

# EDUCACTION

**12-14 April 2024**

## **Mp3 – Memory Route in Italy** **Deliverable D3.1 – Educational Modules**

“Each student delegation will elaborate an educational module about a meaningful historical place in their country, in which they highlight the innovative way of tackling gender education and anti-oppressive dynamics”.

### **1. Country: GREECE**

### **2. Historical place:**

Distomo Village

1. Historical context:

2. Historical event:

In 1944, as German successes had started coming to an end, the occupation of Greece faced mounting pressure from the resistance movements, particularly the EAM and ELAS, which had intensified their activities since their formation in 1941.

This period marked a critical turning point in the war, with German forces losing ground on all fronts.

In a desperate attempt to suppress the growing rebellion, the Nazis resorted to brutal reprisals, culminating in the horrific Distomo massacre — a vicious act against innocent, unarmed villagers.

This atrocity, described by historian Mark Mazower as one of the worst atrocities of the entire war, was a direct retaliation for the village’s resistance against the occupying forces. 228 people died in the massacre, including 53 underaged children under the age of 16.

Despite the continuous repression and scenes of horror inflicted upon the populace, the resilience of the Greek resistance ultimately highlighted the desperate measures the Nazis employed as their grip on Greece weakened. Distomo stands as a chilling testament to the brutality of occupation and the human cost of resistance during a time when the country was on the brink of liberation.

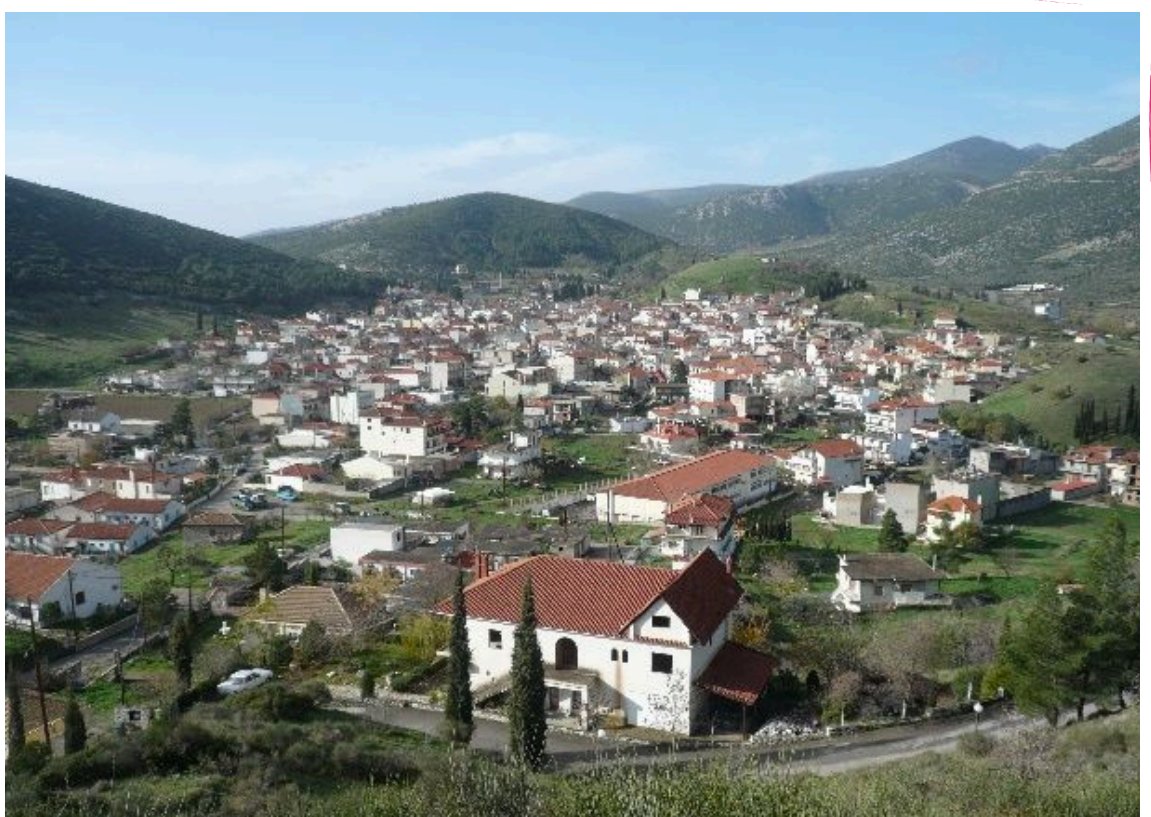


Figure 1.  
Distomo today



### 3. In which way, under which circumstances the gender aspect is relevant?

*The importance of women as members but also as symbols of their community and nation*

In order to start speaking about the atrocities committed by the German armed forces of the Waffen-SS against the population of Distomo and especially its women and to find out the purpose behind those actions, we must first define the role of women as symbols of both their nation and their community.

To start, a woman is capable of birth, of bringing new life in the world.

She is a daughter, a wife and most importantly a mother capable of love and care for her children. She is ready to move earth and sky in order to protect her family in trying times and especially in wartime. She is the one that must find food for her children, she is responsible for running the house while the men either fight on the front or the resistance.

All in all, she is the core of her family both in body and soul.

So, for one to aim to destroy and exterminate every woman, his goal must be to destroy a specific community and completely demolish its cultural stability.

