DECONSTRUCT

D2.1 Baseline Study

Report on teaching the Holocaust and Holocaust Distortion in Greece, Hungary, Italy and Portugal

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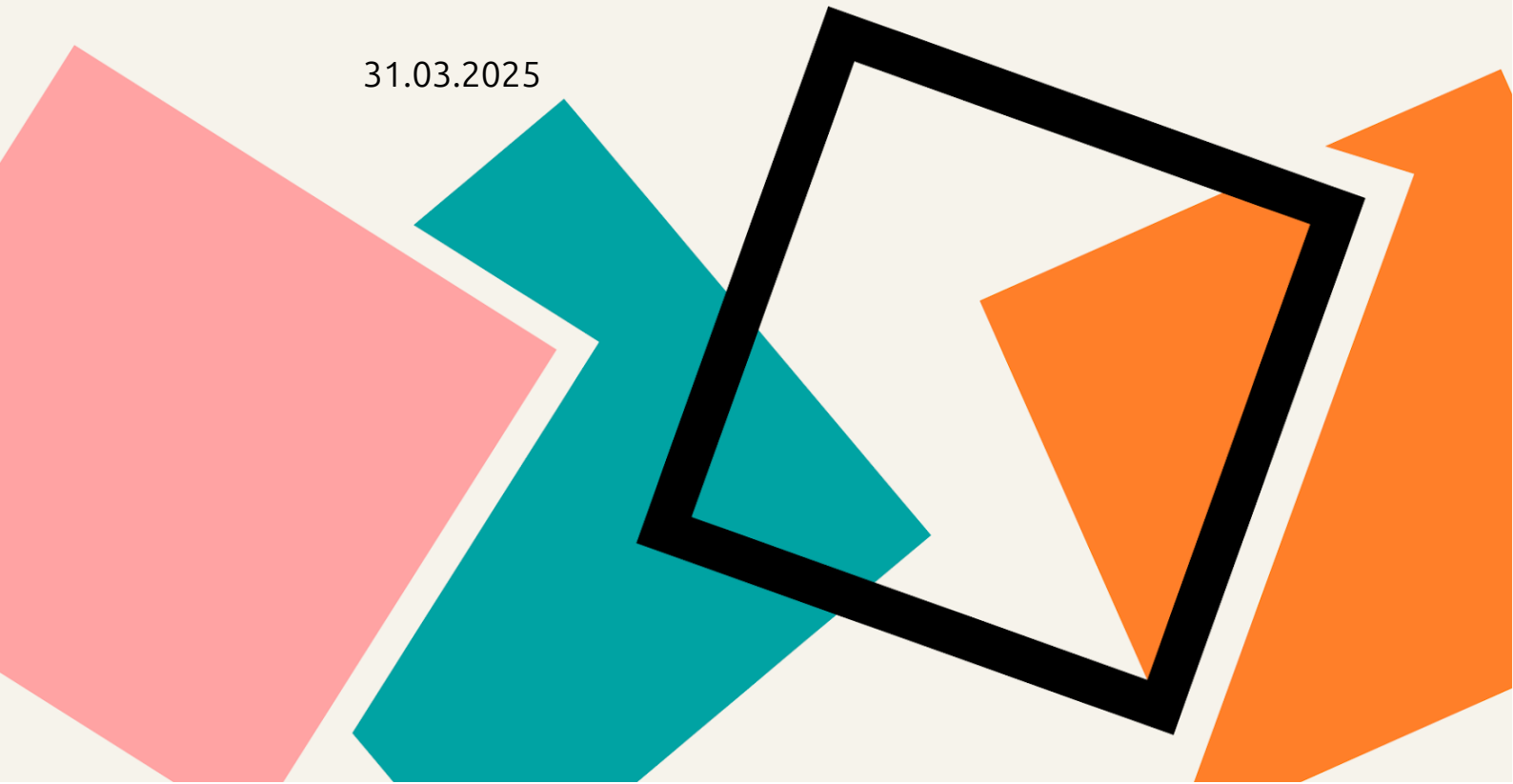
31.03.2025



DECONSTRUCT

Deconstructing Distortion and Disinformation via Campaign and Digital Education

DECONSTRUCT

Project Agreement No.

101144756

D2.1 Baseline Study

How to cite: APA 7.0

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Co-funded by the European Union

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DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

AUTHOR(S)	Giorgos Antoniou, Lydia Maria Vlasidou, Zsuzsanna Ludmán
REVIEWER(S)	Luca Koltai
DISSEMINATION LEVEL[1]	PU
START DATE OF PROJECT	01.05.2024
DURATION OF THE PROJECT	30.04.2026
SUBMISSION DATE	31.03.2025
ORGANISATION NAME OF LEAD CONTRACTOR FOR THIS DELIVERABLE	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH)

VERSIONING AND CONTRIBUTION HISTORY

VERSION	***DATE***	***MODIFICATION REASON***	***MODIFIED BY***
1.0	10.01.2025	1st draft	Giorgos Antoniou
2.0	31.01.2025	1st draft of the survey chapter	Zsuzsanna Ludmán
3.0	10.02.2025	2nd draft of the survey chapter	Zsuzsanna Ludmán
4.0	19.02.2025	Final draft	Giorgos Antoniou
5.0	31.03.2025	Final version	Lydia Maria Vlasidou, Zsuzsanna Ludmán

[1] This project has received funding from the European Union's CERV programme under grant agreement No 101144756

PU – Public (fully open, automatically posted online on the Project Result platforms);

SE – Sensitive (limited under the conditions of the Grant Agreement);

CO – EU classified: EU restricted, EU confidential, EU secret under Decision 2015/444

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Executive summary

This baseline study, undertaken within the framework of the DECONSTRUCT project, offers a comprehensive examination of Holocaust education and the manifestations of Holocaust distortion in Greece, Hungary, Italy, and Portugal. Funded by the European Union and co-funded by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the project is driven by a commitment to confront antisemitism and historical misrepresentation through a strategic combination of scholarly research, digital resources, and educational initiatives.

The report is structured around several critical axes, beginning with an analysis of the historical and cultural frameworks that have shaped Holocaust memory in the four countries under investigation. The study situates these national narratives within broader European developments, underscoring how wartime histories, political transitions, and evolving public discourses have influenced both official and popular understandings of the Holocaust. In Greece and Hungary, for instance, memory politics are deeply entangled with nationalist interpretations and competing claims of victimhood, leading to notable instances of Holocaust distortion. Italy, by contrast, has long privileged a resistance-based narrative that minimises Italian complicity, while Portugal's engagement with Holocaust remembrance remains a relatively recent development, reflecting its historical position as a neutral actor during World War II.

The institutional framework section interrogates the extent to which Holocaust education is embedded within national curricula and the pedagogical challenges that arise in each context. While Italy has established a robust legislative foundation for Holocaust education, Greece and Hungary face considerable gaps, with inconsistencies in teacher training and curricular integration. Portugal has made significant strides in recent years through initiatives such as Memoshoá and the development of museum-based educational programs, despite its historically limited engagement with the Holocaust.

Teachers' perspectives offer an invaluable lens into the practical realities of Holocaust education, revealing the structural and ideological barriers that educators encounter. Across all four countries, teachers highlight the constraints imposed by limited classroom time, insufficient resources, and, in some cases, societal resistance to an honest reckoning with the past. Many educators adopt creative pedagogical strategies – incorporating survivor testimonies, cinematic representations, and experiential learning – to foster deeper engagement among students. However, they also report significant challenges, including the persistence of Holocaust trivialisation, the spread of misinformation, and political pressures that complicate classroom discussions.

A quantitative survey conducted with 364 secondary school students across the four countries sheds light on the state of Holocaust knowledge and critical thinking skills among younger generations. While students often exhibit empathy when engaging with Holocaust narratives, their understanding is frequently shaped by fragmented historical knowledge and exposure to misinformation, particularly through digital and social media platforms. The findings underscore the urgent need for enhanced media literacy education to equip students with the analytical tools necessary to critically assess and challenge historical distortions.

In its concluding section, the report advances a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening Holocaust education and combating historical misrepresentation. Key proposals include a call for curricular reforms that integrate Holocaust education more comprehensively into national syllabi, the expansion of teacher training programs, and the adoption of interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches that link Holocaust studies with broader discussions on human rights and contemporary manifestations of antisemitism. Additionally, the study advocates for greater engagement with digital resources to ensure accessibility and foster critical engagement with online sources.

By addressing these educational gaps and enhancing the tools available to both educators and students, the DECONSTRUCT project aspires to cultivate a more historically literate and critically engaged society, capable of recognizing and resisting the distortions that threaten the integrity of Holocaust memory and historical truth.

1. Introduction and methodology

The memory of the Second World War was a fundamental ingredient in the reconstruction of postwar Western European identity; its eastern counterpart utilised this memory as a struggle for social justice and antifascism. Later on, the concept of victimization emerged, allowing new categories of citizens, such as veteran and victim groups, to demand recognition and compensation for their contributions. In the 1980s, the Holocaust became a central symbol of Western European identity, representing an experience that the European project aimed to prevent from ever being repeated (Rothberg, 2009; Levy and Sznaider, 2006).

The end of the Cold War brought new perspectives on the war, its memory, and the Holocaust, challenging the possibility of a unified European perspective on the war legacies. The Holocaust remained a pivotal event, shaping societal attitudes, political narratives, and education worldwide. The study of Holocaust education and commemoration provides valuable insights into how nations confront their past and promote historical understanding.

The DECONSTRUCT project – *"Deconstructing Distortion and Disinformation via Campaign and Digital Education Partnership"*, funded through the CERV-EQUAL scheme and co-funded by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), is a two-year initiative dedicated to countering the growing threat of antisemitism and Holocaust distortion through education and research. A transnational consortium of organisations leads the project, including the Zachor Foundation for Social Remembrance and Hétfa Research Institute from Hungary, the University of Florence from Italy, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki from Greece, and the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon from Portugal. By fostering a continuous cycle of education and engagement, DECONSTRUCT equips individuals with the tools to critically assess and challenge misinformation, progressing from learning to action. The project localises educational materials, develops testimony-based learning resources, and leverages digital platforms to ensure accessibility across different languages and contexts.

The first section of the report examines the historical and cultural context of Holocaust debates in the four countries, analysing how historical events and cultural trends have shaped perceptions over time. It assesses societal attitudes, political discourse, and the integration of Holocaust education into schools, identifying challenges and areas for improvement. The institutional landscape is assessed, focusing on the role of policy-making and educational frameworks in supporting Holocaust education. The section also addresses Holocaust distortion, evaluating major debates and incidents in public discourse and education. Additionally, it highlights responses from civil society, institutions, and Jewish organisations, and analyses educational initiatives aimed at promoting accurate historical understanding. The authors primarily based their work on official data, surveys, and government reports. They also highlighted notable cases that garnered attention from the press and the public. The second part of the report explores educators' perspectives on teaching the Holocaust through interviews with 40 teachers, 10 from each country (Greece, Italy, Hungary and Portugal). The teachers were selected based on ensuring a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences, and their

availability while teaching at the secondary school level. As a result, the group of 10 teachers from each country includes educators from both urban and rural areas, with varying levels of Holocaust-specific training, as well as teachers from diverse disciplines and age groups. This section examines classroom realities, including resource availability, curriculum constraints, and the impact of Holocaust distortion on teaching. It also addresses student responses, such as engagement, misconceptions, and emotional reactions. By highlighting teachers' experiences, it reveals the challenges and opportunities in fostering critical thinking and empathy, offering insights to improve support systems and teaching strategies.

The third section of the report presents the results of a quantitative survey conducted to explore students' media literacy, awareness of fake news and understanding of Holocaust distortion. The survey engaged a total of 364 secondary school students, with approximately 80 participants from each country. The survey was conducted online and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Of the total participants, 345 students fully completed the survey, while 19 provided partial responses. Project partners actively recruited participants using a convenience sampling method by distributing the survey to teachers and classrooms that volunteered to participate. The questionnaire covered students' habits in verifying information, trust in various media sources, and their awareness of misinformation, particularly concerning Holocaust denial and distortion. It also explored students' familiarity with Holocaust history, their attitudes toward discrimination and cultural diversity, main sources of knowledge, and reflections on how the Holocaust is taught in schools.

2. State of the art

2.1 Historical and cultural context

2.1.1 Greece

The acknowledged number of the prewar Greek Jewish population is between 72.000 and 77.000 the Jews from the Dodecanese included, albeit as Italian citizens. Some 50.000 of them resided in Thessaloniki. In 1945, only about 10.000 Jews remained, representing a survival rate of about 13-17%, the lowest in the Balkans and among the lowest in Europe (Antoniou and Moses, 2018).

Current Holocaust research addresses three long-neglected topics: 1) Jewish-Christian relations before and during the Holocaust; 2) the re-establishment of Jewish life in Greece after the Holocaust, including the restitution of the Jewish property; 3) historical memory and oblivion in dealing with the difficult past and present of the Jewish-Gentile relations. The question of responsibility, apart from the Nazis, for the tragic fate of the Greek Jews haunts the subject. Why were Jewish people in Greece exterminated at higher rates than in most other European countries? What was the role of the local population, the Axis collaborators, and the Jewish community itself in this process of extermination? Was Greek society characterised by admirable solidarity towards its Jewish population as many like to suppose?

The Jewish Community of Greece is one of the oldest in Europe, tracing its origins to the Romaniote Jews, who developed unique traditions and the Judeo-Greek language. The mass migration of Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal in the 15th century further strengthened the Jewish communities, particularly in Thessaloniki, which became a centre of Jewish culture up until the Holocaust. The distribution of Jewish communities in Greece varied widely, with Thessaloniki housing over two-thirds of the population. Its devastation accounted for three-quarters of Greek-Jewish victims, overshadowing higher survival rates in other regions. Some scholars attribute the extermination of Greek Jews to pervasive antisemitism, with parts of the population viewing the Nazis as a means to settle old conflicts rooted in religious, social, and economic tensions. Others link Christian responses – ranging from solidarity to hostility – to nationalist agendas. The destruction of the Jewish cemetery in Thessaloniki is a typical example of how the local authorities capitalised on the prospect of the Jewish catastrophe as early as 1942.

Greece has taken initiatives to restore the memory and rights of its Jewish citizens, such as the return of confiscated properties (1944) and the establishment of the Organisation for the Relief and Rehabilitation of the Jews of Greece (1949). In 1961, a monument was erected within the private space of the new cemetery in Thessaloniki. Another monument, that of Liberty Square, commemorating the "Black Sabbath" of 1942, was erected in 1997 but moved to its natural space in 2006. In 2004, the Greek Parliament established January 27th as the Day of Remembrance for Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust, and in 2018, the decision was made to establish the Holocaust Museum of Greece in Thessaloniki. Cultural awareness of the Holocaust is cultivated through monuments, annual ceremonies, and educational programs. The Jewish Museum of Greece and the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki play a central role by offering educational seminars and collaborating with international

organisations such as Yad Vashem. Of particular importance, the "march of Memory" every 15th of March commemorates the first deportation to concentration camps in Thessaloniki, an event in which thousands of people participate annually. A particularly positive force, the General Secretariat of Religious Affairs, has organised a variety of actions, student competitions, teacher training sessions, international conferences and events and has published extensively on the state-of-art educational activities of the Ministry[2].

