certain "unorthodox" commemoration phenomena. Moreover, "despite the intention to reach as wide an audience as possible and create content that is universally relevant, certain groups within this audience are sometimes the subject of criticism, and followers' counterarguments to these denouncements are rejected or dismissed" (Dalziel,

2021, p. 180). It is thus desirable that improvements are pursued to make online users more included, important and empowered by relaxing some forms of authority and "rhetoric" tones in the communication practice and by seeking further feedback from its visitors and acknowledging individual interpretations of remembrance and reflection.

THE HOLOCAUST ON TIKTOK - A THIN LINE BETWEEN ACTUALITY AND ABSURDITY

TikTok continues to be one of the fastest-growing social media networks on a global scale. Moreover, while its users are rather diverse, TikTok is mainly used by younger generations. It therefore provides a valuable opportunity for Holocaust museums to engage with these generations and offer input to combat misperceptions, misinformation and distortion. The need to become more active on TikTok is all the stronger when considering the sizable increase in hate speech and the alarming presence of antisemitic messages (Weimann & Masri, 2021). Similarly, since it is dominated by youth culture, TikTok is constantly being used for trends and challenges. In the context of this document, the #Holocaustchallenge is among the most notable ones. This challenge has generated serious upset among Holocaust survivors, as teenagers re-enacted traumatic situations that have often resulted in content that institutions such as Yad Vashem and the USHMM have termed disrespectful or trivializing[1]. The question of whether and in what form re-enactment should take place is currently the subject of intense debate. However, despite these fallbacks and apparent difficulties when using TikTok to address the topic of Holocaust remembrance and commemoration, there are also good examples of young people participating in the culture of remembrance on TikTok. In addition, TikTok also opens up the possibility of reaching young people, e.g. by turning eye witnesses into creators themselves. One of the most prominent positive creators is the TikTok account by Lily Ebert[2], a 98-year-old Holocaust survivor, who is running the account together with her great grandson Dov Forman. In her posts she answers questions from followers, talks about her life now and the horrors she had to endure while being imprisoned in Auschwitz[3]. Similarly, the World Jewish Congress[4], as well as memorial sites such as KZ-Gedenkstätte Neuengamme[5], Gedenkstätte Bergen-Belsen[6] and Mauthausen Memorial[7] are effectively using TikTok to address various forms of misinformation, providing factual information to rectify misperceptions, as well as to provide insights into the horrific circumstances under which prisoners were kept in the camps.

"EVA STORIES": A NEW (DEBATABLE) TYPE OF COMMEMORATION

As with TikTok, Holocaust remembrance and commemoration on Instagram has rapidly grown in recent years. Moreover, scholars have attributed this to a generational shift in commemoration, with younger generations using "their" platforms to remember the Holocaust (Commane & Potton, 2019). Interestingly, this generation has no biographical link to the Holocaust (Łysak, 2021), which has led to types of commemoration that have been perceived quite differently by different stakeholders. One such example, which has been widely discussed, is the "Eva Stories" project, a private initiative led by the Israeli media entrepreneur Mati Kochavi and his daughter Maya[8]. Although a debate is still underway on the matter, we consider "Eva Stories" to be a positive showcase of how the affordances of social media, in this case Instagram, are used to reach out to younger generations and to position historical information into the present, using modern language and terminology. Following the work of Henig and Ebbrecht-Hartmann (2022), this can be particularly effective since actual witnesses are passing away and therefore the opportunities to ask and inquire about daily life in a relatable fashion are diminishing.

[1] https://memoscape.net/the-holocaust-on-tiktok-the-importance-of-context/

[2] https://www.tiktok.com/@lilyebert

[3] Other Holocaust survivors who are using TikTok are Tova Friedman (https://www.tiktok.com/@tovafriedman) and Gideon Lev (https://www.tiktok.com/@thetrueadventures).