Also, many nations depict the personification of their fatherland (or motherland), as a noble woman. So, the raping of a woman in the hands of enemy soldiers apart from a horrendous act, as a symbolic raping of the occupied nation or, on a smaller scale, a community.

*Distomo and the crimes of the Waffen-SS against the women of the village*

One of the worst massacres of innocent villagers in occupied Greece happened in the village of Distomo, in Boeotia. The village was destroyed completely by the forces of the Waffen-SS as a reprisal for recent actions in the surrounding region undertaken by the resistance fighters.

It must be noted that the SS didn't just target the women of the village specifically. Everyone was a target from men to children and elderly people.

The difference is that the men and the elderly were mostly shot on sight, while the women were about to experience one of the worst massacres that happened in Greece during the Occupation. The Germans started killing the children in front of their mothers and then started raping them. We have accounts of gangrape of women in the hands of the German troops, of mutilation of the genital parts of the victims and most disturbingly of lechery of already dead bodies by the SS. There was also the torturing and disembowelment of pregnant women and many more horrific accounts of brutalities.

All these acts show us the levels of sadism that the SS were willing to reach in order to punish the population of occupied territories. They used everything they had in their disposal to genocide the local population, to leave a mark so permanent that whoever survived the slaughter could never recover mentally.



Figure 2. German soldiers in front of burnt buildings during the massacre

*Why are women always targeted during wartime and why the SS were so merciless*

The example of the massacre at Distomo is a testament to how women can suffer horribly and in so many ways during wartime.

As was mentioned before, they are mothers, wives, daughters.

So, seeing everything they love to get destroyed is pain on the deepest level. And then we have the raping from the soldiers. This is not of course new in times of war.

Throughout history, given the circumstances, victorious soldiers would rape or torture the women of their enemies. In their eyes, they were little more than trophies that would satisfy their needs. Women are also more vulnerable than men physically so they can offer little resistance against battle-hardened soldiers.

In our case, those kinds of atrocities are being committed by the ruthless SS and they are now taken to a new extreme because Nazi ideology has taught them that they are the master-race, they are better than everyone else and they have the right to punish anyone they deem guilty in any way they want.

Every action they took against the women of the village was clearly with genocidal intent. They wanted to completely destroy the village and leave a permanent mark to anyone that survived the carnage.

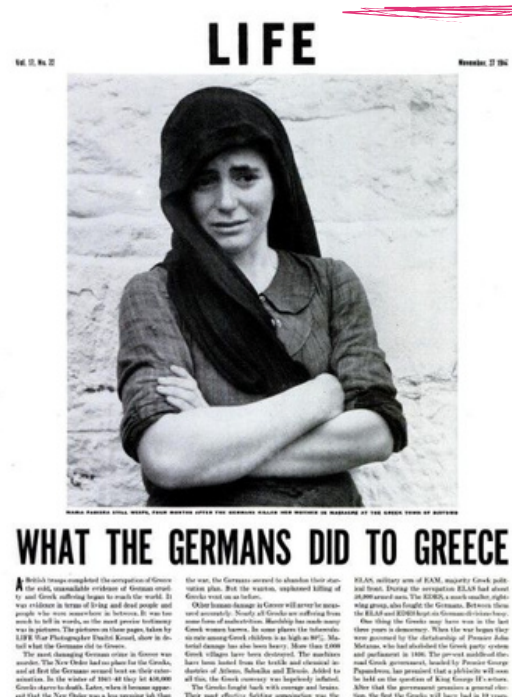


Figure 3. Maria Padiska became a symbol as "The woman of Distomo" when her photograph taken by Dmitri Kessel was published in Life magazine on November 1944



Closing thoughts

The suffering of the women of Distomo can leave any sane human being speechless. The depravity of the soldiers and the incredible pain that these women were put through is a testament to the horrors of war and the killing of innocents.

It is also proof that women can suffer and “die” many different times during a conflict.

They can “die” when they lose their children, when they are being raped and tortured by ruthless soldiers and they can experience loss on a whole other level.

We are fortunate that some women and some men survived that fateful day and through their testimonies this massacre came to light and the tragic story of Distomo could be told.

Today there is a whole museum commemorating that day and we also have various activities in the surrounding area that can help us understand what those unfortunate souls had to go through.

#### **4. In which way, under which circumstances the history of the place can contribute in strengthening the concept of resistance to oppression/dictatorship/extreme violence?**

The events that took place in Distomo are a striking example of the brutal and indiscriminate violence of the fascist regimes and their consequences on the collective memory of the place. The executioners intended to vent their anger, which anger has to do with the death of the German soldiers, without caring that the executed had nothing to do with it.

They turned on those who knew they could not resist.

So, they turned on an unarmed population, including women and children, while at the same time, they accused the resistance FIGHTERS of being responsible for the massacre.

In order to “use” this incident to the whole concept of resistance, it is necessary to be presented as an example of violence that the authoritarian regimes, and especially the nazi and fascist regimes, are able to use. Specifically, it should be emphasized that the sole responsibility lies with the regime which first incites violence, while the path of resistance uses violence to protect the country from an authoritarian regime.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the consequences of the executions for the survivors, both for the grief and the loss of their people, and for the destruction of their community.

The purpose of the presentation of the events that took place in Distomo eighty years ago is to make people aware of the brutal violence of Nazism and other fascist regimes and the need to keep them in collective memory.