However, the complexities of incorporating the commemoration of the deportations in the public sphere are well documented. The Holocaust was officially recognised by the Greek Parliament in 2004 (Hellenic Parliament, 2004), long after the recognition of the Pontic Greeks, Armenians, and Greeks of Asia Minor genocides. In 2013, under pressure from the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn Party, Prime Minister Antonis Samaras became the first to visit a synagogue and delivered a speech against racism and neo-Nazism. (World Jewish Congress, 2013). However, he controversially claimed that "Greek genes and DNA" were resistant to antisemitism, reflecting the official Greek narrative of Christian solidarity with Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. This narrative had long been part of both the public and academic discourse within Jewish communities.

The 2018 Holocaust Remembrance Day speech given by the then (late) Mayor Boutaris in Thessaloniki openly addressed those responsibilities and the lack of empathy the Christians showed. It went viral in Greece and internationally and was widely acclaimed as a milestone in correcting the widespread belief that only Greek Christians who saved Jews ought to be commemorated at such events (Protagon.gr, 2016).

2.1.2 Italy

In contrast with the dominant collective memory of the National Socialist era and the Holocaust in Germany, Italy is one of the Western countries that has emphasised anti-Nazi resistance over pervasive local collaboration during the Holocaust[3]. After World War II, Italy lacked a unified national memory (Subotić, 2023). Two opposing narratives emerged (Foot, 2009): one portraying Italy as a victim of Mussolini and Hitler, and another marked by anti-communist sentiment opposing anti-fascist rhetoric. Italian commemorative events emphasise German guilt and highlight the resistance movement and German mass murders (Sierp, 2012), often downplaying Italian involvement in antisemitic persecution. The "good Italian" versus "bad German" myth persists in collective memory (Fogu, 2006), avoiding deeper examination of civilian and police roles in Jewish persecution (Gordon, 2012). Stories of Jewish rescues by Catholic clergy, widely promoted by the Church, served to counter criticism of Pope Pius XII's actions during the Holocaust (Zuccotti, 2002). However, recent scholarship questions this

[2] We are particularly indebted to Vassiliki Keramida for sharing information and reports of the Ministry, especially the 2024 report titled Legislative Initiatives and Actions on Issues of the Jewish Communities

[3] Italy's surrender in September 1943 led to German occupation, armed resistance, and the creation of Mussolini's puppet state. Deportations of Italian and foreign Jews to Germany and Poland also began.

narrative, suggesting a less benevolent response by Italians and greater complicity of police and military forces in Jewish deportations from 1943 (Sarfatti, 2007).

Furthermore, the complexity of national memories and transnational memorials is reflected in Italy's major commemorations. (Sarfatti, 2017). The "Festa della Liberazione" [Liberation Day], established in 1946, marks the end of the Nazi-Fascist occupation on April 25. Since 2000, the 'Giorno della Memoria' (Remembrance Day) commemorates the liberation of Auschwitz, focusing on Nazi responsibility for deportations while downplaying fascist involvement. Subsequently, the 'Giorno del Ricordo' [National Memorial Day of the Exiles and Foibe[4]] was established in 2004 to commemorate Italian victims in the border conflicts between Italy and Yugoslavia and is celebrated on 10 February.

2.1.3 Hungary

The fate of Hungarian Jewry in the first half of the 20th century was deeply intertwined with the social and political changes in the country, creating a tense atmosphere in Hungary in which the Jewish community became increasingly victimised by 'scapegoating'. During the Second World War, when the country became an ally of Nazi Germany, the situation of the Jewish population deteriorated dramatically. Persecution began with the so-called Jewish Laws[5] and the deprivation of rights, culminating in deportations to death camps after the German occupation of Hungary in March 1944[6]. The Hungarian authorities played a key role in the process, resulting in the deaths of around half a million Hungarian Jews in the Holocaust. In the post-war years, under Soviet rule, the memory of the Holocaust remained a taboo subject for a long time (Knap et al., 2021), and only after the fall of communism did it become part of the social discourse again. Since then, the history and memory of the Holocaust in Hungary have become an element of national public and political discourse and debate.

Although the Hungarian government has expressed its sympathy for the Hungarian victims of the Holocaust and the Jewish community, its memory politics remain controversial due to contradictions between rhetorical actions. For example, on Holocaust Remembrance Day 2023, the Parliamentary State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior stressed that *'it is important for us in Hungary that Hungarian Jews feel safe every day, today, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow'*[7]. In

[4] The foibe massacres refer to mass killings both during and after World War II, mainly committed by Yugoslav Partisans and OZNA, against the local ethnic Italian population (Istrian Italians and Dalmatian Italians) against people associated with Fascism, Nazism and collaboration with Axis, and against Croat and Slovene anti-communists.

[5] The term Jewish Laws refers to the antisemitic, anti-Jewish legislation introduced in 1920 and then between 1938 and 1942 (see Pap & Lehotay, 2023).

[6] The first deportation from Hungary took place in 1941 (before the German occupation): the Hungarian authorities organised the deportation of approximately 20.000 Jews, who were 'stateless' or had 'unsettled citizenship', to Kamenets-Podolsk, where most of them were killed. (for more see Eisen, G., Stark, T., 2013 or Braham, R., 1997).

[7] See the website of the Secretariat of the Human Rights Working Group of the Ministry of Justice [Igazságügyi Minisztérium Emberi Jogi Munkacsoport Titkársága], at https://emberijogok.kormany.hu/megemlekezes-a-holokauszt-magyarorszagi-aldozatairol (accessed: 17.09.2024)

contrast, government nostalgia for the Horthy regime[8] and debates about the memorial to the victims of the German occupation in Budapest's Szabadság Square highlight the contradictions of the memory politics related to the Holocaust, a topic that will be explored in more detail later.

Tensions over the politics of Holocaust remembrance may be further exacerbated by incidents such as the one when the National University of Public Service invited Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former Iranian president and outspoken Holocaust denier, to be a guest speaker. This move has also sparked controversy and has once again highlighted the political tensions over Holocaust remembrance issues in Hungary.

Furthermore, the 70th anniversary of the deportation of Hungarian Jews, in 2014, triggered a broad social discourse and reflection in Hungarian society. The government supported 'Holocaust Memorial Year 2014' events, setting up a one-and-a-half billion HUF civil fund (approximately 3.63 million EUR[9]) to finance local initiatives. The fund aimed to involve the wider society in the process of commemoration and to encourage civil society to become more active. The Memorial Year thus saw the implementation of several public and civil projects, some of which were funded by the state and others by private initiatives. Such projects have contributed to dealing with the past and strengthening national solidarity. The series of events throughout 2014 aimed to make the history of the Holocaust and Jewish culture accessible to people of all ages and bring the tragedies of the past closer to today's generations.

However, the official commemoration efforts were accompanied by significant controversy. Critics accused the government of attempting to rewrite history and diminish Hungary's responsibility for the Holocaust. The most debatable issue was the erection of the memorial to the German occupation in Budapest's Szabadág Square. The monument depicted Hungary as an innocent victim of Nazi Germany, symbolised by the Archangel Gabriel being attacked by a German imperial eagle. This narrative, which suggested that Hungary itself was merely a victim rather than an active collaborator in the deportation of over 400.000 Jews in 1944, sparked outrage among historians, Jewish organisations and civil society. The opponents viewed it as an attempt to externalise responsibility and downplay the role of the Hungarian government and authorities in the Holocaust. In response to this controversy, the Hungarian Jewish umbrella organisation (MAZSIHISZ) boycotted the official Holocaust Memorial Year, demanding the withdrawal of the monument (Kovács, Mindler-Steiner, 2015). The public opposition to the government's memory politics also manifested in grassroots protests. Activists organised ongoing demonstrations at Szabadság Square, creating a 'counter-memorial' with family photos, historical documents and personal stories of Holocaust victims, as a way of countering the government's narrative (Pető, 2014).

[8] Miklós Horthy's role as governor of Hungary during the Second World War, especially in the introduction of the Jewish laws and the deportation of Hungarian Jews, is highly controversial. Although some see him as a symbol of the fight against communism, others hold him responsible for the Hungarian victims of the Holocaust.
[9] At the exchange rate on 2025.01.13.

A similarly important event within this year was the 'Forgotten Neighbours' exhibition[10] in Pápa, which recalled the past of the local Jewish community and helped to remember the former local residents through personal stories, documents and objects. This project has also contributed to the rethinking and processing of the tragedies of the Holocaust in local communities.

The anniversary of 2014 also gave rise to many other informal initiatives, such as the 'Yellow Star Houses Project'[11], in which participants placed plaques on the walls of former yellow-star houses. There were also initiatives on social media platforms, such as the 'Holocaust and my family' Facebook group[12], where members could share their personal family stories, helping to promote collective trauma processing, and sustaining and developing collective memory.

2.1.4 Portugal

Portugal, under the Estado Novo regime led by António de Oliveira Salazar from 1933, remained neutral during WWII and hosted many Jewish refugees, with estimates ranging from 40.000 to 100.000 (Kaplan, 2020). The refugee influx peaked in the summer of 1940, largely due to the actions of Portuguese consul Aristides de Sousa Mendes, who defied Salazar's orders and issued thousands of visas to save refugees (Milgram, 2010). Despite a strict visa policy since 1935, undocumented refugees who entered Portugal were usually allowed to stay (Pimentel & Ninhos, 2013).

Although antisemitism was not a core ideology of the Estado Novo, and Salazar himself did not endorse it, he feared communism and any foreign influences that could threaten his regime. As a result, Salazar and his police state distrusted all foreigners, including Jews, as well as potential communists, liberals, and leftists (Kaplan, 2020). He worried that refugees could bring liberal and democratic values into Portugal. Antisemitism was largely absent among the Portuguese population and went unnoticed by refugees, who instead experienced acts of kindness and compassion from the poor Portuguese people. The Portuguese-Jewish community and Jewish relief agencies also offered assistance (Kaplan, 2020).

Between 1935 and 1945, Jewish refugees arrived in Portugal in three distinct waves. The first wave (1935-1939) consisted of several hundred refugees with proper documentation, facing few obstacles. Some settled in Portugal, while others used it as a temporary stop (Kaplan, 2020). The second wave, in the spring of 1940, saw between 40.000 and 100.000 refugees pass through Portugal after Germany's defeat of Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and France. Lisbon became a key departure point for those fleeing Europe (Kaplan, 2020). The third wave (1941-1945) involved sporadic arrivals from across Europe. Salazar agreed to save about 1,000 Hungarian Jews, supported by two diplomats, Carlos de Almeida Fonseca Sampaio Garrido and Alberto Carlos de Liz-Teixeira Branquinho, who risked their lives to protect refugees (Milgram, 2010).

[10] Facebook page of the 'Forgotten Neighbours' project: https://www.facebook.com/gyekiczki/ (accessed 17.09.2024)
[11] Website of the 'Yellow Star Houses project': https://www.csillagoshazak.hu
[12] Page of the "Holocaust and my family" Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/holokauszt.csaladom (accessed 17.09.2024)

However, it is important to note that, compared to other neutral countries like Spain, Switzerland, and Sweden, Portugal issued the fewest letters of protection to Hungarian Jews. This underscores the mixed record of Portugal's response to the Jewish refugee crisis during World War II (Kaplan, 2020).

2.2 Institutional framework and Holocaust education

2.2.1 Greece

Jewish communities in Greece hold the legal status of public law entities, equivalent to that of the Greek Orthodox Church. This status grants them autonomy in managing their internal affairs, while the state maintains oversight through the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. Greece is also a member of IHRA and has adopted the IHRA definitions of antisemitism and Holocaust denial. In 2019, the Greek state strengthened its institutional framework by officially adopting these definitions, while the Jewish Museum of Greece was recognised as a research centre with a status equal to state institutions. In 2024, Greece signed the Vienna Declaration, committing to enhanced cooperation in combating antisemitism and encouraging the reporting of antisemitic incidents. Concurrently, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs introduced Holocaust and antisemitism education into the training of diplomats at the Diplomatic Academy, incorporating the IHRA working definition. This training includes visits to the Jewish Museum of Greece and Athens' synagogues to familiarise diplomats with Jewish contemporary history and life.

The Greek educational system incorporates the Holocaust through initiatives by the Ministry of Education, the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs, and the Jewish Museum of Greece. Since 2012, student competitions have encouraged digital Holocaust projects, with winners attending educational programs, including visits to the Auschwitz Museum. Participation has steadily increased, promoting Holocaust memory among younger generations. The Jewish Museum organises seminars with international organisations like the Mémorial de la Shoah and Yad Vashem to improve Holocaust teaching methods and has published educational guides. The General Secretariat also distributes resources, such as "Understanding Antisemitic Hate Crimes", and collaborates with international programs like Mémorial de la Shoah's educator training (Jewish Museum of Greece, n.d.).

Despite progress, several challenges hinder Holocaust education in Greece. Key issues include curriculum gaps, with limited and fragmented references to the Holocaust in textbooks. The curriculum allocates only two hours per year to Holocaust teaching, often focusing on film screenings, which makes the topic feel peripheral. Another challenge is the limited scale of teacher training programs, where participation is often restricted, and the same educators are trained multiple times. Making training mandatory for history teachers and expanding its reach could help address these issues.

Addressing antisemitism, both in and outside classrooms, is crucial. Incidents of vandalism and attacks highlight the need for broader societal awareness through education. Additionally, funding remains a challenge, as existing programs require more stable financial support to expand their reach, including increasing student participation in educational visits to Auschwitz. (Messinas, E., 2020).

An additional problem with introducing Holocaust teaching in the Greek educational system is an apparent lack of social approval of such potential. In a published 2015 survey Holocaust as an obligatory teaching topic returned only a 50% acceptance by respondents and a 25% rejection of this prospect, the lowest among other topics of national history, including a well-known national myth of Greeks being taught in secret schools under Ottoman rule. On a follow-up survey a year later, that 50% was reduced to 25%, still high enough to raise concerns[13].

2.2.2 Italy

Italy has been a key player in global Holocaust education and remembrance efforts. Since joining the IHRA in 1999, Italy has increased support for initiatives focused on Holocaust remembrance, education, and research. Following its 2004 Chairmanship, both institutions and civil society became more engaged in Holocaust-related matters, with the 2018 Chairmanship further enhancing awareness of the IHRA within Italian institutions and academia.

In 2000, Italy was among the first countries to enact a specific law requiring the teaching of the Holocaust in schools, with a particular focus on the historical and ethical aspects of the event[14]. As a direct consequence of this legislation, the national competition, entitled “I Giovani Ricordano la Shoah” (Young People Remember the Shoah)[15], was inaugurated in 2001. The competition aimed to encourage students to deeply study and understand the catastrophic events that shaped 20th-century European history. It implemented Law 211/2000, which established "Giorno della Memoria" (Holocaust Remembrance Day) in Italy, commemorating the persecution of Jews and Italian military and political deportees to Nazi camps. The law also required the education system to pass on the memory of the Shoah to future generations.

In Italy, several institutions, including the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI) and the Ministry of Education, promote Holocaust education in collaboration with international organisations like Yad Vashem, the Mémorial de la Shoah, and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum. These partnerships offer training seminars and study trips, such as annual teacher training in Jerusalem and the ‘Train of Remembrance’ summer school in Tuscany since 2005.

Additionally, several Italian institutions are instrumental in providing Holocaust education for students and educators. These include associations and organisations such as the “Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea” (CDEC, Centre for Contemporary Jewish Documentation)[16] and the “Associazione Figli della Shoah” (Association of Children of Holocaust Survivors)[17], in addition to local administrative bodies and two university initiatives: the Master in Holocaust Education at the University of Roma Tre and the Advanced Course in Holocaust Education at the University of Florence.

