



# I-@N

Policy Recommendations

# MITIGATING THE CONSEQUENCES OF WAR AND FORCED MIGRATION FROM A CULTURAL HERITAGE PERSPECTIVE



Co-funded by  
the European Union

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# Identity on the Line (I-ON) 2019-2023

Since 2019, researchers from seven museums and a university in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Croatia have been conducting a study on the long-term consequences of war and forced migrations for three generations: the former migrants themselves, their children, and grandchildren. The project involves 164 qualitative in-depth interviews, using similar approaches and methodology across all partners, and collecting objects and photos to investigate the historical backgrounds of migration processes, in collaboration with experts from various fields of study.

This project, which is co-funded by the EU, is a large-scale collaboration and the first of its kind due to its multilateral approach, the scope and complexity of the empirical data collected, and its methodological and analytical framework.

**THE STUDY HAS FOCUSED ON VARIOUS HISTORICAL MIGRATION PROCESSES AND THEIR IMPACT ON DIFFERENT POPULATIONS. SPECIFICALLY, THE STUDY INCLUDES RESEARCH ON:**

**DENMARK**

*The House of Knud Rasmussen*

The ongoing migration of people from Greenland to Denmark after 1945, which has resulted in micro-racism towards indigenous people from Greenland that persists to this day.

**SLOVENIA**

*National Museum of Contemporary History*

The migration of people from former Yugoslav republics to Slovenia after World War II, as well as the impact of Slovenia's independence in 1991 on these migrants.

**CROATIA**

*Ethnographic Museum of Istria*

The complex political history of the Istrian peninsula and its multi-ethnic population, which was characterized by the emigration of over 200,000 people after World War II.

**SWEDEN**

*Åjtte, Swedish Mountain and Sami Museum*

The forced migration of Sámi reindeer herding families from northern to southern areas of Sweden around 1920.

**NORWAY**

*Vest - Agder Museum*

The German occupation of Norway during World War II, when approximately 500,000 German soldiers were temporarily stationed in a country with a population of barely three million.

**LITHUANIA**

*Univesity of Vilnius*

The Holocaust in Lithuania, which had a particularly heavy impact on women.

**POLAND**

*The Museum of Middle Pomerania in Slupsk*

The massive population exchange that occurred in former German Pomerania after 1945, exemplified by the former German town Stolp, now the Polish city of Slupsk.

**1** Painful memories and trauma resulting from war and forced migration can be passed down from one generation to the next, particularly when they are not openly addressed and kept a secret. They continue to impact identity formation, family relations, and societal cohesion.


**2** The transgenerational trauma transfer has been observed within families of both victims of injustice and abuse, as well as those who have committed actions that are condemned by society or law. This challenges the stereotypical victim-perpetrator dichotomy.

**3** The stereotyping and Othering that is prevalent in public discourse, contribute to continuous marginalization and disenfranchisement of migrants and their descendants.

**4** Governing bodies and local hosting communities play a crucial role in either mitigating or perpetuating the negative consequences of traumatic experiences, for example by implementing, maintaining, or terminating practices and policies that lead marginalised groups and individuals to feel lonely and excluded.


**5** Facilitating access to information through cultural heritage initiatives can play a crucial role in supporting collective healing. With public attention and a balanced display of historical events, we can contribute to the wellbeing of former migrants and their descendants, as well as promote the social integration of contemporary ones.

# OVERALL FINDINGS




*“From my early childhood I was instructed not to tell anyone that I came from Germany. In the aftermath [of the war], I understood that these cover stories were good for me. I had friends who didn’t have such cover stories, and who ended their lives as adults, shooting themselves because they couldn’t cope with it anymore.”*

Bjørn, age 77 (Norway).  
Son of a German soldier.




*“After the war, Dita shut her mouth and nobody ever heard about the war – nobody. Neither my second husband Volodia, nor my son. Maybe now he reads something. But my granddaughter asked! The son never. At home nobody. [...] Did mother talk about the war? No. We both never spoke about the war. Then we were together, and we never spoke about the war. [...] My granddaughter used to push me: ‘Tell, tell.’ No, I didn’t say anything terrible, I only used to tell just a little bit. [...] I wanted to forget, just to delete everything.”*

Yehudit (Dita) Sperling-Zupovitz,  
age 99 (Lithuania).  
Survivor of the Kaunas ghetto and the  
Stutthof Concentration Camp.