Yet, an important issue that is being addressed is the opposition to these facts today, as they are not isolated events, but contemporary society is called upon to face them in different forms.

In conclusion, it is necessary to place the episode of Distomo in an international historical context of similar fascist atrocities, in order to make clear the universality and the connivance of the violent outbursts of the totalitarian, and especially nazi and fascist regimes against the innocent and civilians.



Figure 4  
Orphans of Distomo 1944.  
Photographer: Dmitri Kessel

#### **5. How would you present these aspects to the public?**

All of the above is indicative of how rich in social and political processes the historical context of World War II and therefore the Distomo massacre was.

Both the issue of gender violence and gender roles, and the threat of fascist violence, are relevant issues even today, around which we need to be informed, educated and sensitized.

However, it is still an open question as to what the most effective methods of approaching these issues are, always depending on the target audience.

A good example of various alternative ways of approaching history are actions carried out by the Distomo Museum.

The Museum organizes an anniversary festival with different events, which can incorporate disparate audiences.

When this audience involves pupils and/or students, the museum's approach helps to bring them into contact with the past and to cultivate historical, political and social awareness.

Some of the ways that the museum uses are education through the screening of filmography and documentaries or a theatre performance, even a puppet show, which will provide evidence of the same event, expand on it and provide an opportunity for discussion as to the same or similar collective traumas, and the historical and political contexts in which it is located.



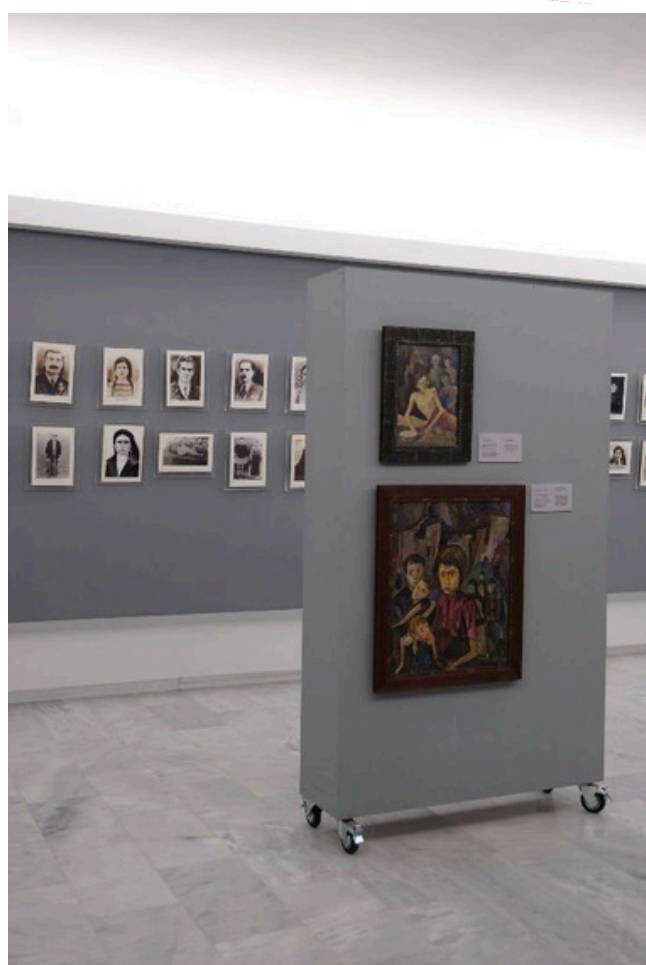
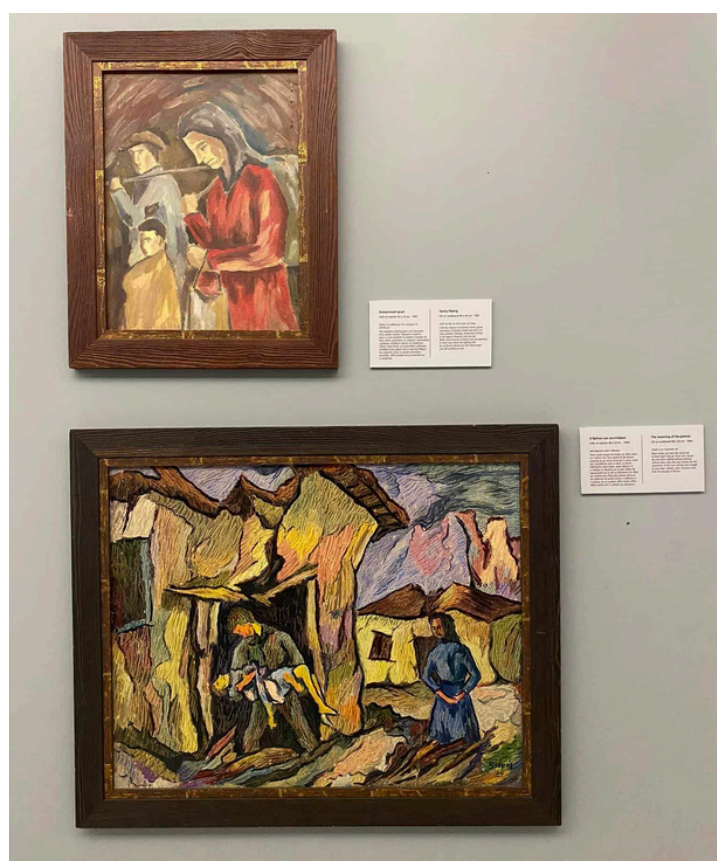


Figure 5.  
Museum of the Victims of Nazism in Distomo

On the same basis, concerts are organized where songs of great composers, which were related to the resistance movement during the Second World War in Greece, are performed by local choirs and not only.