[13] Antoniou et al, unpublished survey on Holocaust Memory in Greece, 2017.
[14] For the state of Holocaust education before 2000, see Santerini (2003).
[15] Annually, the Ministry of Education and UCEI select relevant themes and jointly organise competitions to encourage reflection and collaboration within the education system. Further information can be found at https://www.scuolaememoria.it/site/it/il-concorso-i-giovani-ricordano-la-shoah/.
[16] https://www.cdec.it/
[17] https://www.figlidellashoah.org/

As a result, Holocaust education has advanced while a rise in specialised publications over the past two decades has enhanced understanding and remembrance in Italy.

Nevertheless, challenges remain in Holocaust education in Italy, including regional disparities and the need for ongoing teacher training to improve knowledge and methods, reflecting schools' autonomy and proximity to memorial sites. A survey conducted in 2018 on perceptions of Holocaust education in Italian schools yielded inconclusive results. Approximately 48% of respondents indicated that the Holocaust is not adequately taught in Italian schools, while 44% believed that Holocaust education was sufficient. These findings emphasise the necessity of ongoing endeavours to standardise Holocaust education across regions and guarantee that teachers have access to the requisite resources, training, and support to educate students effectively about this historical event. (Statista, 2019)

In January 2018, the Ministry of Education and the Italian IHRA delegation introduced guidelines for Holocaust education, linking it to themes like human rights and anti-discrimination[18]. These guidelines aim to foster critical thinking, empathy, and engagement. In November 2021, the Ministry published additional guidelines for combating antisemitism in schools, addressing various forms of contemporary antisemitism. Despite these efforts, there is still a gap in integrating digital tools and social media into Holocaust education, with traditional methods like textbooks and site visits dominating.

2.2.3 Hungary

Hungary joined the Stockholm Declaration in 2000 and became a full member of the IHRA in 2002. In doing so, the country has committed itself to Holocaust remembrance and education. In 2000, the official Holocaust Remembrance Day was also introduced, held on 16 April, commemorating the beginning of the ghettoisation of Jews in Hungary. Secondary schools must implement a commemoration day, and while it is not compulsory for primary schools, many of them organise commemorations, in-school or extra-curricular activities to mark the occasion – mostly because they believe that it is obligatory (Forrás-Bíró, 2016). In addition, the Holocaust Documentation and Remembrance Centre was opened in Budapest in 2004, a prominent site for studying and remembering the Holocaust, while several rural memorial sites have been opened for visitors (Jancsák et al., 2018).

In Hungary, commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day is typically organised by history or humanities teachers. However, efforts can be isolated or abandoned without support, and some schools may not hold central commemorations, leaving the issue to be addressed at the teachers' discretion (Forrás-Bíró, 2016). The National Core Curriculum (NAT) sets the educational framework in Hungary, influencing teaching materials and textbook choices.[19] In Hungary, commemoration of

[18] Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (2022). *Linee Guida Nazionali "Per una didattica della Shoah a scuola".* Available at https://www.mim.gov.it/-/linee-guida-nazionali-per-una-didattica-della-shoah-a-scuola

[19] Related website of the Education Office: https://www.oktatas.hu/kozneveles/kerettantervek/2020_nat (accessed 17.09.2024)

Holocaust Remembrance Day is typically organised by history or humanities teachers. However, efforts can be isolated or abandoned without support, and some schools may not hold central commemorations, leaving the issue to be addressed at the teachers' discretion (Forrás-Bíró, 2016). The National Core Curriculum (NAT) sets the educational framework in Hungary, influencing teaching materials and textbook choices[20]. Until recently, teachers lacked up-to-date, locally relevant Holocaust teaching materials and training aligned with international best practices. While national history teacher associations now offer some support, the absence of localised materials and clear guidance still poses challenges for effective teaching.

The 2024 Hungarian Matura exam highlights the importance of antisemitic ideologies in 20th-century history. At the intermediate level, topics covered Nazi Germany, Hitler's rise to power, and Hungary's Horthy era, including antisemitic policies like the numerus clauses. At the advanced level, oral exam topics included the Holocaust in the context of WWII and the antisemitic ideologies of interwar dictatorships. The model curriculum of history for secondary education (i.e. grades 9-12)[21], published by the Education 2030 Learning Research Group[22], outlines Holocaust education for grade 11 students, focusing on the causes, characteristics, and major events of WWII, including the Holocaust. Students are encouraged to study visual sources and testimonies and engage in activities like presenting on the Budapest Ghetto and visiting the Holocaust Memorial Center.

However, history teachers in Hungary face challenges due to an over-regulated curriculum, time constraints, and a lack of guidance, leaving many unsure of how to teach the Holocaust (Vida, 2016 in Jancsák et al., 2018). Although digital resources are available, issues like limited training and technical support hinder the effective use of platforms like IWitness, and IHRA's recommendations remain underutilised (Mezei, 2016; IHRA, 2019).

2.2.4 Portugal

Portugal's neutral stance during WWII led to delayed research into the Holocaust. Despite not being directly involved, we argue that the Holocaust should be part of Portugal's national narrative. The Estado Novo regime suppressed the memory of Portugal's neutrality and its collaboration with Nazi Germany. Researchers like Irene Pimentel, Cláudia Ninhos, Avraham Milgram, Esther Mucznik, Ansgar Schaefer, and António Louçã have highlighted this neglected chapter. Holocaust education and research in Portugal progressed slowly, with references to the Holocaust appearing in textbooks only after 1988. It became part of the national history curriculum in 2002, taught in secondary schools from the 10th and 12th grades, and the 9th grade from 2014.

[20] In the standard school structure of 12 grades primary school takes up the first 8 years, then secondary school is an additional 4 grades.
[21] The model curriculum is developed based on the National Core Curriculum and its related framework curriculum. For the history model curriculum for grades 9-12, see https://www.oktatas2030.hu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/tortenelem-mintatanterv-9-12.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2024)
[22] In Hungarian: Oktatás 2030 Tanulástudományi Kutatócsoport – for more information about the Research Group, see https://www.oktatas2030.hu/ (accessed: 08.12.2024)

Founded in 2009, Memoshoá – Association for Memory and Teaching of the Holocaust – aims to promote education, remembrance, and research on the Holocaust. Over the years, it has established protocols with national and international institutions, providing training to hundreds of primary and secondary school teachers in the field of Holocaust education. Since 2010, it has organised study trips for teachers to European sites related to the History of the Holocaust – "Seminars on Wheels" – and is currently preparing a trip along the refugee route of World War II in Portugal. In 2016, it created the project "My School Goes to Auschwitz" for students, which aims to provide schools with direct contact with Holocaust and World War II memorial sites.

The Association supports schools in various activities commemorating the Holocaust, with lectures and the loan of exhibitions related to the theme. It has a specialised library with works on World War II, the Holocaust, and other genocides, as well as a collection of DVDs available for loan.

In the 2016/2017 school year, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, it held the "Telling the Holocaust" contest, with great participation from schools. In 2019, it established the biennial Memoshoá Ivette David of Research Award, and the 2nd edition is currently underway. It is involved in research projects on Holocaust education and Holocaust denial[23].

The Holocaust Museum of Porto (MHP), founded in 2021 by the Jewish Community of Porto (CIP/CJP) in collaboration with B'nai B'rith International and global Holocaust museums, aims to engage the public, especially younger audiences. It provides educational resources, professional development for educators, exhibitions, and supports research. The museum also shares documents and artefacts left by refugees in the Oporto Synagogue during WWII. Overseen by Jewish Community members with familial connections to Holocaust victims, it is part of a broader strategy to combat antisemitism, including school visits, teacher training, historical film screenings, and partnerships with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Oporto[24].

Founded in 2010, the Sousa Mendes Foundation is dedicated to honouring the memory of Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Its two-fold mission is to raise funds for the restoration of the Casa do Passal and the creation within its walls of a museum and memorial site and to sponsor US-based projects that perpetuate his legacy[25].

Portugal became a member of the IHRA in 2019, and as a result, more emphasis was placed on the importance of Holocaust education and research. An example is "Remembering the Past Learning for the Future: Research-Based Digital Learning from Testimonies of Survivors and Rescuers of the Holocaust (ID 740639658), a project that was funded along with other 5 research projects in 2020 by the national funding agency Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) via the Program Portugal and the Holocaust: Research and Memory, Special Support for R&D. The project aims to address the scarcity of Holocaust research and awareness in Portugal. The investigation is primarily based on Holocaust testimony videos from the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive, with a particular

[23] For more information, check https://en.memoshoa.pt/quem-somos
[24] For more information, see https://www.mhporto.com/
[25] Compare https://sousamendesfoundation.org/our-mission/

focus on those related to Portugal. The international team of the project has created free-of-charge digital educational resources on the Holocaust – for the first time – in European Portuguese[26].

2.3 Antisemitism as distortion and distortion as antisemitism

While this section does not systematically incorporate comparative data across countries, surveys such as the Eurobarometer Perception of Antisemitism and the ADL Global 100 could provide valuable context for understanding broader trends. Similarly, although the depth and focus of individual country discussions vary, this reflects both the availability of sources and the specific dynamics of antisemitism in each context. A more standardised approach across countries – particularly in addressing topics like secondary antisemitism, Holocaust denial, and distortion – could enhance comparability, though structural differences must also be acknowledged. Additionally, while this report does not systematically assess the impact of events since October 7, it is important to recognise that recent developments have further intensified debates around antisemitism, particularly in relation to Holocaust trivialisation and the so-called "new antisemitism". These aspects remain critical considerations for any ongoing or future analysis of the subject.

2.3.1 Greece

Antisemitism is one of the most common manifestations of social prejudice in Europe and elsewhere. Greece is not an exception to this rule; in fact, Greece, according to the 2015/2017 Anti-Defamation League Global Survey, has the highest proportion of antisemitic beliefs in Europe. A set of four nationally based studies, between 2015 and 2018, verifies this view. The studies exemplify the strong connection between antisemitism, nationalism and Holocaust distortion. It is hard to estimate the status due to a lack of recent surveys and the impact of conflicting variables (The Gaza war on the one hand and the strong alliance between the Greek and Israeli governments on the other hand)[27].

Although the number of Greeks of the Jewish religion is, according to the Greek Census, very low (5000, i.e. 0.05% of the Greek population), the antisemitic rhetoric and the recorded attacks on Jewish monuments or synagogues are disproportionately high. (Anti-Defamation League, 2019). Chrysi Aygi (Golden Dawn), a neo-Nazi party until recently with parliamentary representation (now in disguise), is the most important advocate of antisemitic views in contemporary Greece, but the spread of Holocaust distortion is among all parts of the Greek political spectrum and society. Some disconcerting incidents vary across all levels of government and different ideological persuasions. One of the key concerns regarding the relationship between politics and antisemitism is that there are many incidents of anti-Jewish rhetoric, with perpetrators from both the ideological left and right.

In many of those incidents, the role of the Greek Church is pivotal. Stemming from Christian anti-Judaism, it often takes other forms like anti-Zionism or Jewish conspiracies (Human Rights First, 2014).

[26] For more information, see https://holocaustinportugal.letras.ulisboa.pt
[27] Antoniou G, Dinas E., Kosmidis S, Saltiel L, 2017). *Antisemitism in Greece today*, Heinrich Böll Stiftung. https://gr.boell.org/el/2017/03/02/o-antisimitismos-stin-ellada-simera

The mass media play a big role as well. The way antisemitism is reported or, more often, not reported helps the phenomenon to expand and become an everyday theme that should not carry any consequences for the politician or any other figure harbouring similar views in public. The lack of an inclusivity culture also plays a role. Some mainstream newspapers also put forward subtle and not-so-subtle opinions against the Jews (especially when Middle East politics and conflicts are on the agenda) (Eliezer, V., 2017).

In a partially unpublished survey of 2017, 21% of Greeks responded that the deportations of Greek Jews had a positive effect on Greek society. An additional 17.7% had neutral feelings about this question. 27% of respondents replied that they had too much of a Holocaust discussion and time has come to leave it behind as a topic. 29% responded that the Jewish people were exterminated because they did not resist; 33% responded that they were exterminated because people disliked them because of their actions, and a stunning 57% because they were rich. In a 2015 report, an impressive 70% of Greeks replied they had suffered worse genocides than the Jewish people, a result that, since then, has been verified in a 2017 and a 2018 survey. Greeks have replied in similar numbers that they have suffered more than the Armenians, Bosnians and a fictional ethnic group that one study invented alike[28].

How do these numbers relate to demographic characteristics? We find very weak associations with gender, but in terms of age, we find that older citizens are more likely to harbour antisemitic views. The penetration of antisemitism is more prevalent for voters of the extremes, both left and right. However, ideology can mean many things to different people. Self-assessments of cosmopolitanism and ethnocentrism predict antisemitism; Cosmopolitans are less likely to express antisemitic attitudes. The same pattern is observed in other sets of attitudes; we find that respondents who have a general tendency to subscribe to conspiracy theories are more likely to express antisemitic views.

In Greek society, the concept of victimhood is a powerful tool for misusing Holocaust analogies, driven by two dimensions (Antoniou, Dinas & Kosmidis, 2020). The first is an obsession with the past, marked by a sense of injustice, exclusion, and defeat, rooted in a narrative of foreign interventions and a culture of "victimhood nationalism" (Rozett, 2022). The second dimension relates to the global culture of victimhood, where the Holocaust is used as a comparison for various groups, often distorting history. This mindset is especially prevalent among far-right parties seeking recognition for "Greek" genocides and is reflected in anti-racism initiatives and online platforms addressing victimisation and memory.

During the 2009 austerity crisis, Greece's past was invoked to fuel conspiracy theories and populist responses, with comparisons drawn between Nazi Occupations and Merkel with Hitler. Critics of the government were labelled "collaborators", and debates over Nazi war reparations gained attention as a way to regain national pride. Politicians like Alexis Tsipras even compared the crisis to a

[28] The published part of the survey can be found here. Antoniou G, Dinas E., Kosmidis S, Saltiel L, 2017). *Antisemitism in Greece today*, Heinrich Böll Stiftung. https://gr.boell.org/el/2017/03/02/o-antisimitismos-stin-ellada-simera

"Social Holocaust". Antoniou, Dinas, and Kosmidis (2020) argue that the Greek national narrative emphasises victimhood, leading to envy and distortion when comparing the nation's suffering to that of others, particularly Jews during the Holocaust.

2.3.2 Italy

The report "Antisemitic Prejudices in Europe: Survey in 16 European Countries" (Kovács & Fischer, 2021) finds that Italy has relatively low levels of antisemitic sentiment, ranking in the "middle" among European countries regarding primary antisemitism, characterised by deep-rooted stereotypes and prejudices.[29] The results indicated that 9% of Italians were classified as moderately antisemitic, while 10% were classified as strongly antisemitic. With regard to cognitive antisemitism, 32% of Italians aged 18-75 exhibited moderate antisemitic attitudes, while 3% demonstrated strong antisemitic attitudes. Finally, in terms of affective antisemitism, 13% exhibited moderate antisemitic attitudes, while 10% demonstrated strong antisemitic attitudes.

The same report presents findings on the prevalence of secondary antisemitism and Holocaust distortion[30]. The results show that secondary antisemitic attitudes, such as Holocaust distortion, are more common than primary antisemitism in Italy, with 35% of adults aged 18-75 exhibiting such views. Of these, 33% have moderately antisemitic attitudes, while 2% have strongly antisemitic attitudes. It is also noteworthy that, according to the 2019 ADL/Global 100 Index[31], 38% of participants believe that Jews discuss the Holocaust excessively.