*“ [One day at school] the teacher said, ‘Now I want to check your knowledge of Italian!’ She gave us a sheet of paper, one to me, one to my brother – of course the others had a notebook [...] At the next lesson another woman came, [...] she got up from the desk and showed everyone [our assignments] saying: ‘These refugees have written on these two sheets [of paper] – you can see that they were born in a stable!’ I couldn’t take it anymore; I took the inkwell and threw it at her.”*

Luigi Donorà, age 86 (Italy).  
Refugee from Istria in Italy.



**RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF WAR AND FORCED MIGRATION BY ALWAYS APPLYING A THREE-GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE.**

This shift in perspective is necessary in all public discourse, political work, media communication, and professional approaches when dealing with individuals and societies marked by traumatic events. War and forced migration impact not only the current generation, but also future generations, inter-familial relationships, and interactions within affected societies.

**INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO PROVIDE MULTIDISCIPLINARY SUPPORT AFTER COLLECTIVE TRAUMA; SUPPORT BY CULTURAL MEDIATORS, ETHNOLOGISTS, ANTHROPOLOGISTS, HISTORIANS, SOCIOLOGIST, IDEALLY IN COLLABORATION WITH PSYCHOLOGISTS AND PSYCHIATRISTS.**

The possibilities of cultural history museums and related professions to address the silence that often follows collective trauma for decades are neither properly explored nor taken advantage of. Museums can initiate discussions based on an objective display of historical events, provide safe spaces to share personal narratives, as well as places for dialogue.

In a world where millions of people are affected by war and forced migration, all professions that can support many individuals at the same time must be set in motion.

**SUPPORT AND ENABLE PROFESSIONALS AND INSTITUTIONS WORKING WITH CULTURAL HERITAGE TO RAISE PUBLIC ATTENTION TOWARDS SENSITIVE AND CONTESTED HISTORICAL EVENTS AND APPLY A MULTI-VOCAL PERSPECTIVE.**

Museums and related professions have unique possibilities to collect and display personal narratives about controversial or sensitive parts of history and provide new approaches to learning and understanding. To achieve this, adequate working conditions, proper training, and project funding are necessary.

Capacity-building initiatives and multidisciplinary university programs for cultural professionals should focus on sensitive narrative facilitation and participatory research approaches, and intensify efforts. Additionally, more effective financial mechanisms should be implemented to better support cultural institutions working with migration and sensitive heritage.

**INTENSIFY INITIATIVES ON SOCIETAL AND POLITICAL LEVELS TO DIMINISH ALL FORMS OF STEREOTYPING OF MIGRANTS**

The significant role that local hosting societies and governing bodies can play in contributing to the well-being of individuals and successful integration of all members cannot be overstated. Efforts to end the marginalization and disenfranchisement of migrants and their descendants should be intensified and included in political strategies and programs.

Minorities must be systematically included in discussions, co-created projects, and participatory approaches to ensure that a diverse range of opinions and perspectives are represented.

**INITIATE FURTHER RESEARCH ON HOW PUBLIC INTERPRETATION AND DISPLAY OF CONTESTED HISTORY CAN POSITIVELY IMPACT INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETAL PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING.**

There is a growing awareness of the crucial role art and culture can play in improving health and wellbeing for individuals and societies. However, the specific health effects of addressing the silence that follows collective trauma, for individuals and societies, have yet to be adequately examined. This work should start as soon as possible, and should be measured in light of the SDGs of Agenda 2030, especially SDG 16, but also 10, 11 and 17.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

More information can be found at  
[www.i-on.museum](http://www.i-on.museum) & [www.identityontheline.eu](http://www.identityontheline.eu)

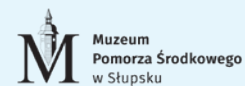
VESTAGDERMUSEET



KNUD RASMUSSENS  
HUS



Etno  
grafski  
muzej  
Istre  
*Museo Etnografico dell'Istria*



Muzeum  
Pomorza Środkowego  
w Słupsku



Instytucja Kultury Samorządu  
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