Education goes further with photo exhibitions, with students entering the educational process through art.

Through photographs, each person/student comes closer to the visual image of the events and can perceive the historical contexts experientially.

The aim is not only to gain knowledge of the historical context, but to cultivate generally anti-authoritarian thinking with critical tools, which does not depoliticize the context.

These critical tools are developed and highlighted through the seminars that the Museum incorporates into its activity plan, which offer knowledge from expert scholars and provide the time and opportunity for further discussion.

In an attempt to address, and perhaps even reach, the pupils, there are activities like 'sports games'.

Some of them are the organization of friendly football matches between neighboring municipalities or long-distance races.

More generally, learning through games introduces pupils to historical thinking in a lateral and entertaining way. To raise awareness among children, it carries out activities such as students writing letters to the children who perished during the massacre.

Hikes are also conducted, taking this sensitization beyond the museum to the memorial area, with students "touching" the past and exploring its "routes" in real time.

Another activity is the celebration of memorial services and high priestly memorials, the laying of wreaths, the observance of a minute's silence and the playing of the National Anthem in honor of the fallen. The therapeutic performance of mourning, which is shared within the community, is thus highlighted, making the mourning process at least bearable.

To the idea of strengthening the "touching" of people speeches or group discussions with members of the families of the victims could be added.

In this way, it is possible to make a more meaningful opening of the experience and develop the public's will to explore (in the historical and political context) through questions and references to relevant collective traumas.

This idea could be combined with modern technology, through the use of Virtual Reality (VR), from which the public could see the area of Distomo through a memorial route.

A process of comparison of the day before and the day after the massacre could also be presented. This would be more easily accessible to the viewing public through a diary re-enactment from the perspective of a female fighter, using this technological contact always with respect of the victims and their families.

The process of highlighting memory is an indication of the 'battle for memory' which is dynamic, socially determined and not self-evident.

Most of the creative actions carried out in the Distomo area take place annually over the course of several days.

The systematization of this action may include visits of schools and universities throughout the year, including a concise but comprehensive program of activities.

A more regular visit to the memorial site would enable schoolchildren and students to enhance their historical knowledge and judgement at the time they wish, strengthening their interest in exploring the past.



These educational programs may include learning games, which will be modified and varied depending on the age group they are aimed at. These games may take the form of drawing for the younger aged groups, while for the older ones this will be extended to reflection on photographic material and the promotion of associative thinking.

Through these learning games young people will be able to engage in a direct process of exploration and knowledge in a different, light-hearted and creative way.

In addition, the History of Distomo, as well as all its activities, can be presented on a web page on the Internet. With technology now playing a key role in our daily lives, the creation of an online page widens the audience that can be informed.

By seeking an online page dedicated purely and solely to the Distomo massacre, it will be easier for anyone from all over the world who wishes to do so to obtain a first insight into the historical event. Thus, one can delve deeper with additional sources and photographic material on the situation that prevailed before, during and after the massacre, while also having photographic material of the actions that took place in the area and information on those that are to take place.

The aim of these actions, both existing and proposed, is to strengthen and discover collective memory.

Like other places of memory with a significant historical burden in Europe, Distomo needs to bring its history to light and lead to understanding and healing of the trauma. Through its diverse activities it wants to instill some basic knowledge, firstly, and then to develop critical thinking and shield us against fascist ideology. It aims to shed 'light' on the darker aspects of the resistance and takes the audience out of the process of acquiring depoliticized knowledge.

For the younger audiences, these programs can give them first contact with the past, familiarizing them with the desire to acquire knowledge and cultivating their historical consciousness.

Learning games and puppet shows are a creative start for them, which will help them to develop their interest in knowledge.

For the adult young audience, meeting programs around the sites of memory, as well as the conducting of seminars, the audiovisual links to the events and the discussions that will follow, will help to make a deeper connection between academic historical knowledge and the collective consciousness and popular history, helping in the production of original historical material based on a deeply traumatic past.

Through its overall action and the commemorative processes and performances around the traumatic experience of the Distomo massacre, the audience, regardless of age, is involved in a process of that will help historical understanding on important terms such as fascism and the oppression of the period, terms that people are still confronted with today, 80 years later.

The emphasis is on promoting historical memory, but also a culture that has no need for the canonization of individual victims, but rather for a comprehensive political discussion and search that will lead to a deeper understanding, without de-ideologizing. The experience of this trauma can become for the public the tangible example of violence and racist politics and lead to the desire to eradicate it.

The rise of fascism during the World War II and the continuous and diverse development that it has already received and still receives in the Greek political sphere throughout the years render it a matter of high importance. It is evident it constitutes a permanent historical danger for all societies, requiring constant vigilance.

Figure 6.