In terms of perceptions about the prevalence of the phenomenon, the Third Survey on Discrimination and Hate Crimes against Jews in the EU (EU, 2024) found that 74% of Jewish respondents in Italy consider antisemitism is a big problem in their lives. 73% think that antisemitism in Italy has increased in the last five years, while 98% have encountered antisemitism in their daily life

[29] Primary antisemitism refers to the traditional, long-standing forms of antisemitic prejudice that have existed for centuries, often rooted in cultural, religious or ethnic stereotypes. This type of antisemitism typically involves beliefs, attitudes and ideologies that portray Jews as a threat or an inferior group. These beliefs may be deeply embedded in social or religious narratives and have been passed down through generations. Primary antisemitism has a cognitive and an affective dimension. The cognitive dimension refers to negative beliefs, stereotypes and judgments about Jews and is the more "rationalised" or ideological form of antisemitism, while the affective dimension refers to negative emotions or feelings towards Jews, such as hatred, fear, disgust or resentment. These reactions are not always based on conscious thought, but rather on emotional reactions or deep-seated prejudices

[30] Secondary antisemitism is a form of antisemitism that arises in response to the memory of the Holocaust and, more broadly, the post-Holocaust era. In contrast to primary antisemitism, secondary antisemitism is often characterised by attitudes that downplay, deny or even blame Jews for the consequences of the Holocaust. The following indicators are used to identify the questions that comprise the secondary antisemitism that relativises the Holocaust:
- The number of Jewish victims of the Holocaust was much lower than is usually claimed.
- Jews are also to blame for the persecution against them.
- Many of the atrocities of the Holocaust were often exaggerated by the Jews later.
- Jews exploit Holocaust victimhood for their own purposes.
- Jews still talk too much about the Holocaust.
- We must keep the memory of the persecution of the Jews alive.
- After so many decades have passed since the persecution of the Jews, the Holocaust should be taken off the public agenda.

[31] https://global100.adl.org/country/italy/2019

in the year before the survey. At the same time, the results of the 2019 Eurobarometer survey[32], which aims to measure the public's perception of antisemitism in their respective countries, show that Holocaust denial is perceived as the most important problem by 61% of Italian respondents.

Despite the absence of empirical evidence concerning the prevalence of this phenomenon, it is widely acknowledged that the distortion of the Holocaust is pervasive in political discourse. This manifests itself in comparisons with other events and crises[33], including recent analogies between the Holocaust and the restrictions imposed in response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic[34].

Holocaust imagery is increasingly misused in media and public discourse, particularly in debates on unrelated issues. Recent examples include distorted press reports about Israel's actions in Gaza and the false claim that the establishment of Israel served as collective compensation for Holocaust victims. In education, inadequate coverage or misrepresentation of the Holocaust contributes to its trivialisation. In secondary history teaching, excessive focus on Nazi actions risks oversimplifying the Holocaust while neglecting fascist collaboration and post-fascist state-sponsored antisemitism in Italy. Instances of Holocaust misrepresentation also emerge in university curricula, where some institutions have censored discussions on genocide or failed to address antisemitism critically. However, the most prevalent distortions occur on social media and during anti-Israel protests, where Holocaust references are often misused for shock value or political points. This includes memes, modified images, and videos that either deny the Holocaust or distort historical facts.

In order to gain insight into the prevalence of Holocaust distortion in Italy, it is essential to first acknowledge the findings of the Observatory of Antisemitism of the Contemporary Jewish Documentation Center (CDEC, 2024)[35]. In their 2024 report, the CDEC documented 454 incidents of antisemitic behaviour that occurred in 2023. Of these, 90 incidents were classified as pertaining to neo-Nazi/neofascist antisemitism, denial and trivialisation of the Shoah, accounting for 20% of the total incidents recorded.

The report highlights various antisemitic tropes distorting the Holocaust, rooted in longstanding prejudices. These include Holocaust inversion and trivialisation, such as comparing Nazi-era anti-Jewish policies to the Green Pass during the COVID-19 pandemic or accusing Israel of committing a "Holocaust" against Palestinians. Such tropes often aim to discredit Jews and Israel, portraying them as emulating the Nazis (Chapelan & Becker, 2024). Additionally, extreme right-wing

[32] https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2220

[33] In 2014, the politician Beppe Grillo used improperly Primo Levi's poem "If this is a Man" on his blog; in 2017, the then Minister of Health Lorenzin was portrayed as a Nazi for her policy of compulsory vaccination of children; in 2018, the president of the Campania region compared the PD (Democratic Party) to the Jews in 1938.

[34] For example, the term "health dictatorship" and comparisons with Nazi policies that trivialised the historical suffering of Holocaust victims were used.

[35] In 2023, the Observatory of Antisemitism (CDEC) recorded 454 incidents, up from 241 in 2022. Of these, 259 were online and 195 offline. A significant rise occurred between October and December, with 216 incidents, compared to 67 in 2022. Offline incidents included physical assault, defamation, death threats, and vandalism, such as mezuzahs being ripped off doors. Online antisemitism was prominent across platforms like Facebook, X, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Telegram.

circles have promoted the idea of “Nazi Jews supporting Ukrainian Nazism”, equating Jews, including President Zelensky, to Nazis. This ideology claims Zionism is a form of Nazism, which antisemites oppose due to its alleged association with xenophobia and hatred.

The distortion and trivialisation of the Holocaust is not the exclusive domain of the radical right[36]. Rhetoric from Arab-Islamic extremism and some far-left groups, especially around 27 January, often refers to a “real Holocaust” (the Palestinian one), accusing “Nazi-Zionist” collaboration.[37] After the 7 October attack, insults grew more crude and violent, with phrases like "Never again" and “We remember” (Chapelan & Becker, 2024) used to equate Holocaust remembrance with the Gaza crisis. Some minimise the Holocaust's impact, suggesting Jews benefited from it, while others accuse Jews of using the Holocaust to advance their own interests, reversing victim and perpetrator roles. Since March 2020, Holocaust distortion has appeared in anti-vaccination rhetoric, with Holocaust-related antisemitism primarily targeting Senator Liliana Segre, accusing her of lying and complicity with Zionist actions, vaccination policies, and Nazism.

2.3.3 Hungary

In a report on the representation of Jews and antisemitism in an educational context in Hungary, Szőnyi (2024a) provides an overview of recent research studies focusing on the level of antisemitism in Hungary (among other countries), as presented below. The study “Antisemitic Prejudices in Europe: Survey in 16 European Countries” (Kovács & Fischer, 2021) examines antisemitism in 16 European countries, including Hungary, in 2019-2020. Its results indicate that over 40% of the Hungarian population harbours primary antisemitic views, which encompass both strong and moderate cognitive and affective antisemitism (Kovács & Fisher, 2021). Another research, focusing on the Visegrád countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), found that in Hungary, the percentage of individuals with antisemitic attitudes exceeds 50%, which is higher than in the other three countries (Barna et al., 2022). Additionally, according to the 2023 ADL GLOBAL 100 survey[38], 37% of Hungarians express antisemitic views, a decrease from over 40% reported in previous years, which aligns with findings from earlier studies conducted before 2023 (Szőnyi, 2024a).

The Memorial to the victims of the German occupation, unveiled on 20 July 2014 in Budapest’s Szabadság Square, has sparked significant controversy (see in more detail in the previous chapter connected to Hungary). Depicting Hungary as an innocent angel and Germany as an evil eagle, it has been criticised for distorting history, particularly Hungary’s role in persecuting and deporting Jews.

[36] The reappropriation of Shoah memory through the use of stumbling stones [Stolperstein] is exemplified in Padua, where the neo-fascist group CasaPound erected a stumbling block in front of the town hall. A comparable action was undertaken in Gorizia on Viale D’Annunzio. The inscription on the brass plaque reads, “For Palestine and her children”.

[37] For example, on 11 and 12 December 2023, the following comments were posted on Facebook: “What is happening in Gaza is not even comparable to the Holocaust"; *“If they had exterminated you all that time, we would live in a better world... You are worse than Hitler, you suck.”*

[38] For more information on the ADL GLOBAL 100 survey, see https://global100.adl.org/country/hungary/2023 (accessed 08.12.2024). The ADL measures only one dimension of antisemitism, the so-called cognitive dimension (the acceptance of antisemitic statements), but does not assess its affective (emotional) or conative (behavioural) dimensions

The monument was erected hastily, without public consultation, and despite widespread protests, it was installed without public access or a formal i installation ceremony (Erőss, 2016).

The so-called 'Living Memorial (in Hungarian Eleven Emlékmű) was a spontaneous reaction to the above-mentioned misrepresentation, constructed directly in front of the memorial to the victims of the German occupation. The 'Living Monument' became a symbol of protest through personal objects, photographs and copies of letters, constantly evolving and enriched by the memorials placed there. This alternative memorial not only recalls the events of the past but also acts as a living expression of civil resistance and collective memory, emphasising the active role of society in coming to terms with history and the importance of confronting the past.

The complexity of Hungarian memory politics is evident in the interplay between the Trianon Peace Treaty[39] and the Holocaust. The victim narrative dominates both, reinforced by competing memories in public discourse (Gerner, 2006; Gyáni, 2012; György, 2012). Research by Knap et al. (2021) and Barna and Knap (2023) analysing online press articles highlights these dynamics. For Trianon, the narrative focuses on passive victimhood and "heroic soldiers", framing losses as "meaningless sacrifice". In contrast, Holocaust memory is often linked to the silenced trauma of Soviet rule. Far-right articles predominantly emphasise Trianon, downplaying the Holocaust by portraying Trianon's losses as greater (Knap et al., 2021).

Competing victimhood narratives frequently appear in public discourse and political communication. The latter often employs double messaging, particularly regarding responsibility and historical memory, as seen in debates surrounding statues of Miklós Horthy and Bálint Hóman[40] and György Donáth[41]. Hungarian memory politics still emphasise Trianon trauma and passive victimhood, especially in narratives about soldiers and Hungarians abroad, with less focus on these traits in World War II and Holocaust narratives (Knap et al., 2021).

2.3.4 Portugal

Holocaust denial is not expressly mentioned in the Portuguese Criminal Code. However, its Article 240(2) punishes those who, in public and by any means, make an apology, deny or grossly trivialising crimes of genocide, war or against peace and humanity resulting in (a) violence, or (b) defamation, or (c) threat, or (d) incite violence and hatred against a person or group of persons because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or physical or mental disability, with imprisonment of between six months and five years. In 2012, the Supreme Court highlighted the balance between freedom of opinion and protecting fundamental legal values,

[39] The Treaty of Trianon, or Trianon Peace Dictate, recorded the dissolution of historical Hungary after World War I as one of the elements of the Paris Peace Accords of 4 June 1920. The peace treaty defined Hungary's new borders, and its territory and population were reduced to a third of their former size.

[40] During his time as Minister of Religion and Education, he supported the introduction of the so-called Jewish laws that restricted the rights of Jews and contributed to the antisemitic political environment.

[41] Although he is seen as a victim of the communist regime, he was a prominent figure in the far-right, antisemitic and nationalist political movements of the 1930s.

ruling that mere dissemination of ideas, however unjustified, is not criminal unless it supports genocide or justifies it, such as blaming victims for their suffering.[42] The Portuguese Official Journal / Legal Gazette, *Diário da República* (DRE), fosters a Lectionary and provides an entry to the Crime of Incitement to Hatred and Violence, which is linked to crimes against peace and humanity, hate speech, incitement to violence, and denial or publicly condoning of a crime.

The crime of "hate speech" involves publicly inciting violence, defamation, threats, or insults against individuals or groups based on characteristics like ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Defined in Article 240(2) of the Penal Code, it carries a prison sentence of 6 months to 5 years and excludes private conduct. Punishable acts must occur in public spaces or through dissemination methods like speeches, graffiti, posters, media, or public online posts. Such acts must promote or deny crimes against peace and humanity with discriminatory effects, provoking violence, threats, or hatred against targeted groups.

While Holocaust distortion is not widespread in Portugal, some troubling trends deserve attention. A small number of citizens have compared public health measures, like mask mandates, to the restrictions faced by Jews during the Holocaust, trivialising the systematic persecution and murder of millions. Additionally, animal rights activists, such as the group Holocausto Animal (2014-2019), have drawn controversial analogies between the Holocaust and the treatment of animals in factory farms. On January 27, 2022, Holocaust Remembrance Day, protests in Lisbon used this comparison to highlight cruelty in the livestock industry, raising awareness of animal suffering[43].

In a relevant academic discussion in the public sphere, Portuguese diplomats João Hall Themido and Carlos Fernandes publicly criticised Aristides de Sousa Mendes, a renowned rescuer of Jews during the Holocaust. Themido's autobiography, *Uma Autobiografia Disfarçada*, and Fernandes' book, *O Cônsul Aristides Sousa Mendes: A Verdade e a Mentira*, both minimise Sousa Mendes' role in saving lives, contributing to the seemingly undocumented historical reassessment of a national symbol (Themido 2008, Fernandes 2023). Similarly, Diogo Ramada Curto, full professor of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, also criticised Aristides de Sousa Mendes in his article[44] "O Desconhecido Veiga Simões". Curto questioned Sousa Mendes' actions during World War II and minimised his role in rescuing Jews.

In response, Holocaust scholar Irene Pimentel refuted Curto's claims in her article[45] "Acerca de Alberto da Veiga Simões e de Aristides de Sousa Mendes". Pimentel defended Sousa Mendes, highlighting his significant humanitarian efforts and challenging the inaccuracies presented by Curto.

[42] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698043/EPRS_BRI(2021)698043_EN.pdf

[43] https://oholocaustoanimal.wordpress.com/2019/03/06/comunicado-aos-nossos-seguidores/ and https://www.facebook.com/events/247038170841717/

[44] https://expresso.pt/cultura/2017-11-06-Acerca-de-Alberto-da-Veiga-Simoes-e-de-Aristides-de-Sousa-Mendes

[45] https://expresso.pt/cultura/2017-11-06-Acerca-de-Alberto-da-Veiga-Simoes-e-de-Aristides-de-Sousa-Mendes

In June 2020, Pimentel criticised inaccuracies about Aristides de Sousa Mendes on Wikipedia[46]. Pimentel highlighted several errors and misrepresentations regarding Sousa Mendes' actions and legacy, emphasising the importance of accurate historical documentation[47].

False narratives about the Holocaust spread online, such as a far-right podcast by Sérgio Tavares falsely claiming George Soros's father collaborated with the Nazis. These distortions fuel antisemitic conspiracy theories.[48] The heavy-metal band Holocausto Canibal, formed in Portugal in 1997, bears a provocative name referencing a notorious exploitation film.[49] Similarly, José Rodrigues dos Santos's novel *O Mágico de Auschwitz* faced criticism for trivialising the Holocaust, with controversial claims about gas chambers being a "more humane" Nazi method and suggesting Jews adapted to Auschwitz, downplaying their immense suffering.[50] In 2019, history students from the University of Coimbra named their allegorical car 'Alcoholocausto' at their emblematic students' feast *Queima das Fitas* (2019). This act sparked controversy for its insensitivity and trivialisation of the Holocaust[51].

In the late 20th century, there were a few isolated incidents of Holocaust denial in Portugal. In 1996, Artur Nunes da Silva referred to the "myth of the Holocaust" (Jornal de Notícias, 2/8), while Silva Resende, director of *O Dia*, excused Nazi crimes (10/9). In 1997, General Carlos Azeredo, a candidate for Oporto City Council, used quotation marks around the word "Holocaust" (Público, 1/8). He received support from Madeira's ex-president, Alberto João Jardim, who claimed to know "what the organisation of the international Jewish movement is" and criticized the focus on Nazi crimes (Público, 16/8 and 20/8/97). Additionally, an opinion piece by Pedro Miguel Melo de Almeida[52], where quotation marks were again placed around the word Holocaust and the figure of six million Jewish deaths was questioned[53].