[4] https://www.tiktok.com/@worldjewishcongress

[5] https://www.tiktok.com/@neuengamme.memorial

[6] https://www.tiktok.com/@belsenmemorial

[7] https://www.tiktok.com/@mauthausenmemorial

[8] https://www.instagram.com/eva.stories/

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MUSEO NAZIONALE DELL'EBRAISMO ITALIANO E DELLA SHOAH – MEIS

ADDRESS THE HOLOCAUST AS A UNIQUE OR UNPRECEDENTED EVENT WITHOUT EMBRACING ONE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT OVER ANOTHER

Often in the light of certain phenomena of distortion or trivialization, there may be an idea of violating the assumptions that consider the Holocaust as a unique or unprecedented event. These two positions are still undergoing scholarly debate and, depending on which one is adopted, comparisons and parallels can be made at various levels. It is important to acknowledge that people may have implicit or explicit beliefs that lead them to endorsing one position over the other. Flexibility in dealing with distortion phenomena that may reflect a wide range of positions and nuances within these different epistemologies is therefore recommended, along with the acknowledgment of multidirectional perspectives and the recognition of grey zones and borderlines of distortion.

FOCUS ON NATIONAL OR LOCAL SPECIFICITIES OF HOLOCAUST DISTORTION

Forms of distortion can be found in different countries or even within the same country, especially if the memory of the Holocaust has been politicised or ideologised. It is therefore important to be aware of the different legacies that the Holocaust has left within different geographical, cultural and social contexts in order to devise effective measures to contain distortion. Greater risks of distortion may emerge in the presence of emergency or crisis situations because of the need to draw parallels or comparisons between the past and a present situation (a war or threat of conflict, an economic crisis, a health emergency, etc.) depending on the historical experience of that community or group. Among the most dramatic historical events of the last century, only the memory of World War II, however, is constantly present in popular imagination as a global and total war, providing a multitude of narrative possibilities and memories. And in this scenario, eighty years later, the Holocaust still remains a fascinating, intriguing subject to explore for many people, including young people, precisely because it was an event that has universal human significance and even today has implications for all areas of individual and public life (leadership, the upheaval of society, ideology and power, people in moments of spiritual elevation and decline, loss and destruction, sophisticated killing mechanisms and wars that last for

years and claim victims on an incomprehensible scale). But precisely because of this, unlike other dramatic historical events, it may lend itself more than others to being distorted or trivialised in a variety of ways.

IDENTIFY THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTENTIONAL DISTORTION AND DISTORTION RESULTING FROM LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

While some distorters deliberately misuse content for different gains (seeking visibility or consensus, enjoying provoking a reaction of outrage or offence, spreading hate speech or antisemitic ideas, etc.), there are many who lack solid historical knowledge or the skills to draw parallels and comparisons. Other may simply be easy prey to reductionism (see, for example, the "Reductio ad Hitlerum", also known as playing the Nazi card, to invalidate someone else's position on the basis that the same view was held by Adolf Hitler or the Nazi Party) or other forms of association fallacy. It is important to be aware that these differences exist, although they are not always easy to distinguish, and to implement remedial actions so that the segment of the population that cannot be reached is blocked, while those that might be well intentioned but are ill-informed are addressed.

CAREFUL BALANCE BETWEEN ACTIVE USER INVOLVEMENT AND BANNING 'TROUBLEMAKERS'

Prompt, careful moderation seen as a balancing act between actively engaging and/or blocking/deleting posts is an art that can be learned, providing one has acquired adequate skills in digital communication and social psychology. The balance between these two strategies will, of course, depend on the characteristics of the community and the type of target group addressed on the different platforms. Some platforms may allow one strategy more easily than the other, but it should not be forgotten that the resources available to the specific staff entrusted with moderation will also determine the appropriate mix. The greater the resources available, the greater the feasibility of constructive interaction and reaction.