The mausoleum of Distomo





# EDUCACTION

**12-14 April 2024**

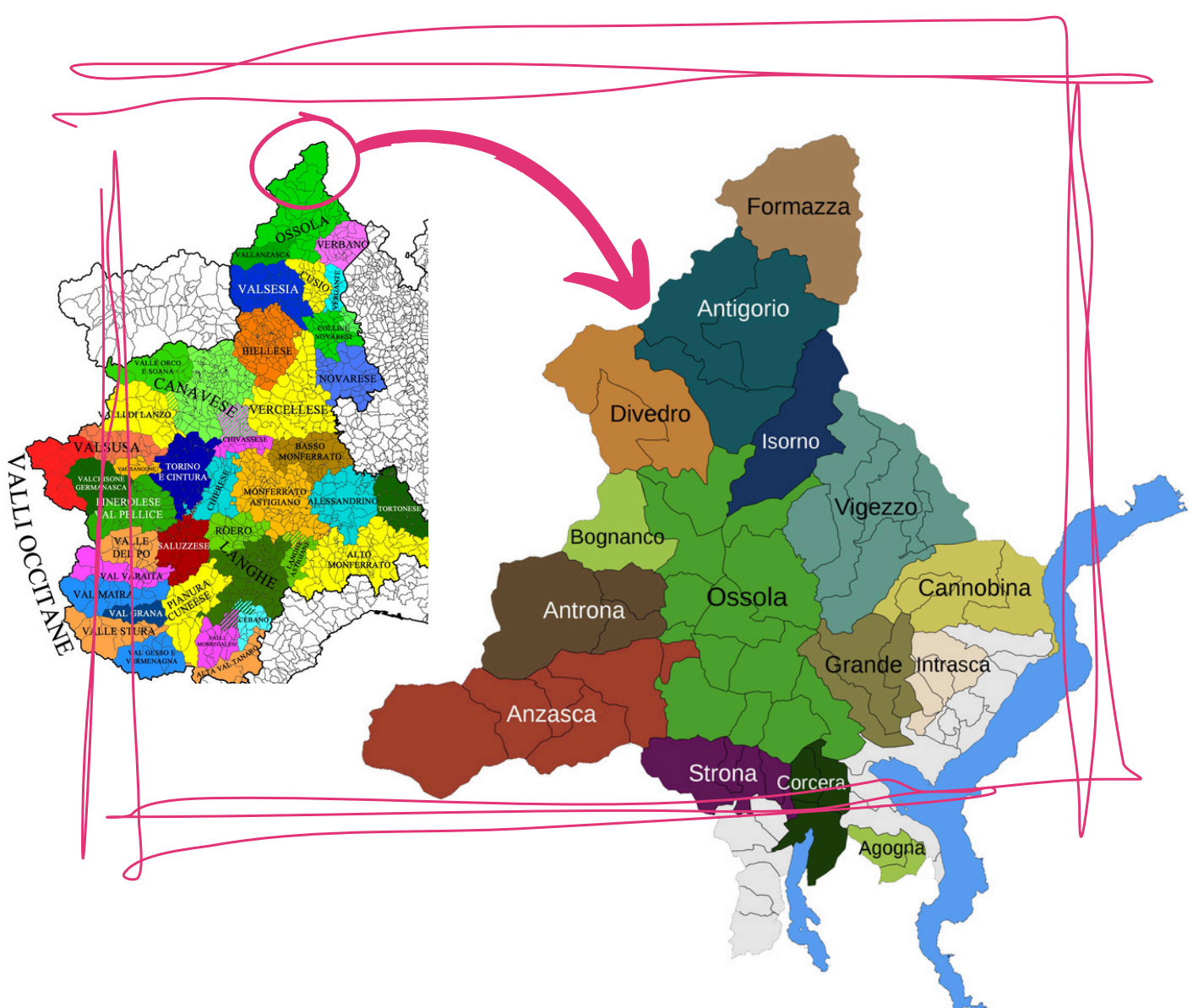
## Wp3 – Memory Route in Italy Deliverable D3.1 – Educational Modules

*"Each student delegation will elaborate an educational module about a meaningful historical place in their country, in which they highlight the innovative way of tackling gender education and anti-oppressive dynamics".*

**1. Country: ITALY**

**2. Historical place:**

Val d'Ossola and Val Cannobina - Northern Italy (Piedmont) on the Swiss border



1. Historical context:

In Italy, after the fall of the fascist regime on July 25, 1943, following the Allied successes in Sicily in early July, the king and the new government led by General Badoglio decided to negotiate with the Allies for the end of hostilities.

The Armistice of Cassibile, announced on September 8, marked Italy's unconditional surrender to the Allies but also the beginning of the civil war: the king and government escaped to the south, protected by the Allies.

In the meantime, Hitler was implementing the "Alaric Plan" which involved the invasion of northern Italy. Benito Mussolini was freed from prison in Gran Sasso, where he had been since July.

With Hitler's support, he founded the Italian Social Republic, or the Republic of Salò (named after its capital) in northern Italy.

The situation remained stable during the winter of 1943-1944.

During the spring-summer of 1944, the Allies moved northward and overcame the "Gustav Line" (from the mouth of the Garigliano River to Ortona, Abruzzo), where they had been stuck since the previous winter.

The partisans finally reached Rome and then Florence.

During these months, the northern anti-fascist partisan forces organized the first "partisan republics," liberated areas under their control, mostly in mountainous regions, that were easier to defend.

One of the most important was the Val d'Ossola Partisan Republic, a brief democratic experiment from September 10th to October 23rd, 1944. The liberated area covered a large valley of 1,500 square kilometers on the border between Italy and Switzerland, along the Toce River.