The far-right blog[54] Consciência Nacional published Holocaust denial content, which was refuted by the newspaper *Observador*'s Fact Check section. On the Consciência Nacional website, there are multiple attempts to contradict historical facts: "Typhus was the real killer of most prisoners in concentration camps," "there were no gassings at Auschwitz," "the Jews declared war on Germany

[46] In her article "A versão falseada sobre Aristides de Sousa Mendes", published in *Público* on June 21, 2020

[47] https://www.publico.pt/2020/06/21/politica/noticia/versao-falseada-aristides-sousa-mendes-wikipedia-1921080
http://irenepimentel.blogspot.com/2020/06/a-versao-falseada-sobre-aristides-de.html

[48] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IoMd61a4Whc [around 53:00]. More information on the podcaster Sérgio Tavares: https://mediatrust.ubi.pt/analise-do-caso-sergio-tavares/

[49] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocausto_Canibal

[50] https://www.nit.pt/cultura/livros/jose-rodrigues-dos-santos-dizer-que-os-judeus-se-adaptaram-a-auschwitz-e-obsceno

[51] https://www.cmjornal.pt/portugal/detalhe/alcoholocausto-cortejo-da-queima-das-fitas-de-coimbra-gera-polemica-por-causa-de-nome-de-carro-alegorico

[52] https://www.publico.pt/2003/03/24/jornal/a-proposito-do-holocausto-199449

[53] Irene Pimentel. "De novo, a mentira da negação do Holocausto..." *Público* (2023): 14 de Abril de 2003 https://www.publico.pt/2003/04/14/jornal/de-novo-a-mentira-da-negacao-do-holocausto-200173

[54] https://consciencianacional.blogspot.com/2020/01/holocausto-desmontar-o-mito.html

in 1933," and "the number of Jews who died in the war ranges between 150,000 and 400,000, as proven by Red Cross records[55]."

Although no systematic research has been conducted on Holocaust distortion and misinformation in Portugal, there has been limited research on the Holocaust and antisemitism (Garcia, 2023; Nunes, 2023; Trigo, 2023; Nunes, 2014)[56]. In Portugal, antisemitism exists, though rarely expressed openly or violently (cf. Anti-Defamation League, ADL Global 100 Index, 2019). According to surveys like the European Commission's Special Eurobarometer, a significant portion of the Portuguese population perceives antisemitism as a problem – 41% in one survey, with 18 percent believing it had worsened over five years. Additionally, concerns about possible antisemitic actions have been raised about political figures, such as the incoming EU Council president, António Costa, and incidents like the 2019 U.S. State Department report mentioning religious discrimination. Jewish Communities have warned about lingering antisemitic attitudes, particularly in political and legal circles. While debates over political figures like António Costa persist[57], there is consensus that Portugal as a whole does not foster antisemitism, illustrating the nuanced reality of the issue[58]. According to the 2014 ADL Global 100 survey, antisemitic attitudes in Portugal are 20% lower than the EU average and one-third lower than in Spain.

The most serious incident occurred on September 25, 2007, when neo-Nazis vandalised 17 graves in Lisbon's Jewish cemetery. Esther Mucznik suggests that the limited presence of antisemitism may stem from the fact that many Portuguese, forced to convert to Christianity in 1497, have Jewish roots they acknowledge. However, certain Portuguese terms, such as *judeu* (a mean person) and *judiaria* (mischief), reflect deep-seated hostility toward Jews. While the Middle East conflict has not fuelled antisemitism in Portugal, it has led to criticism of Israel, and false comparisons between the Holocaust and the situation in Gaza persist. Efforts like Memoshoá work to combat these distortions through education.

[55] https://observador.pt/factchecks/fact-check-o-numero-de-6-milhoes-de-judeus-mortos-no-holocausto-nao-passa-de-um-mito/

[56] The following paper provides comprehensive research on the historiographical production of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism in Portugal in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th: Nunes, J. P. A. (2014). Darwinismo social e anti-semitismo: o caso português. *CEM–Cultura, Espaço & Memória*, (5).

[57] https://www.jns.org/porto-jews-warn-incoming-eu-council-president-has-history-of-antisemitism/

[58] https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/portugal/

3. Teachers' perspectives

The interviewed teachers across Greece, Hungary, Italy, and Portugal share several common traits, with notable differences in gender distribution, school types, and geographical locations. In Greece, the majority are female (9 out of 10), highly experienced (9), and primarily history teachers (7), with most working in public schools (8) in urban settings (6). Similarly, in Italy, most teachers are female (9), all are experienced, and the majority specialise in history (7), though they work across diverse school types, particularly in sciences (4) and humanities schools (3). Portugal shows a more balanced gender distribution (4 women, 6 men), with all teachers being experienced and mostly history educators (7), working predominantly in public schools (7) with a strong presence in urban (5) and suburban (4) areas. Hungary presents the most diverse mix in terms of school types, with vocational schools (5) being the most common and an even split between urban and rural educators (5 each). Across all four countries, Holocaust education expertise is generally high, with the majority of teachers being experts (ranging from 7 to 9 per country). While most educators work in urban settings, suburban and rural areas also have representation, particularly in Portugal and Hungary.

It is important to note that this is a small sample and may not be fully representative of the broader teaching populations in these countries. The gender distribution varies significantly, with Greece and Italy having predominantly female participants, while Portugal and Hungary show a more balanced mix. There are variations that highlight possible differences in teacher demographics and school structures across countries, depending also on the geographical location of the schools and their resources.

3.1 Teaching methods and challenges

3.1.1 Methods

Holocaust educators share common goals of fostering historical awareness and empathy, yet their methods vary based on experience, institutional context, and local history. While experienced educators employ interactive techniques like survivor testimonies, literature, and experiential learning, others rely more on traditional lectures and textbooks. Many also integrate local history to make lessons more relevant. This section explores the diverse teaching strategies used in Greece, Portugal, Hungary, and Italy, highlighting both shared practices and unique national approaches.

In Greece, Holocaust educators demonstrate both shared objectives and diverse methods, influenced by their experience levels, institutional frameworks, and the challenges inherent in teaching this sensitive topic. Experienced educators exhibit a nuanced understanding of Holocaust education, skilfully integrating diverse teaching methods, including films, testimonies, and extracurricular projects, to engage students meaningfully. For example, one of them moderates discussions firmly, ensuring harmful views are addressed constructively. Conversely, less experienced educators rely more heavily on traditional methods like textbooks and lectures.

Many educators utilise films, presentations, and testimonies to humanise the Holocaust and foster empathy. For example, including firsthand testimonies to connect students emotionally to the

historical events, emphasising the humanity of the victims and is critical of the use of many popular films due to the distorted historical reality they portray for artistic reasons, *"It is common knowledge that cinema is always helpful in teaching history but for the older students films such as "La vita e Bella" work as a starting point to distinguish the real elements from the fake, romanticised ones".* Extracurricular activities, such as student competitions, creative documentaries, and translations of survivor testimonies, are also frequent methods of dealing with the topic. These projects help students explore the Holocaust in-depth and from unique perspectives, encouraging independent thinking and active participation.

Some teachers integrate local history, such as Thessaloniki's Jewish cultural heritage, to make lessons more relatable by taking their students on educational walks through the city's main monuments and places of historical interest. By connecting the Holocaust to students' own communities, they create a stronger connection to the subject. Also, some educators incorporate literature, art, and written testimonies to provoke thought and discussion. These materials encourage students to reflect on the emotional and ethical aspects of the Holocaust, broadening their understanding beyond historical facts. Teachers also facilitate classroom conversations that address controversial topics, stereotypes, and misconceptions. These discussions provide a platform for students to express their views while being guided toward a deeper understanding of tolerance and acceptance.

Similarly, in Portugal, the educators employ diverse methods to teach the Holocaust, ranging from historical analysis and literature to creative and immersive activities. For instance, an extremely passionate and experienced teacher combines traditional teaching with experiential learning, such as organising exhibitions and displaying survivors' testimonies. This approach is mirrored by other, who integrates Holocaust education into philosophy classes to explore ethical and philosophical themes, such as justice and morality. Some of them use films like *The Pianist* and *Schindler's List* to foster emotional engagement, while others connect Holocaust themes to broader discussions of human rights through literature. Additionally, one of them created a play with her students to creatively engage them with Holocaust history, emphasising the role of active participation.

The main methods, tools and focuses that the interviewed Hungarian teachers use to teach about the Holocaust include key strategies. First of all, they emphasise emotional engagement, using multimedia resources, survivor testimonies, and personal narratives to humanise the Holocaust. As one of them noted: *"The hardest but most essential part is getting students to see that these events aren't just old stories; they're reminders of what can happen when hate is allowed to grow."*

Hungarian teachers address misconceptions through discussions and rely on credible sources, while projects, exhibitions, and commemorative events foster active student involvement. Beginning with the roots of antisemitism, they introduce students to its events and consequences without overwhelming them with shocking imagery. Teachers often use visual materials, such as documentaries and Centropa's short films, which they described as *"concise, engaging, and deeply resonant"*. Literature and arts-based lessons also play a role: teachers integrate Holocaust themes into both literature and history, using works by Imre Kertész, Miklós Radnóti, and Antal Szerb to explore Jewish

identity and persecution. Some of them also incorporate moral dilemmas from *The Fifth Seal* to encourage ethical reflection. Also, films like *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist* enrich discussions, while project-based and place-based learning add depth. For instance, students created AI-generated posters and led Holocaust Remembrance Day discussions, fostering ownership of their learning. Visits to local memorials, synagogues, and museums such as the House of Terror or Auschwitz-Birkenau are also key teaching methods used by the Hungarian teachers. These methods (beyond the scope of regular lessons) often sparked meaningful conversations and helped students connect emotionally to the subject matter, and, in some cases, even shifted their perspectives.

The teaching of the Holocaust by Italian educators reveals a spectrum of experiences, methodologies, and challenges. Teachers with extensive expertise have developed nuanced approaches over years of dedicated teaching, as one of them mentions: *"When I deal with the Shoah [...] I can start with easier topics in the first grade [...] and in the last year I deal with more complex topics".* These educators emphasise critical thinking, experiential learning, and interdisciplinary strategies. In contrast, other teachers seek further institutional support and training to enhance their effectiveness. Some teachers despite specializing in areas other than history, integrate Holocaust education into their lessons through literature and culture, highlighting how diverse disciplines can enrich understanding.

Teachers use a range of methods to engage their pupils. Experiential activities, such as memorial visits and national competitions, foster emotional connections and deepen learning: *"they (students) need to know that the work they have done has an impact outside the classroom"*. Multimedia tools, including films, survivor testimonies, and literature, are employed by other teachers to create varied and impactful lessons. Additionally, another educator said that the integration of Jewish culture and history through literature illuminates the broader historical context and the use of primary sources, and as highlighted by two other educators, further encourages analytical skills among students.

3.1.2 Challenges

Across Greece, Portugal, Hungary, and Italy, educators face significant challenges in teaching the Holocaust, including time constraints, outdated curricula, and a lack of institutional support. Many rely on personal initiatives to supplement inadequate resources, while others encounter resistance from colleagues or societal pressures. Limited training opportunities and rigid curricula further hinder efforts to provide comprehensive and engaging Holocaust education. This section explores these obstacles and the ways educators navigate them in different national contexts.

Most of the interviewed Greek educators agree that the current curriculum inadequately supports comprehensive Holocaust education. Some teachers highlight outdated or insufficient textbook content and advocate for an overhaul of the curriculum. While others (teaching in German schools), benefit from structured curricula that prioritise Holocaust education and provide ample resources. The Greek curriculum lacks integration of the Holocaust in younger grades and across

interdisciplinary subjects, creating missed opportunities for early education on tolerance and human rights.

One of the most commonly reported issues is the limited time allocated to Holocaust education within the curriculum. Teachers note that a single hour or a short unit is insufficient to cover the complexities of the Holocaust and it's the most common to only teach about the Holocaust on January 27th, as mentioned by all the interviewees, *"Another colleague and I fight tooth and nail to keep the history class in order to have even the slightest opportunity to teach about it"*. In addition, many educators criticise textbooks as being either outdated or overly simplistic. Some of them frequently supplement or replace these materials with their own curated content, such as multimedia tools, PowerPoint presentations and survivor testimonies, but this demands extra effort and preparation that not all teachers are capable of, nor motivated to do.

In Portugal, many teachers rely on their own initiative to create. A teacher who attended a Yad Vashem seminar described its transformative impact on her teaching but lamented the lack of similar opportunities for other educators. meaningful educational experiences. This gap is compounded by the absence of Holocaust-focused modules in teacher training programs. One of the experienced educators emphasised the absence of structured support and called for the Ministry of Education to implement systematic training initiatives. The lack of time within the curriculum is a significant barrier, describing the teaching manual as a "bible" that leaves little room for supplementary topics or in-depth exploration.

The systemic failure to equip teachers with the necessary tools and resources to address such a complex subject comprehensively was emphasised by all educators. One of them mentioned resistance from colleagues, some of whom perceive Holocaust education as repetitive or irrelevant. This resistance often stems from non-humanities faculty, such as science teachers, who have remarked, *"It happened 80 years ago. You should choose a more contemporary topic."* Time constraints and the rigidity of the curriculum further complicate efforts to provide comprehensive Holocaust education. Initial scepticism among peers was also described, but noted that collaborative activities eventually fostered engagement.

The Hungarian interviewed teachers frequently cited significant challenges to teaching about the Holocaust in general. Time constraints further limit their ability to address the Holocaust comprehensively, as the model curriculum allocates only two, at most three, lessons to cover the Holocaust. Some teachers also reported feeling considerable pressure to keep pace with the curriculum and ensure all topics were covered by the end of the school year. This problem was highlighted by one of them saying: *"There are things that are compulsory to be taught, you teach them, and then you might have an extra hour to go round the subject a bit, but then it's in 12th grade, shortly before graduation, when time is really tight. And then usually every lesson is broken down into exactly what you need to repeat, moving forward."*

Institutional barriers also pose challenges for teachers. They often lack formal training or access to specialised resources on Holocaust education and also on distortion, leaving them to rely on personal initiatives and mostly on discussions with students, when they experience distorted views or

antisemitic remarks. As one of them mentioned: *"There's barely any space to really dig into these topics… We're constantly moving through the material, and while I'd love to spend more time addressing things like distortion, there's just no room in the schedule."* Also, financial support for initiatives remains largely limited (e.g., for field trips even within the country). A Hungarian teacher expressed frustration over instances where colleagues were either unsupportive or passive, citing examples such as failing to inform their students about available opportunities (e.g., meeting a Holocaust survivor who has been invited to their school).

An incident was recounted where colleagues in the teachers' room dismissed the importance of Holocaust Remembrance Day: *"There was Holocaust Remembrance Day, for example, when we had to go to wreath-laying. Then some colleagues went to the teachers' room and said, 'Why should we do this, that Jews should be happy to live here', and so on."*

In Italy, the curriculum's support for Holocaust education appears inconsistent across schools. Some educators report a lack of encouragement from their institutions, particularly when proposing innovative or time-intensive projects: *"I was only allowed to organise one meeting in the afternoon because, according to them, [organising it] in the morning would steal school time"*. This lack of institutional support sometimes stems from colleagues' resistance, where initiatives were undervalued or actively boycotted. Additionally, there is little evidence of a cohesive national toolkit or framework to guide educators in Holocaust education. The need for structured guidelines and resources to prevent distortion and misinformation was explicitly mentioned.