RAISE QUESTIONS AND NOT GUILT

Avoid guilt-ridden tones that may induce rejection in those who have not yet developed an adequate awareness and sensitivity level towards the Holocaust. The tone should not be institutional, and the work should encourage dialogue and also admit error. It is important to create a space that encourages dialogue and understanding and not a place to attack and judge others, even those approaching the subject of the Holocaust for the first time. Staff and people in charge of curating content and interaction should present themselves with a listening attitude: if they act like another authority deciding what to say, there might be a risk of making the communication environment unappealing.

AVOID RHETORIC OR EMOTIONAL TONES

It is recommended that a narrative register be adopted, trying to adapt the language to the audience and avoiding rhetoric or emotional tones. Sometimes irony can be used to dampen inflammatory tones or relieve tension in a heated debate. As ironic communication makes an evaluative argument that violates contextual expectations and intends the listener to recognize that she/he has deliberately misapplied the evaluative argument (Kaufer, 1981), it can also serve in shifting the focus of attention to the message to be conveyed without indulging in patronising or pedagogically explicit discourse. Another suggestion is to show juxtapositions between the present and the past, and explain the factors of difference in a very simple, informative manner. It is important to speak objectively in order to be eloquent, and to keep under control the very understandable emotionality that the seriousness of the topic may generate.

TRY NEW THINGS! USE NEW FORMS OF SOCIAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGY TO EXPRESS YOUR IDEAS

Social media is a very dynamic field, always offering new ways of expression, e.g., 360° videos, Instagram stories or TikTok clips. It is thus important to be open to new forms of media storytelling and digital memory and to exchange ideas with people who have already gained experience in this field. Trying out new things and reflecting on them promotes discussion of how to remember in the present day and opens up opportunities to reach new target groups and get in touch. Explore alternative social media platforms like TikTok to engage younger generations on Holocaust themes: they are eager to listen to you!

INVESTMENT ON STAFF'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Professional development opportunities for museum staff are usually designed to support projects that use the transformative power of professional development and training to generate systemic change within museums of all types and sizes. In the specific context of developing measures to counter Holocaust distortion, such programs are supposed to provide museum staff with the skills to integrate digital technology into museum operations and to support them in providing inclusive services to people with diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, especially by gaining the skills to deal with the different aspects related to the fight against Holocaust distortion. Museum staff should be encouraged to attend these kinds of programmes, which are expected to include topics of critical digital literacy and social media literacy skills focusing on recognizing and responding to distortion on social media.

EMPOWER STUDENTS TO BE TOMORROW'S "MEMORY DISSEMINATORS"

Social media have become an indispensable part of students' everyday lives. Dealing with Holocaust topics in social media should be part of education in order to sensitize students to distortion and give them tools to become powerful representatives of tomorrow's culture of remembrance. Students should be empowered to participate in discussions and represent opinions, and also to become memory-makers themselves, thus participating in the construction of digital heritage in the collective memory. There are useful websites that provide guidelines for using social media in education, for example: https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/educational-materials/using-social-media-holocaust-education and https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2021/09/08/the-holocaust-and-social-media/

GREATER INTEGRATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Like schools, museums and memorials are part of a geographical context that continuously communicates and informs its visitors about what happened in the past and the changes that are taking place in the present. Social media can be tools for connecting and activating networks, providing that the exploration of places and the discovery of what has happened in neighbourhoods, streets and homes are designed as a concrete formative experience in the field (De Bartolomeis, 2018). The use of social media in such contexts represents an opportunity for involvement that is capable of integrating what is known and well-explored into a message/product of communication and expression of one's own point of view on the content learned (Schwartz, 1977). An important contribution to the development of these synergies in meetings, exchanges and learning can be made through the Service Learning methodology (Battistoni, 2002), which allows work on curricular contents by involving students in the identification of problematic areas concerning history, memory, documentation and testimonies. With Service Learning, it is possible to involve students in designing and implementing a service in solidarity with museums, memorials and the whole community and, at the same time, implement a learning pathway with well-defined disciplinary and cross-cutting objectives related to the Holocaust and to proper use of social media.

STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND EXCHANGE

Continuous cooperation would support the work that museums carry out in the field of social media. This could involve coordinating joint actions and initiatives (social media campaigns, educational activities with students, initiatives addressed to the adult public, etc.). This may also help to create permanent infrastructures for data collection about identified distortions that are shared more frequently. The effect of learning from each other should not be underestimated. Joint campaigning adds weight to the conveyed content and reaches greater audiences. It would be useful to launch a collective, simultaneous action to show that all museums or all foundations are present at the same time to carry out this kind of common objective.

ANNEX. IHRA WORKING DEFINITION OF HOLOCAUST DENIAL AND DISTORTION[1]

MEMORIALE DELLA SHOAH DI MILANO

The IHRA's Member Countries adopted the working definition of Holocaust denial and distortion by consensus at the IHRA's Plenary meeting in Toronto on 10 October 2013.

This working definition was developed by IHRA experts in the Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial in cooperation with the IHRA's governmental representatives for use as a practical working tool.

The working definition of Holocaust denial and distortion has laid the foundation for further resources on recognizing and countering Holocaust denial and distortion, including an action-oriented toolkit[2], the #ProtectTheFacts campaign[3], policy recommendations[4], a short film[5], a publication[6], and a paper[7].

It has also inspired action outside the IHRA. The United Nations' General Assembly, for example, made use of the working definition in its Resolution A/76/L.30[8], which condemned denial and distortion of the Holocaust and commended the IHRA for its work. The resolution was adopted on 20 January 2022, the anniversary of the Wannsee Conference.

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[1] https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-holocaust-denial-and-distortion

[2] https://againstdistortiontoolkit.holocaustremembrance.com/

[3] https://www.againstholocaustdistortion.org/

[4] https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/reports/recognizing-countering-holocaust-distortion-recommendations

[5] https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/publications/holocaust-distortion-growing-threat-film

[6] https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/publications/understanding-holocaust-distortion-contexts-influences-examples

[7] https://holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/Paper%20on%20Distortion_0.pdf

[8] https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N22/230/12/PDF/N2223012.pdf?OpenElement

THE WORKING DEFINITION OF HOLOCAUST DENIAL AND DISTORTION

The present definition is an expression of the awareness that Holocaust denial and distortion have to be challenged and denounced nationally and internationally and need examination at a global level. IHRA hereby adopts the following legally non-binding working definition as its working tool.

Holocaust denial is discourse and propaganda that deny the historical reality and the extent of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis and their accomplices during World War II, known as the Holocaust or the Shoah. Holocaust denial refers specifically to any attempt to claim that the Holocaust/Shoah did not take place.

Holocaust denial may include publicly denying or calling into doubt the use of principal mechanisms of destruction (such as gas chambers, mass shooting, starvation and torture) or the intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people.

Holocaust denial in its various forms is an expression of antisemitism. The attempt to deny the genocide of the Jews is an effort to exonerate National Socialism and antisemitism from guilt or responsibility in the genocide of the Jewish people. Forms of Holocaust denial also include blaming the Jews for either exaggerating or creating the Shoah for political or financial gain as if the Shoah itself was the result of a conspiracy plotted by the Jews. In this, the goal is to make the Jews culpable and antisemitism once again legitimate.

The goals of Holocaust denial often are the rehabilitation of an explicit antisemitism and the promotion of political ideologies and conditions suitable for the advent of the very type of event it denies.

DISTORTION OF THE HOLOCAUST REFERS, INTER ALIA, TO

1	Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany.
2	Gross minimization of the number of the victims of the Holocaust in contradiction to reliable sources.
3	Attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide.
4	Statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event. Those statements are not Holocaust denial but are closely connected to it as a radical form of antisemitism. They may suggest that the Holocaust did not go far enough in accomplishing its goal of "the Final Solution of the Jewish Question".
5	Attempts to blur the responsibility for the establishment of concentration and death camps devised and operated by Nazi Germany by putting blame on other nations or ethnic groups.

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