The valley included 32 municipalities with 85,000 inhabitants. The area was liberated by partisans of the Val Toce Division, under the command of Captain Alfredo Di Dio, who defeated the fascist troops in Domodossola. Despite its brief existence, it was one of the most important experiences, for the large territory it liberated and for its ability to organize a structured government.

The provisional government, which reshaped the valley's political and social structures in an anti-fascist direction, included Gisella Floreanini della Porta, the first woman to become a minister on Italian territory.

This marked a significant step for women's empowerment in the Ossola Republic. The other partisan republics, even if they were democratic, never allowed women to hold positions of power.

This democratic experience would later contribute to the drafting of the Italian Constitution. The downfall of the partisan experiment came after 40 days when the Republic of Salò attacked it with 5,000 troops, who managed to reconquer the area.

Most of the population fled to Switzerland, which had offered assistance in the previous days. A similar fate happened to other liberated areas. Although quite large and widespread across the peninsula, the Nazi-fascists managed to close down these experiences during the winter of 1944, and stopped the Allied advance at the "Gothic Line" (along the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines).

## 2. Historical event:

During the 40 days of its existence, the liberated territory established a provisional government formed by the main anti-fascist forces in the country.

The provisional council received recognition from the CLN authorities and managed to develop relations with Switzerland, which provided significant aid.

It was a brief experiment to implement more democratic governance mechanisms, reflecting hopes for how the Italian state would be shaped after the war.





### 3. In which way, under which circumstances the gender aspect is relevant?

Gisella Floreanini della Porta was a member of the PCI (Italia Communist Party) and became a member of the provisional council, she was responsible for assistance and relations with popular organizations. Gisella was the first woman to hold a government position in Italy. Even in other partisan republics, no woman was ever appointed to a provisional council. Another highly significant aspect of the Val d'Ossola Republic was the contribution of women in the Women's Defense Groups.

Her role marked a significant difference from the norm, women were typically relegated to supporting roles in many partisan movements. Women served as couriers, nurses, and even combatants, but it was rare for them to hold leadership positions or have a political influence. Floreanini's participation in the provisional government represented a symbolic role also for the future of Italy.

Gisella Floreanini wrote: «For the first time in the history of our country, a woman who was neither a queen, a princess, an abbess became a government leader. What were the reasons that motivated these men to accept the proposal, carrying out, in my opinion, a new and unique act in the history of Italy?» With these words, she demonstrated consciousness of how the class issue intersected with the gender issue and also wrote about the necessity for a knowledge of gender dynamics, especially among men, for the construction of a democratic country.



### 4. In which way, under which circumstances the history of the place can contribute in strengthening the concept of resistance to oppression/dictatorship/extreme violence?

The territory represents an example of liberation from Nazi-fascist tyranny. It also shows how democratic and pluralistic institutions can emerge even in precarious contexts and under great difficulties. In such "exceptional" circumstances, significant progress can happen, such as having a woman in a government role.

### 5. How would you present these aspects to the public?

1. Target:

Young students in lower secondary school

2. Objectives:

- to keep the memory of Val d'Ossola Republic alive
- to make students reflect on the concepts of dictatorship and democracy
- to develop an emotional and intellectual awareness of the experience of women in the resistance, their choices, and experiences

3. Methodology:

Use augmented reality to illustrate the territory during the Republic's period. Some actors' recordings will narrate the experiences of people who lived through the events and how they participated, focusing on the experiences of women in the Women's Defense Groups. Official documents of the Republic, together with telegrams exchanged with CLNAI, will be displayed in chronological order.

In the Domodossola City Council, students will simulate a meeting of the Provisional Council, with special attention to Gisella Floreanini and her role in the council. Throughout the experience, students, divided into small groups, will work on a short video summarizing what impacted them the most, which will be shown at the end of the day with an explanation.





# EDUCACTION

**12-14 April 2024**

## Wp3 – Memory Route in Italy Deliverable D3.1 – Educational Modules

*"Each student delegation will elaborate an educational module about a meaningful historical place in their country, in which they highlight the innovative way of tackling gender education and anti-oppressive dynamics".*

### 1. Country: **POLAND**

### 2. Historical place:

The Julian Marchlewski Cotton Industry Plant, a textile factory for cotton processing in Łódź, now transformed into the Manufaktura shopping center.



#### 1. Historical context

In 1971, Poland was under communist rule as part of the Eastern Bloc, controlled by the Soviet Union.

It was a time of deep divisions between society and the authorities. While official propaganda claimed that equality and justice prevailed in the state, the reality was far from ideal.

The government exercised control over all aspects of public and economic life, and citizens were deprived of free speech and the ability to express any dissent.

In December 1970, violent protests erupted among workers on the Baltic Coast, particularly in the cities of Gdańsk, Gdynia, and Szczecin, triggered by sudden increases in food prices. These protests led to brutal clashes with the police and military forces.

Łódź, today one of the largest cities in Poland, two hundred years ago was just a small town with a few thousand inhabitants. However, in the 19th century Łódź became one of the most important cities of the textile industry in the region, and the English called it the "Polish Manchester".



One of the most important places in the city was the factory owned by a man named Izrael Poznański, built at the end of the 19th century. It was a huge complex of buildings covering almost 30 hectares. After the Second World War, when Polish lands were in the hands of the communists, the factory changed its name to the Marchlewski Cotton Industry Plant - named after a socialist activist who worked in this factory in the 19th century.