Resistance from colleagues and institutional inertia was also noted, it often hampers the execution of ambitious projects. Societal factors, including parents' objections and the politicisation of Holocaust discourse, create additional hurdles. Another challenge lies in student disengagement, which can arise from repetitiveness or emotional fatigue, as one teacher put it, *"I wouldn't talk about gas chambers with primary or middle school pupils, but rather about right and wrong, human rights, stories of survivors"* in relation to what should be taught when.

Several teachers noted the influence of geopolitical events, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on perceptions of the Holocaust. For instance, it was observed that colleagues abandoned Holocaust education projects as a form of protest against the war in the Middle East. Similarly, a teacher reported a colleague refusing to engage in Holocaust-related education due to perceived inappropriateness during ongoing conflicts: *"When you trivialise [history], you're also denying some historical events"*, and also*: "You can't distort the history of the Shoah and its victims with inappropriate comparisons"*. Some teachers expressed frustration with colleagues who inadvertently perpetuate distortion by avoiding the topic or introducing biases. Such attitudes create obstacles for educators striving to maintain the integrity of Holocaust education, further isolating them in their efforts.

3.1.3 Students' response

In Greece, Portugal, Hungary, and Italy, students generally engage with Holocaust education through emotional and intellectual connections, particularly when personal stories, films, and interactive discussions are used. While many express interest and curiosity, challenges persist, such as a lack of

foundational knowledge, resistance to controversial topics, or viewing the Holocaust as a distant event. Educators emphasise the importance of empathy-driven approaches and incorporating local history to make the subject more relatable. Despite facing barriers like outdated materials and limited time, teachers use creative methods to foster student engagement and provoke philosophical and ethical discussions.

Greek teachers report that visual aids, personal stories, and interactive discussions often evoke strong emotional and intellectual engagement. For example, personal photos from Auschwitz leave a lasting impression, while films and literature help students connect with the human aspect of the Holocaust. However, misconceptions and resistance can also arise, particularly when students lack foundational knowledge or exposure to the subject. Some teachers focus on correcting distorted views and providing a solid historical context. Discussions about the Holocaust can sometimes provoke resistance or misconceptions among students, particularly when addressing antisemitism or controversial comparisons. A Greek teacher said: *"Sometimes I am ashamed (as an educator) for the students that haven't been taught about these things earlier, because children are like sponges, when we teach and talk about the same topics with passion, again and again, they internalise them and they never forget them",* which shows that students absorb the lessons taught and it's possible to make a change.

In Portugal, students generally show a positive response to Holocaust education, engaging actively with the topic. Many express a strong desire to learn more, often reacting with shock and horror upon discovering the full scale of the Holocaust. However, some educators noted that despite their engagement, students may perceive the Holocaust as a distant event, limiting their emotional connection. This detachment was sometimes attributed to the educational disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which created gaps in students' broader historical understanding.

The pandemic also led to challenges in fostering critical thinking skills among younger students, who were often more vulnerable to misinformation. For example, some students had never been exposed to Holocaust narratives before, but after viewing films like *Schindler's List*, they were deeply moved. These experiences often sparked philosophical discussions about justice, humanity, and the morality of such atrocities. One teacher noted, *"At first, the students were very suspicious of films like Schindler's List, but they soon became moved and engaged, asking philosophical questions like, 'Why do others kill people like this?'"*

Many educators emphasised the importance of fostering empathy rather than relying on sensational or overly shocking methods. Students expressed curiosity and surprise, signaling a desire for further exploration of Holocaust topics, particularly in the context of broader ethical and philosophical discussions. Additionally, students often struggled to fully grasp the scope of the Holocaust's atrocities, reinforcing the importance of using credible sources to ensure a deeper understanding.

The Hungarian students' reactions to the topic of the Holocaust during the lessons varied from empathy and curiosity to initial scepticism or apathy, but were generally positive when lessons incorporated emotional and immersive elements. Some teachers observed a decline in shock or

surprise among younger generations, attributing this to increased exposure to Holocaust narratives, something that was brought up: *"The hardest part, I think, is capturing their interest. They see it as something that happened long ago, and they're more concerned with their own issues today."*

Teachers emphasised the need to engage students who, over time, increasingly view the Holocaust as a distant historical event. For vocational education teachers, this challenge is often compounded by the fact that their students are not required to take final graduation exams in history, leading to lower levels of interest in the subject. These teachers reported that such circumstances demand even greater effort to spark engagement in their classrooms.

Italian students' responses to Holocaust education vary widely but are often shaped by the methods used. Interactive and experiential learning tends to elicit enthusiasm, with many pupils expressing pride and commitment, as seen in two of the teachers' projects. However, students may initially resist the subject if it feels repetitive or disconnected from their lives. Teachers address this by linking the Holocaust to personal and regional histories, which helps students relate to the material. On the whole, educators report that students are empathetic and attentive when lessons are thoughtfully designed.

Holocaust education in Greece, Portugal, Hungary, and Italy demonstrates both shared objectives and diverse methodologies, aiming to foster empathy, critical thinking, and an understanding of human rights. Common teaching methods include the use of survivor testimonies, films, literature, and creative projects to humanise the Holocaust and connect students to its historical and ethical dimensions. Educators frequently incorporate local history and visits to local memorials and museums to make the topic relatable and meaningful. Experiential learning activities, like creative documentaries and classroom discussions, encourage active participation and deeper exploration of the subject. Despite these efforts, educators across these countries face similar challenges, such as limited curriculum time, outdated or insufficient teaching materials, and a lack of institutional support and, as a result, many teachers compensate by using their own resources and initiatives. Institutional barriers, including resistance from colleagues and rigid curriculums, often limit the scope of Holocaust education, forcing educators to innovate within tight constraints. Furthermore, societal factors, such as parents' objections, political influences, or a lack of teacher training opportunities, exacerbate the difficulties of addressing this complex and sensitive subject. However, Holocaust education resonates with students through interactive and empathy-driven approaches, such as survivor testimonies and local history connections, sparking curiosity and ethical discussions. While these methods often leave lasting impressions, challenges persist. By linking lessons to personal and regional contexts, educators aim to foster deeper engagement and ensure the relevance of these historical lessons in students' lives.

3.2 Holocaust distortion

3.2.1 Terminology interpretation

Educators' understanding of Holocaust distortion varies with their expertise. In Greece, experienced teachers can identify subtle forms of distortion, while less trained educators are still learning. In Portugal, limited exposure to distortion results in fewer teachers recognising it, although some highlight its presence through media literacy. Hungarian teachers often confuse distortion with antisemitism and denial, while Italian educators show varying levels of understanding, influenced by current geopolitical issues. These differences highlight the need for targeted training and resources to better address Holocaust distortion.

The educators' level of expertise and training played a significant role in shaping their understanding and approach to addressing Holocaust distortion. Experienced teachers in Greece demonstrated a thorough grasp of the term and its manifestations, drawing on years of teaching and participation in Holocaust education programs. Their depth of knowledge allowed them to identify nuanced forms of distortion, such as students doubting specific historical accounts or parroting conspiracy theories, and to implement targeted strategies to combat these issues. For instance, the importance of addressing misconceptions head-on was highlighted.

In contrast, educators with less formal Holocaust specialised training initially struggled to define Holocaust distortion, reflecting a lack of familiarity with the term. However, their responses during the interviews revealed a growing awareness as they connected the concept to incidents they had observed, such as students denying the Holocaust or repeating biased views from their social circles. This indicates that even without extensive training, educators can develop a more nuanced understanding of Holocaust distortion through reflective practice and exposure to professional dialogue on the subject. One of the interviewees who hasn't received formal training in Holocaust education said *"When you separate a historical event from what happened before and after it, it can be very easily distorted, if you concentrate only on a very small part of history you'll lose the essence of it, it is a matter of not knowing it's context"* and with that, he emphasised the need to teach the Holocaust in a broader historical perspective in order to safely avoid its distortion.

One of the most pressing challenges during the fieldwork was to identify Holocaust distortion information in the Portuguese setting. This can be partially explained by the low levels of antisemitism in Portugal (a conclusion that some teachers do not agree with), the absence of Jewish communities in the country and a low level of exposure to concepts such as distortion. As a result, comments about distortion are random in the interviews. Many Portuguese teachers lack familiarity with the concept of Holocaust distortion. However, a highly educated and experienced teacher, noted that the most common form of Holocaust distortion is devaluation, comparing it to other historical events, and observes that most students are unaware of this due to the lack of discussion in the classroom and another teacher highlighted the implicit denial inherent in neglecting Holocaust education, stating, *"Not talking about it is a way to deny it."*

Of the ten interviewed Portuguese teachers, only a minority explicitly teach about Holocaust distortion. One of them emphasised the role of credible sources, such as historically accurate films and articles, in combating misinformation. The importance of media literacy, particularly in an era of pervasive fake news, was underlined. Examples of distortion range from trivialisation – using "Holocaust" to describe unrelated tragedies – to antisemitic narratives, such as those linking Jewish communities to wealth or conspiracy theories. One of the interviewees noted that many students are unaware of these distortions due to the lack of classroom discussion.

In Hungary, the concept of Holocaust distortion was familiar to most teachers, though their understanding varied in depth, and there was a general confusion about the concept. In many cases, they tended to blend antisemitism, distortion and denial – concepts that, based on their experiences and examples with students, teachers or other people, often appear to be confused and/or intertwined. One of them defined the concept of Holocaust distortion as ignoring the facts, stressing that researching information is essential: *"Well, to me, Holocaust distortion is when someone makes claims that are not true without examining facts or looking at facts, without looking into certain things."*

The teachers usually recognised distortions as a phenomenon encompassing minimisation, relativisation and outright denial of the Holocaust's significance. The interviews reveal that while teachers are aware of Holocaust distortion as a concept, their understanding is often superficial or confused. Many educators tended to conflate distortion with antisemitism and denial, which were frequently encountered together in their professional or personal experiences. Only two teachers, who had participated in formal training on Holocaust distortion, were able to clearly differentiate these concepts. This highlights the significant gap in specialised knowledge and the need for targeted professional development to empower educators to recognise and address distortion more effectively.

Most Italian interviewees demonstrated an awareness of Holocaust distortion, but the depth of their knowledge differed. Some admitted difficulties in defining the distortion conceptually but could articulate examples, such as the misuse of Holocaust terminology during crises like COVID-19. The risks of inappropriate comparisons arising from ongoing geopolitical conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian war, were also highlighted. In contrast, some teachers showcased more comprehensive understandings, referencing IHRA guidelines and examples of distortion, such as TikTok users mocking Holocaust victims. Some identified subtler distortions, including antisemitic myths about Jewish compensation and the trivialisation of Holocaust history. While some are aware of distortion, they often find their perspectives shaped by sociopolitical influences, such as the Middle East conflict, which complicates their efforts to teach the specificity of the Holocaust. Interestingly, one of them expressed concerns about overestimating the prevalence of distortion, emphasising the risks of oversimplifying such issues. This analytical approach highlights the varying levels of conceptual clarity among educators, reflecting a spectrum from surface-level awareness to nuanced understanding.

3.2.2 Incidents inside the classroom

Holocaust distortion incidents varied across countries. In Greece, some students questioned facts or drew swastikas, with teachers using creative methods like survivor testimonies to address them. In Portugal, students misused Nazi symbols, prompting discussions on media literacy. In Hungary, social media misinformation led to skepticism, with teachers countering it using visual materials. In Italy, distortion was addressed reactively, often facing resistance from colleagues. Many teachers felt isolated due to a lack of institutional support, relying on personal efforts to address these issues.

In more detail, the frequency and severity of Holocaust distortion incidents varied among Greek educators. Some teachers have encountered students questioning the credibility of Holocaust facts or even drawing swastikas, often without understanding their implications. In response to seeing swastikas drawn on school property, one of the teachers took a hands-on approach, involving students to repaint the walls to cover the offensive symbols, turning these moments into teachable experiences. Conversely, other teachers reported little to no direct encounters with Holocaust distortion in their classrooms.

A Greek educator provided specific examples, such as students questioning the authenticity of Anne Frank's diary or doubting the scale of the Holocaust. Conversely, in rural or underprivileged areas, students demonstrated a profound lack of knowledge about the Holocaust. A teacher from a rural school highlighted the challenge of students rejecting factual information because it seemed incomprehensible or exaggerated to them. Another educator observed a tendency among students to diminish the Holocaust's significance, often comparing it unfavourably to other historical tragedies. Some described students making statements such as "it's not such a big deal" or "they must have deserved it", reflecting broader societal misconceptions.

Many rely on survivor testimonies and primary sources to provide students with credible and impactful accounts of the Holocaust. Some educators adopt creative approaches to engage students. For instance, incorporating theatre into teaching, having students perform excerpts from Holocaust survivor accounts. Or using films to debunk distortions, encouraging students to critically analyse media representations of the Holocaust. Calm and respectful dialogue is what the experienced teachers highlighted as the most important. Some pointed out the importance of addressing students' misconceptions through logical discussion and evidence-based arguments. They stress the need to avoid hostility or confrontational debates, instead guiding students toward critical thinking and reliable sources.

In Portugal, despite the confusion around the term Holocaust distortion, some educators actively address it inside the classroom. For example, discussing misinformation among students, such as inappropriate uses of Nazi symbols or confusion between Judaism and Israeli politics. An incident was recounted where younger students drew swastikas on erasers without understanding the symbol's Nazi association. A Portuguese teacher highlighted similar challenges, mentioning that some students trivialise Holocaust narratives or use symbols like the swastika without grasping their historical implications. As he mentioned, *"they don't know what the symbol represents. And when you ask the*

student to explain why they do it, the student talks about the origin of the symbol but doesn't mention the distortion the symbol underwent with Nazism. This is another form of distortion." An example was also shared, and an incident was recounted where younger students drew swastikas on erasers without understanding the symbol's Nazi association. Misinformation stemming from current events was also discussed, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which complicates students' understanding of Holocaust narratives, and schools must actively engage with these subjects to counter misinformation effectively.

In Hungary, too, there were various incidents mentioned by the educators. Some encountered distortion in subtle forms, such as students questioning casualty figures or the authenticity of photographs. Some observed that misinformation spread through social media and online platforms often influenced students' scepticism. As one of the Hungarian teachers mentioned: *"They think these are hacked images, so I have to explain to them that these photos come from verified sources"*. Visual materials, such as documentaries, films and survivor testimonies, are also particularly effective in dispelling/preventing misconceptions/distortions, according to teachers. In addition, many mentioned the power of personal conversations, logical arguments and the presentation of credible and reliable sources for students. As one said: *"I don't think that they're misunderstood, they're just clueless. In many cases, they hear something, they read something, and they don't know if it's true or not true, what's the truth, I always tell them to try to look at it objectively."*

Some teachers noted that immersive experiences, such as visits to Auschwitz or museums, still have a profound impact. They both shared experiences, when students with extreme views broke down emotionally during such a visit, underscoring the transformative potential of experiential learning.

In Italy, some educators addressed distortion only when it arose in discussions. This reactive approach, while valuable, often lacks the structure needed for comprehensive education. Teachers faced additional barriers, such as resistance from colleagues or societal backlash, that hindered their ability to focus on distortion. The disparity in teaching approaches underscores a critical need for standardised resources and training to empower all educators to address this issue effectively.