During the communist regime Łódź was one of Poland's most important textile industry centers. The vast majority of working-age women in Łódź were employed in textile factories. The textile industry had a long tradition in the city, but under the communist regime, it became one of the most poorly paid and least valued sectors of the economy. Women employed in these factories were often exploited, working under harsh conditions for very low wages.

## 2. Historical event

On February 10, 1971, workers at the second-largest factory in Łódź, the Marchlewski Cotton Industry Plant, halted their work. The immediate cause was a reduction in wages at the start of the new year, amounting to about 200–300 złoty. Combined with rising food prices, this led to a significant real decrease in the income of the textile workers.

Additionally, the working conditions in Łódź's textile industry were extremely difficult: the women labored in environments filled with unbearable noise, dust, and high temperatures. Only half of the factories had showers, and only one in five had cafeterias.

In 1969, the average wage of a worker in the textile industry was 1,994 złoty, which was about 80% of the national average salary. The striking workers demanded a wage increase of 20–25% and the creation of a clear system for determining pay. Other factories soon joined the strike. By February 15, approximately 55,000 people across 32 factories were on strike.

As a result, the government was forced to acknowledge the dire situation of workers in the country.

The mass protest, led by tens of thousands of women in the textile industry, culminated in the government abandoning its plans to raise food prices. This was one of the few concessions won by protesters before the rise of "Solidarity," the first independent trade union recognized by the state.



## 3. In which way, under which circumstances the gender aspect is relevant?

Work in the textile industry in Poland, particularly in Łódź, was almost exclusively the domain of women.

At that time, women were burdened with what was called the "double shift." After exhausting work in the factories, they returned home to fulfill traditional roles of managing the household and caring for children. At that time, only a little over 30% of men were actively involved in raising their children.

This situation exacerbated the dissatisfaction with working conditions, as demands for better wages and work environments were not only about the labor itself, but also about the need to support families and finding the right balance between work and personal life.

The situation was further aggravated by the lack of available places in kindergartens for children and the absence of any workplace accommodations for pregnant women. Single mothers, of whom there were many in Łódź, also received no support. Among the 55,000 people who went on strike, 80% were women.





#### **4. In which way, under which circumstances the history of the place can contribute in strengthening the concept of resistance to oppression/dictatorship/extreme violence?**

The history of The Julian Marchlewski Cotton Industry Plant contributes to strengthening the concept of resistance both against oppression and violence.

First of all, protests were targeted against economic and physical oppression. The economic one was based on a Centrally planned economic system in which the government decided on the prices of any article available to buy for themselves.

Oppression intensified in December of 1970 when right before Christmas prizes of food increased rapidly and escalated in January with a significant drop in salaries of factory workers (which in the case of textile factories in Łódź were mostly women).

Physical oppression manifested itself in the difficult working environment that put workers' health at risk. Those elements led to the protest outbreak.

It was mostly aimed at achieving restoration of item prices from two months earlier, raise of salaries, upgrade of working conditions, and equalization of employee privileges. Not only that it aimed also against extreme violence. Workers stayed firm in the factories to avoid unnecessary contact with the military and militia to avoid repeating the bloody outcome of the protest from December '70. They also demanded punishment for those responsible for those events.

Finally, to manifest dissatisfaction with the ruling party, women refused to negotiate with government representatives and they have even spoken about the need to lower minister's salaries

Nowadays The Julian Marchlewski Cotton Industry Plant is now known as Manufaktura. Due to its complex revitalization into a multifunctional and entertainment facility.

At the end of the 1990s, a complex of brick buildings of a former textile factory was purchased by a private investor, and already in 2006, the first opening of a huge shopping center. But 260 stores - that's not all that Manufaktura offers. There are also cinemas, museums (including a branch of the famous Art Museum), a luxury hotel, and public space - an accessible place where many outdoor events take place.

The project required post-industrial buildings for new functions and was developed by architects from Virgile&Stone and Sud Architectes.

Establishment of Manufaktura, one of Europe burdened with revitalization.

It could raise the question of how a building that has completely changed its purpose over the years can strengthen the concept of resistance.

As mentioned before, factory workers stayed firmly in opposition to the oppression encountered at work.

Simultaneously the brick building of a factory stays in the same place as before now working as a place of people rest and entertainment.

It's a symbol of strong opposition against injustice as well as change for the better that comes with it.







## 5. How would you present these aspects to the public?

### 1. Target:

- Students: High school and university students studying history or gender studies.
- Educators: Teachers looking for historical context to incorporate into their curricula.
- Community members: Local residents interested in Łódź history and its impact on women's rights.
- General public: Individuals interested in Polish history and the evolution of labor movements.

### 2. Objectives:

- Raise awareness: To inform the audience about the historical significance of the Marchlewski Cotton Industry Plant and its role in shaping labor rights in Poland.
- Create educational resources: To develop materials that can be used in schools or community workshops focusing on gender education and anti-oppressive dynamics.
- Highlight gender dynamics: To explore the experiences of female workers and the concept of the "double shift" during the communist era.
- Encourage critical thinking: To foster discussions on contemporary gender issues and labor rights by drawing parallels to historical events.
- Promote activism: to inspire attendees to engage with current gender and labor rights movements by learning from the past

### 3. Methodology:

- Interactive workshops: invite students to take part in group discussions that encourage participants to share their thoughts and personal experiences related to gender and labor.
- Exhibits and displays: create an exhibit featuring artifacts, photographs, and documents related to the textile industry in Łódź.
- Guest speakers: create panel discussions with historians, labor activists or former textile workers.





# EDUCACTION

**12-14 April 2024**

## **Wp3 – Memory Route in Italy Deliverable D3.1 – Educational Modules**

*“Each student delegation will elaborate an educational module about a meaningful historical place in their country, in which they highlight the innovative way of tackling gender education and anti-oppressive dynamics”.*

### **1. Country: SPAIN**

### **2. Historical place:**

Road from Málaga to Almería

#### 1. Historical context:

Spanish Civil War (1937, when the rebellious troops are about to occupy Málaga)

#### 2. Historical event:

La Desbandá is a massacre committed by the Francoist forces and the German and Italian aviation against the people who were fleeing Málaga, which was about to be occupied by the rebellious army.

This vast group of people was mostly formed by civilians -women, children and the elderly.

It is considered one of the worst massacres of the war, since thousands of unarmed people were killed while leaving Málaga.

The massacre took place on the road that was connecting the two Andalusian cities: Málaga and Almería.

### **3. In which way, under which circumstances the gender aspect is relevant?**

The main victims of the massacre were civilian groups who were fleeing Málaga, composed of elders, children and women.

Due to this circumstance, women were essential figures both as direct victims of the atrocity and as key figures in the survival and resilience of their families.

They were responsible for organizing the escape, carrying children, looking after the elderly, and ensuring their families had food and water, even under the extreme conditions of bombing, strafing, and artillery fire.





Many of the accounts and testimonies of “La Desbandá” come from women who survived the displacement and later shared their stories.

These oral stories are vital for understanding the human toll of the event, offering insight into the emotional, social, and familial devastation wrought by this event.

#### **4. In which way, under which circumstances the history of the place can contribute in strengthening the concept of resistance to oppression/dictatorship/extreme violence?**

Our historical site and route will contribute to the community in 2 different ways: firstly, it will serve as a remembrance agent, a memory site, where people can visually see the tragedy that happened in that place, and therefore it will attract visitors and curious alike.

The sculptures will serve that purpose to impact the people passing by the site. Then the names will have an impact upon the visitants to visualize the scale of the massacre and also not reduce the killing to numbers. In other words, knowing the names of the victims will cause an empathizing sentiment upon the visitor. It is also important to add to the names the available information of the victims also contributing to the enrichment of the whole composition of the resistance and the victims.

Secondly, the site and the route will emphasize the nature of the victim’s decision and their reasons to flee: those people left because staying behind would have resulted in their death and repression from the fascist invader. The visitor will be able to relive a part of the march and that will make a great impact on them.

Thirdly, the route will reflect the necessity of understanding that this massacre was not a simple act of war, but an attempt of the francoist regime to annihilate what they considered to be the “ideologically rotten” part of Spain.

It will be important to position ourselves, and declare that what happened there was part of a politicide. This, of course, will be a complicated topic to define, and we won’t be able to grasp the difficulty of the subject, but it’s important to underline the extreme violence of the episode.





## 5. How would you present these aspects to the public?

### 1. Target:

The target is meant to be the general public, but more specifically school students

### 2. Objectives:

Firstly, our aim is for this massacre to be known and acknowledged by the general public. Secondly, to pay tribute to the victims, so they are no longer forgotten.

Efforts have been made to remember it, but they haven't gained much attention.

Our idea is to reach more people, to encourage them to delve deeper into what happened, to bring them closer to the reality and history of the victims.

We also aim to make it more accessible and to create a memory space that takes advantage of technological tools, making visitors part of the memorial space and the stories of the victims.

### 3. Methodology:

We should follow a series of steps.

On the one hand, we would like to enable a part of the road so that people can walk through it.

The road is already signposted and we would explain what happened there.

The idea is to place sculptural figures (silhouettes/shadows) along a section of the road.

Aside from the people attending the memorial site, cars driving by will also be able to see the shadows of the victims; even though this would not be our main target, we believe it would peak their curiosity, helping to further spread knowledge on the massacre that took place there.

That would create a sort of "open-air" museum about the topic. In addition, the route would have QR codes that provide audios where victims who represent each generation mentioned before (children, adult, elderly) narrate the experience from their own point of view, giving the route a more personal and human depth.

The sound effects of the audio, the wheels of the carts, the noise of the planes and bombs, the people will immerse the visitor, like they were reliving the march.

Besides, an interactive-online version of the route would be activated in order to make it accessible to everybody and anywhere.

By the last section of the route, there would be an exhibition with larger information, including the names, testimonies, pictures, stories and personal objects of the displaced.

An important part of the information that would be shown in the exhibition would be the photographs and texts of Norman Bethune, a Canadian doctor who was the author of all the pictures that portrait La Desbandá and whose testimony, a great part of it is included in his book "La Desbandá: the crime on the road Málaga - Almería", has been relevant to know what happened in that road to thousands of unarmed people.

Our aim in creating these memorials is not only to build spaces of remembrance in order to preserve the memory of the massacre's victims and their dignity, but another major objective is to contribute to correct the injustice of having praised some of the perpetrators - a few of them are still buried with honors -, who were never held accountable for the crimes related to this massacre, while the victims have been mostly forgotten and reparation has been denied to them.