The personal experiences of teachers reveal the many challenges of addressing Holocaust distortion. Many educators shared examples of encountering distortion in their classrooms. For example, students share YouTube videos that perpetuate distortion, creating opportunities to debunk misinformation. Or being informed about antisemitic chants at football matches, which can be used as a teachable moment to trace sources and discuss stereotypes and to deal with comments from students such as *"If they [the Jewish people] were getting on everyone's nerves, maybe they did something".* However, other teachers were more confrontational. Some recounted receiving antisemitic videos from a former student, a deeply upsetting incident that underscores the pervasive nature of distortion in digital spaces. Others faced accusations of spreading lies and reported her Holocaust-related projects being boycotted, illustrating the societal resistance to addressing this sensitive topic. Such instances highlight the emotional toll on educators and the broader societal penetration of distortion.

Coping strategies varied among teachers. Some relied on primary sources and critical thinking exercises to counter misinformation, encouraging students to substantiate their opinions with evidence. Despite these efforts, the lack of institutional support left many educators feeling isolated, with their success dependent on personal initiative rather than systemic backing.

3.2.3 Incidents outside of the classroom

Holocaust distortion is often shaped by external factors that influence students' understanding and perception of the event. In many cases, societal attitudes, political ideologies, and cultural beliefs play a significant role in perpetuating misconceptions about the Holocaust. This section explores how such external influences, including family opinions, political movements, and societal biases, contribute to Holocaust distortion in Greece, Portugal, and Hungary, and the challenges educators face in combating these issues within the classroom. It is important to note that Italian teachers are not included in this section, as the interviews did not provide relevant data on this topic; either the questions regarding student responses were not asked, or they did not respond to them.

Across Greek interviewees, a recurrent theme was the role of external influences shaping students' misconceptions about the Holocaust. Interviewed teachers from wealthy, urban schools emphasised that many students unknowingly propagate distorted views, often mimicking antisemitic opinions expressed by parents, older siblings, or peers. Others also observed that students frequently repeat such ideas without fully understanding them. This is particularly striking, suggesting that the phenomenon is not confined to affluent areas but can be observed across diverse school settings.

Another shared observation was the impact of far-right ideologies. Several educators pointed to the influence of Greece's now-defunct far-right political party, Chrysi Avgi, in perpetuating Holocaust denial and antisemitism among students and society at large. They noted that incidents of Holocaust distortion surged during the party's peak popularity, though the situation has improved since its decline. Moreover, some teachers discussed a pervasive belief among Greeks that the Holocaust was a foreign tragedy, disconnected from Greek history. This perception fosters a sense of detachment among students, many of whom are surprised to learn about the extent of the Holocaust's impact on Greece, including the devastation of Greek Jewish communities. One of the Greek teachers mentioned many cases where either students or colleagues of hers said: *"Why do we keep talking about it? It has been solved and done. There are other people who have suffered too"*, showing their reluctance to engage with the subject.

The Portuguese interviewees also provided very interesting examples of Holocaust distortion outside of the classroom. One of them talked about a Nazi group defacing a Jewish cemetery in Lisbon with swastikas and the public debates surrounding a proposed Jewish Museum in Alfama, where antisemitic sentiments surfaced with comments in the media regarding *"how Jews should pay for the museum"* and *"they are all rich so they should pay it"*, or even *"the museum can't be higher than the church".* Two teachers referred to students named a booze march cart "Alcoholocausto" during their traditional graduation ceremony, Queima das Fitas, therefore bringing a 'positive' meaning to the Holocaust. One of them said *"I think the term Holocaust is sometimes used very lightly, saying, 'Oh,*

this is a Holocaust', as if to say, 'this is a catastrophe'." In other words, the Holocaust often becomes associated with the word and linked to a situation of disaster or tragedy, which is an exaggeration of what is actually happening, thereby trivializing it.

A few Hungarian interviewees identified a specific form of relativisation in Hungarian society as Holocaust distortion: a *"suffering competition"*. This entails comparing the Holocaust to other historical traumas, such as the atrocities of communism or the consequences of the Treaty of Trianon, leading to resentment, with some perceiving the Holocaust as receiving disproportionate attention and as one of them mentioned: *"I want students to understand that while other groups have suffered, that doesn't diminish the unique severity of the Holocaust or justify attempts to minimise it."*. Another teacher noted that societal biases and scapegoating tendencies reinforced distorted views, too, particularly in politically or economically unstable contexts. *"I think that Hungary is certainly a very problematic place in this respect, because if these social and political anomalies, when the system is so unstable and we are in a state of uncertainty, and if they are exacerbated, then this scapegoating, this shifting of responsibility, this labelling, is certain."*

3.2.4 Social media and fake news

Media, especially social platforms, play a significant role in shaping students' understanding of the Holocaust. Exposure to distorted online content and fictionalised portrayals complicates educators' efforts to teach the subject accurately. This section highlights the challenges of combating misinformation and emphasises the importance of media literacy and critical thinking skills to help students discern reliable sources.

Several Greek interviewees pointed out that students often encounter unverified content on the internet, which can shape their understanding – or misunderstanding – of the Holocaust, as the younger generations tend to blindly trust the Internet. This accessibility to untrustworthy sources has created a parallel challenge for educators: not only must they address the distorted views students bring from home, but they also need to help students navigate and critically assess the vast sea of misinformation available online. A teacher said, *"They (the students) don't know the history, and they are completely used to visual stimuli (…) so easily someone can influence them negatively and they won't even question them"*. It was also noted the particularly dangerous influence of fictionalised portrayals of the Holocaust in popular media, where elements of truth are mixed with fantasy for dramatic effect, leading students to adopt skewed views of historical events.

The impact of social media is felt even more acutely in rural areas, where educators reported that platforms often amplify Holocaust denial and distortion among their students. In these rural communities, social media can become the dominant source of information, reinforcing and spreading harmful narratives that students are rarely equipped to challenge. It was highlighted how such online content frequently conflates the Holocaust with political issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, further affecting students' understanding. Some observed that these distortions are compounded by a lack of alternative perspectives or historical knowledge in the students' immediate environments, making them particularly vulnerable to misinformation.

Various Portuguese teachers addressed the issue of distortion and denial of the Holocaust, mentioning examples of how students can be exposed to distorted views through films and websites. The growing antisemitism in Portugal due to the war in Palestine was highlighted and also integrating media literacy into Holocaust education is essential for combating fake news and misinformation. It also highlighted how younger students are particularly vulnerable to disinformation due to their limited critical thinking skills. The need to counter benevolent distortions that oversimplify complex historical realities was also noted. For example, films or media that overly dramatise or sentimentalise Holocaust narratives may inadvertently undermine their historical accuracy. A teacher from a prestigious secondary school mentioned his involvement in teaching about the Holocaust and the surprising misinformation among students about the topic, despite their privileged background. Misinformation spreads easily through social media and fake news. Another teacher stressed the importance of equipping schools to address this challenge, noting that students often lack the critical thinking skills needed to discern credible information, *"Fake news exacerbates the problem of Holocaust distortion. Schools must actively counter misinformation through dedicated Holocaust education."*

As the Hungarian interviewees said, although overt antisemitism or distortion was rare among students, all of the teachers described encountering prejudices within the classroom/school, rooted in family or community environments. Most teachers noted that students are often exposed to distorted narratives online, which tend to publish distorted or biased information. Family influences also contribute significantly, although rarely, but some students bring extremist views from their home environment into the classroom.

In Italy, social media emerged as a double-edged sword in the discussions. On one hand, platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram serve as breeding grounds for misinformation and Holocaust distortion. Some teachers highlighted how students often encounter distorted narratives online, ranging from trivialisation to outright denial. Specific examples were cited, such as antisemitic chants or memes, which spread rapidly in digital spaces. On the other hand, social media also provides opportunities for educators to engage with students and correct misinformation. However, these opportunities are limited by the sheer volume of misinformation and the decontextualised nature of content on social platforms. Teachers emphasised the challenges of countering entrenched biases and scepticism fostered by social media, which often undermines educators' authority. The spread of misinformation has broader consequences, affecting students' trust in education and official narratives. As an Italian teacher observed, students exposed to distortion may internalise scepticism, leading them to question the reliability of historical facts. This trend, exacerbated by the rise of decontextualised short videos, poses a significant challenge for educators seeking to foster critical thinking and historical awareness.

The experiences of Holocaust education across Greece, Portugal, Hungary, and Italy reveal several shared challenges in addressing Holocaust distortion. A common obstacle is the varying levels of educators' familiarity with the term, often conflating it with antisemitism or denial, and in many cases, formal training plays a crucial role in deepening understanding. Moreover, students frequently

bring preconceptions leading to examples like trivialisation, misuse of symbols, and comparisons to other tragedies. As a result, educators across all countries emphasise media literacy, critical thinking, and the use of reliable sources, survivor testimonies, and experiential learning to counter misinformation. In addition, social media and fake news are widely recognised as amplifiers of distortion, blending fact with fantasy and further complicating students' understanding. Furthermore, teachers face emotional challenges and limited institutional support in tackling such sensitive topics, underscoring the urgent need for systemic resources, standardised training, and broader support to teach the Holocaust effectively and combat distortion comprehensively.

4. Results of the student survey

4.1 Introduction

Besides the desk research and the teacher interviews, a survey was conducted as part of the DECONSTRUCT project, which aimed to explore students' beliefs, knowledge and critical thinking skills connected to media literacy, misinformation and Holocaust education. The questionnaire was designed to provide information about young people's awareness of fake news, their ability to evaluate information and their understanding of sensitive historical topics, particularly the Holocaust. The general goal of the survey was to inform the project's development of educational programs that promote critical thinking, tolerance and historical awareness, including towards the Holocaust.

The survey's target group consisted of secondary school students from the four partner countries: Greece, Hungary, Italy and Portugal. In each country, we distributed the survey to teachers and schools that voluntarily agreed to participate in the project. The students completed the questionnaire online, which took approximately 15 minutes and consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

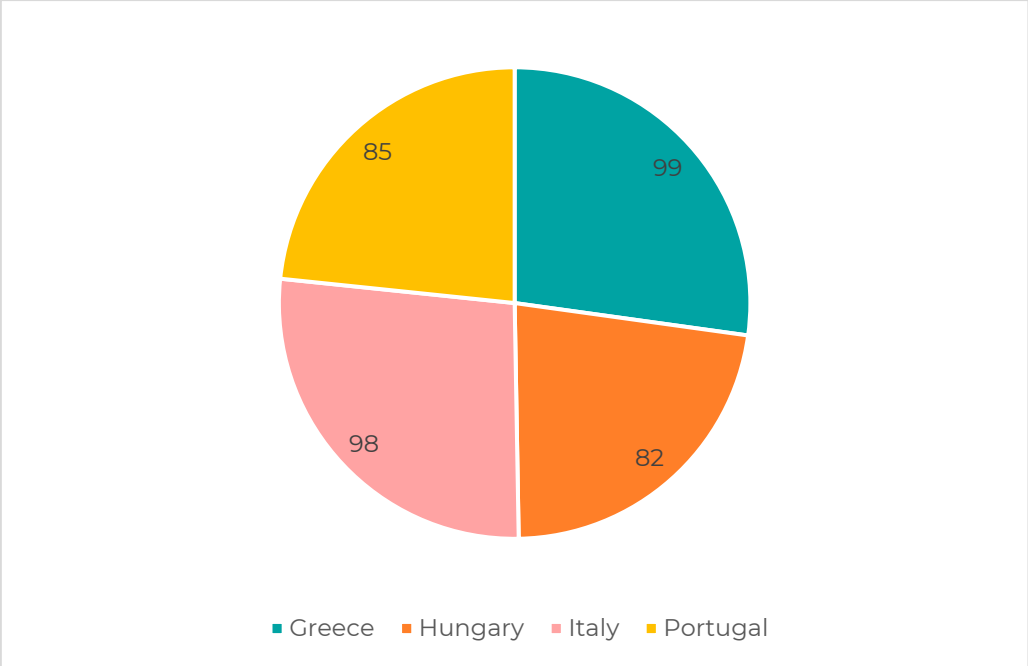
The questions covered various themes, including demographics and socio-economic backgrounds such as age, gender, household environment and parental education levels. They also examined attitudes toward diversity and discrimination, exploring opinions on cultural diversity, tolerance and discrimination. Additionally, the questions investigated media usage and critical thinking, focusing on information sources, trust in the media, fact-checking habits and exposure to misinformation. Furthermore, our questions addressed knowledge and perceptions of the Holocaust, including familiarity with Holocaust history and opinions on Holocaust denial and distortion. The questions also looked into educational experiences related to the Holocaust, including classroom activities, teaching approaches and key messages from the lessons.

Overall, 364 students participated in the survey across the four partner countries (see Figure 1 below). The breakdown by country is as follows: Greece, 99 students[59] with 92 complete responses and 7 partial responses; Hungary, 82 students with 78 complete responses and 4 partial responses;

[59] Of the Greek students, 26 respondents had attended German schools, which is likely to influence their answers, especially regarding their knowledge and attitudes towards the Holocaust.

Italy, 98 students with 96 complete responses and 2 partial responses; and Portugal, 85 students with 79 complete responses and 6 partial responses. [60]

FIGURE 1 NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS, BY COUNTRY (IN %)



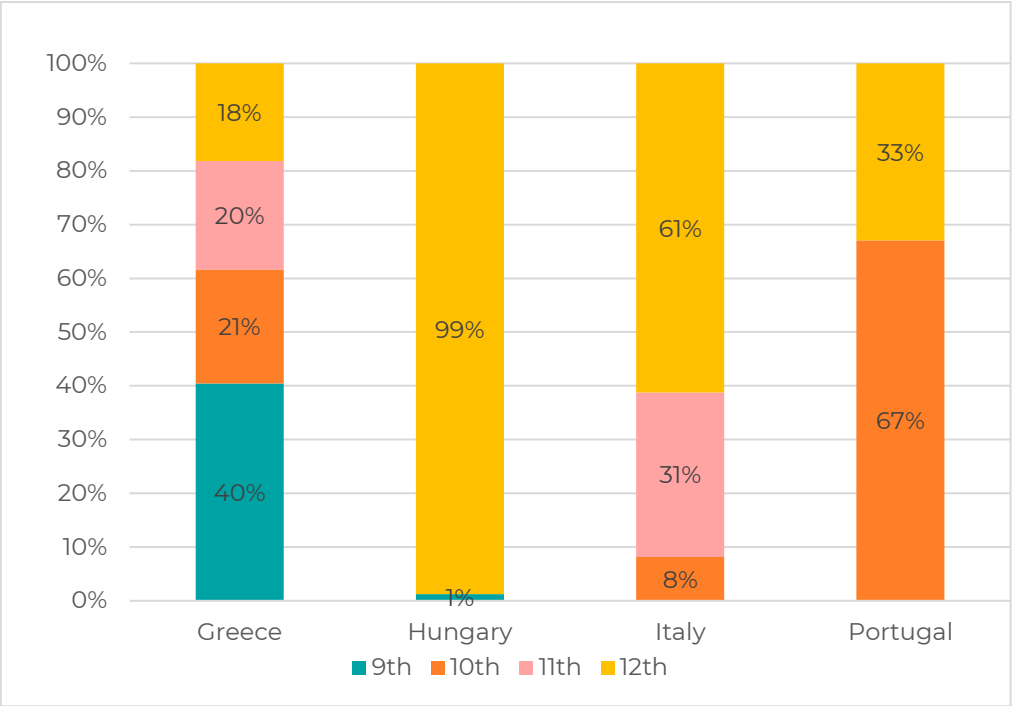
SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 364)

4.2 Demographics and background information of the students

The demographic and background data in the survey provide an overview of the student participants across the four partner countries, which offers a deeper understanding and context for evaluating their responses. Considering the students' age, the overall distribution of grade levels was primarily comprised of 12th graders (51%), followed by 10th graders (24%). In Greece, 40% of the students were in 9th grade, while the remaining grade levels were almost evenly distributed, each representing around 20%. Hungarian respondents were nearly all 12th graders, whereas in Italy, the majority were in 12th grade (61%), followed by 11th grade (31%) and 10th grade (8%). The Portuguese students were mostly in 10th grade (67%), with the rest in 12th grade (33%) (see Figure 2).

[60] All partial responses accessed in the data analysis progressed up to question 16 (out of a total of 28 questions, see Annex 1 on 73). After this question, the 19 partial respondents exited the questionnaire at different stages of the questionnaire. However, 6 of these partial respondents completed all questions but did not formally submit the questionnaire to finalise the process.

FIGURE 2 GRADE LEVELS, BY COUNTRY (IN %)



SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 364)

The gender distribution across the students indicated a higher proportion of female respondents (60%) compared to males (40%). While this pattern held true for most countries, Hungary was an exception, where the proportion of male students was slightly higher. However, these findings reflect only the sample in this survey and may not be representative of broader trends in each country. Regarding school location, the majority of respondents attended schools in country towns or bigger cities (51%), followed by those in capital cities (32%). At the country level, distinct trends emerged: In Greece, most students (88%) were from country towns or bigger cities. In Hungary, 66% of students were from country towns or bigger cities, with 33% from the capital. In Italy, there was a more even distribution, with 42% from country towns or bigger cities and 47% from smaller cities or towns, whereas Portuguese respondents overwhelmingly came from the capital city (91%). As seen in the data, most respondents go to school in an urban or metropolitan environment, making it likely that they have access to a greater variety of information sources than their rural counterparts. This could cause a bias in the analysis of the results, as they are more likely to be exposed to certain narratives – this fact should be taken into account in the rest of the report.

Concerning household resources, the data shows that a significant majority of students and their families, specifically 95-97%, have access to a computer or laptop, internet and a car. Most respondents also own a smartphone (96%) and possess more than 20 books at home (87%). However, only 70% of students have a dedicated study space for schoolwork and 82% have their own room. We also developed an Economic Status (ES) score based on these household data, classifying students into three distinct resource groups: low (4%), middle (18%) and high (79%). According to this, Hungarian

and Portuguese students stand out with the highest proportions of respondents in the high ES category, at 87% and 86% respectively. Italy and Greece also show similar results, with 72% of students categorised as having a high level of household resources. Since students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have more highly educated parents, this may also introduce a bias in the results, as these students are likely to have greater exposure to diverse information sources and educational opportunities, which could influence their perspectives and awareness of social and historical issues.

The data on levels of parental education further confirmed these previous environmental patterns of students (see more in

Annex 2: Country breakdown of parents' and foster parents' educational background). Mothers' and foster mothers' education levels showed that 30% had a master's degree or single-cycle university degree, followed by 27% with a bachelor's or college degree and 18% with a high school degree. Additionally, 10% of mothers had a vocational education degree, 4% had completed only primary education or less and 7% held a doctoral degree. A small proportion (5%) of respondents did not know or did not find it to be relevant to indicate their mother's or foster mother's educational level. For fathers and foster fathers', 22% had a master's degree, 21% held a bachelor's degree and 18% had a high school or secondary education degree. Furthermore, 16% had a vocational education degree, 6% had completed only primary education or less, and 7% held a doctoral degree. A slightly higher proportion (9%) of students reported not knowing or finding this information irrelevant to indicate. These findings reinforce the overall pattern that respondents come from relatively well-educated family backgrounds, which may influence their access to information, critical thinking skills and perspectives on historical and social issues. Furthermore, the demographic findings of the students suggest that the sample was relatively homogeneous, with most students coming from well-resourced households and very favourable socio-economic conditions, which provides an essential context for interpreting the further survey findings.

4.3 Students' attitudes toward cultural diversity and discrimination

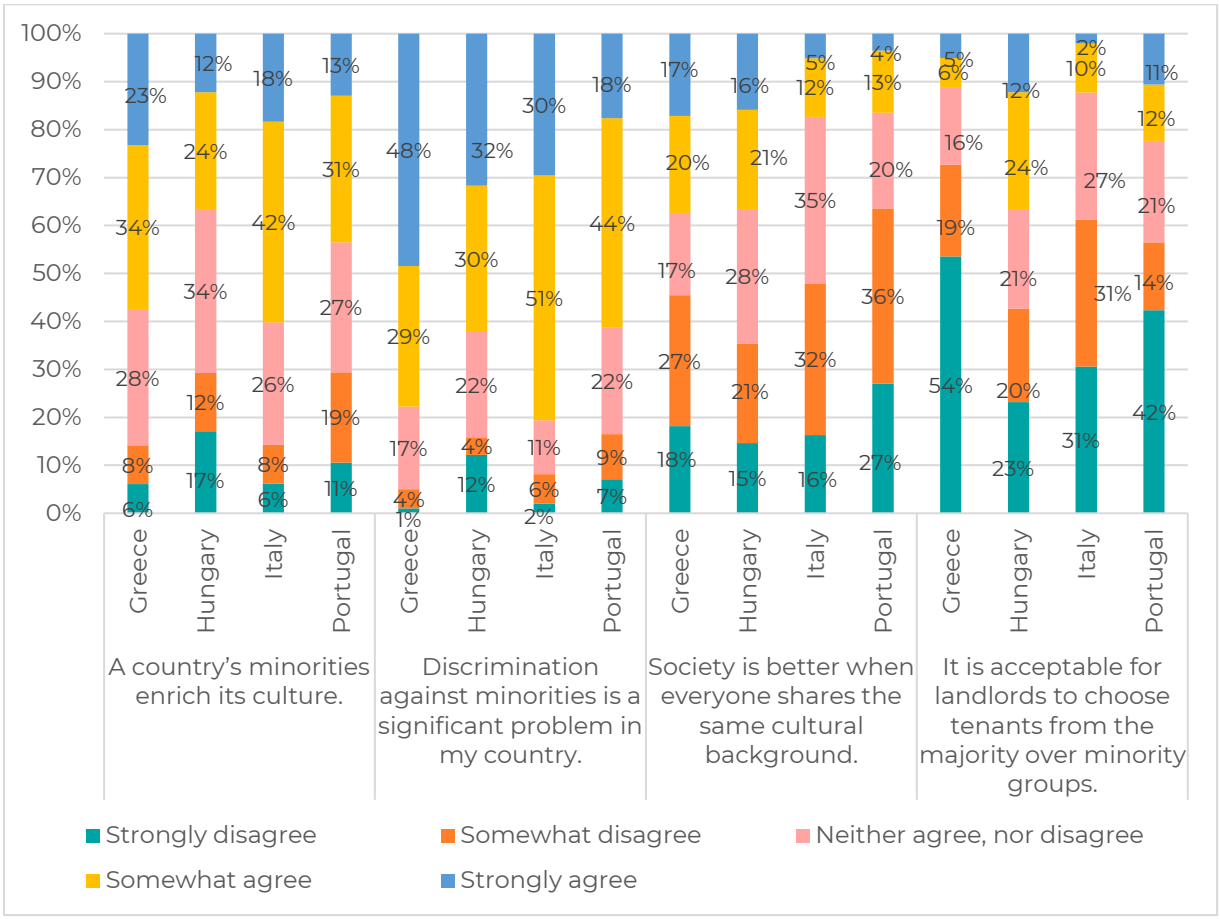
In the first part of the questionnaire, we were curious about students' attitudes toward cultural diversity and discrimination, asking to what extent they agreed with certain statements regarding this topic. The survey revealed mixed attitudes towards the statements. While a significant proportion of total respondents believed minorities enrich their culture, only 17% strongly agreed, with 33% somewhat agreeing (50% in total). Meanwhile, 29% remained neutral, while 12% somewhat disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed (22% total disagreement), which highlights a degree of uncertainty and resistance toward cultural diversity.

At the same time, concerns about discrimination were general, as 39% of total respondents somewhat agreed and 32% strongly agreed (71% agreement in total) that it is a significant problem in their country. Contrasting views emerged regarding cultural homogeneity, where 29% of students somewhat agreed that society is better when everyone shares the same cultural background, while 25% neither agreed nor disagreed. Interestingly, 38% strongly disagreed with the notion that it is

acceptable for landlords to favour tenants from the majority over minorities, though 21% somewhat agreed and an equal percentage (21%) remained neutral on this issue.

In Figure 3 below, we can see that there were differences at the national level for each statement. Hungarian respondents were slightly more neutral regarding whether minorities enrich the culture of their country (with 34%) compared to other countries, where somewhat agreeing was the most common choice. Also, Greek, Italian and Hungarian students perceived discrimination as a more significant issue than respondents from Portugal. Regarding cultural homogeneity as a desirable condition, most Hungarian and Italian students appeared neutral, whereas Greek and Portuguese students expressed clearer opposition. The most striking differences emerged in the responses about landlords' discrimination: students from Greece, Italy and Portugal overwhelmingly disagreed with the notion that landlords should favour members of the majority, while Hungarian students showed a greater tendency to agree or stay neutral with this view (see Figure 3 below). These findings might suggest that cultural context, national history or recent socio-political events influence perceptions of discrimination and cultural inclusion between students from these different countries, but to draw broader conclusions further research would be needed on this topic.

FIGURE 3 STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND DISCRIMINATION, BY COUNTRY (IN %)

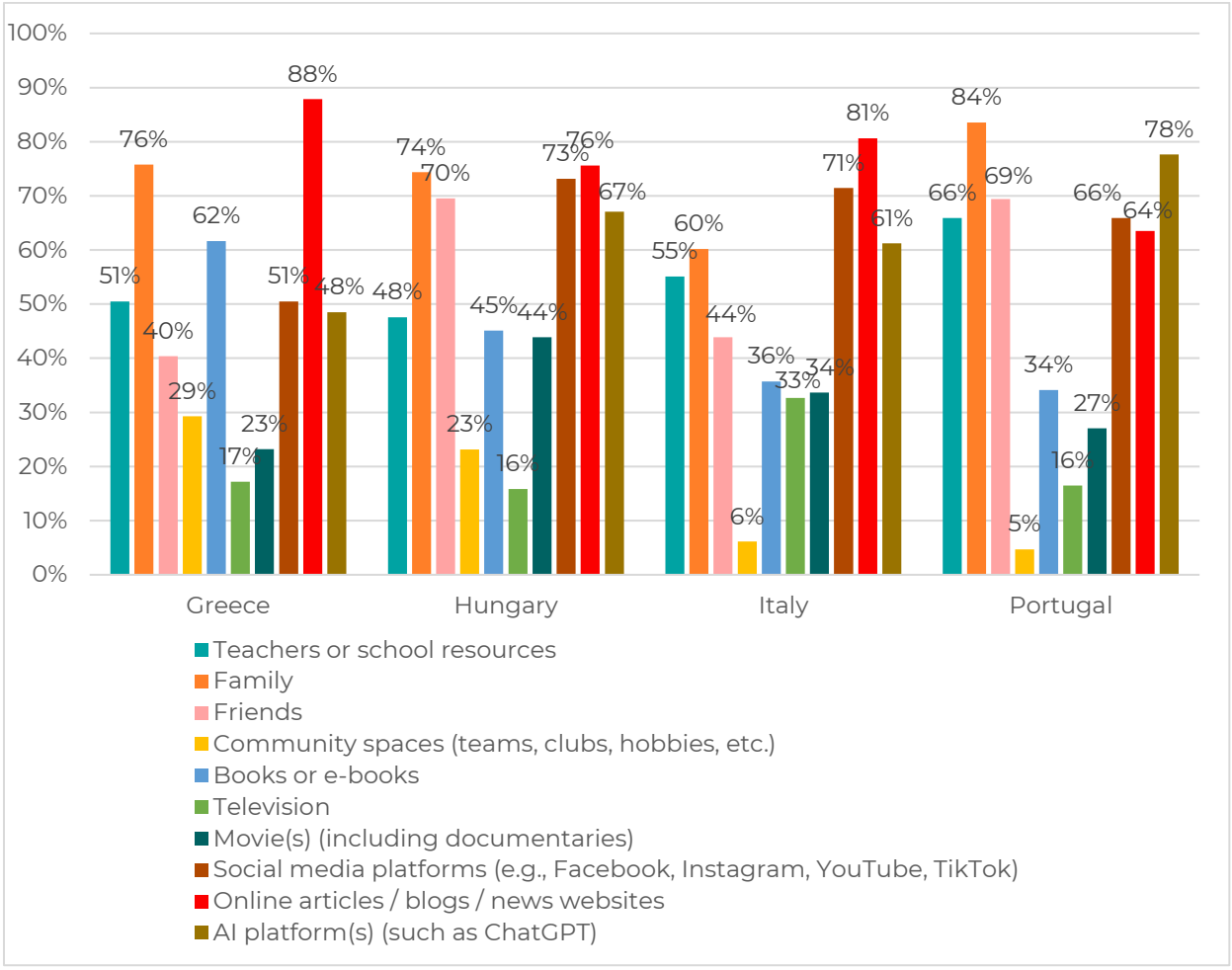


SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 364)

4.4 Media literacy and critical thinking

Besides the topic of cultural diversity, we also looked at students' media consumption habits in a larger thematic block, which stemmed from a desire to understand the context and patterns of how students engage with different types of media. In terms of sources that young people turn to when they need information, the overall top three list included online articles, blogs or news websites (77%), family (73%) and social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok (65%). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the last two places were community spaces, such as teams and clubs (21%) and television (16%). There were differences in the country breakdown – see Figure 4 below – the top 3 list also included books and e-books for Greece (in 3rd place), AI platforms, such as ChatGPT for Italy and Portugal (in 3rd and 2nd place, respectively) and friends for Portugal (in 3rd place). It is important to note that these results confirm that in such a short time of its appearance, the use of AI platforms among students is growing rapidly. However, when it comes to gathering information, online news portals are the most popular in all countries, except for Portuguese students, where the top 3 information sources were family, AI platforms and friends.

FIGURE 4 USE OF SOURCES FOR GATHERING INFORMATION, BY COUNTRY (IN %)



SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 364)

At the same time, students showed slightly varied results regarding the trustworthiness of these aforementioned information sources (see Figure 5 below). In general, teachers or school resources and families emerge as the most trusted sources of information across all four countries. These two sources dominate the rankings, with teachers or school resources consistently being ranked in the top three (as 1st, 2nd and 3rd ranks) by the majority of students in Greece (63%), Hungary (67%), Italy (72%), and Portugal (72%). Similarly, family is highly trusted, ranking near the top (as 1st, 2nd and 3rd ranks) in all countries: Greece (60%), Hungary (56%), Italy (53%), and Portugal (72%). Books or e-books and online articles, blogs or news websites are also trusted by many students, though not as highly as the previous two sources. Greece and Hungary show a somewhat higher preference (in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd ranks) for books or e-books (53% and 48%, respectively), while online articles, blogs or news websites are generally trusted by around 30% to 50% of students across all countries, with Greece 52%) showing higher trust in these sources.

Trust in AI platforms such as ChatGPT varies, but it is generally less than in traditional sources. Portugal and Italy show the highest levels of trust in AI platforms (33% and 34%, respectively), with Hungary having the lowest trust (20%). Greece falls in between with 23% of students placing AI platforms in their top three. Friends rank lower across all countries, with the highest trust seen in Hungary (46%), while Greece (24%), Italy (26%) and Portugal (26%) show similar levels of relatively modest trust in peer-based information.

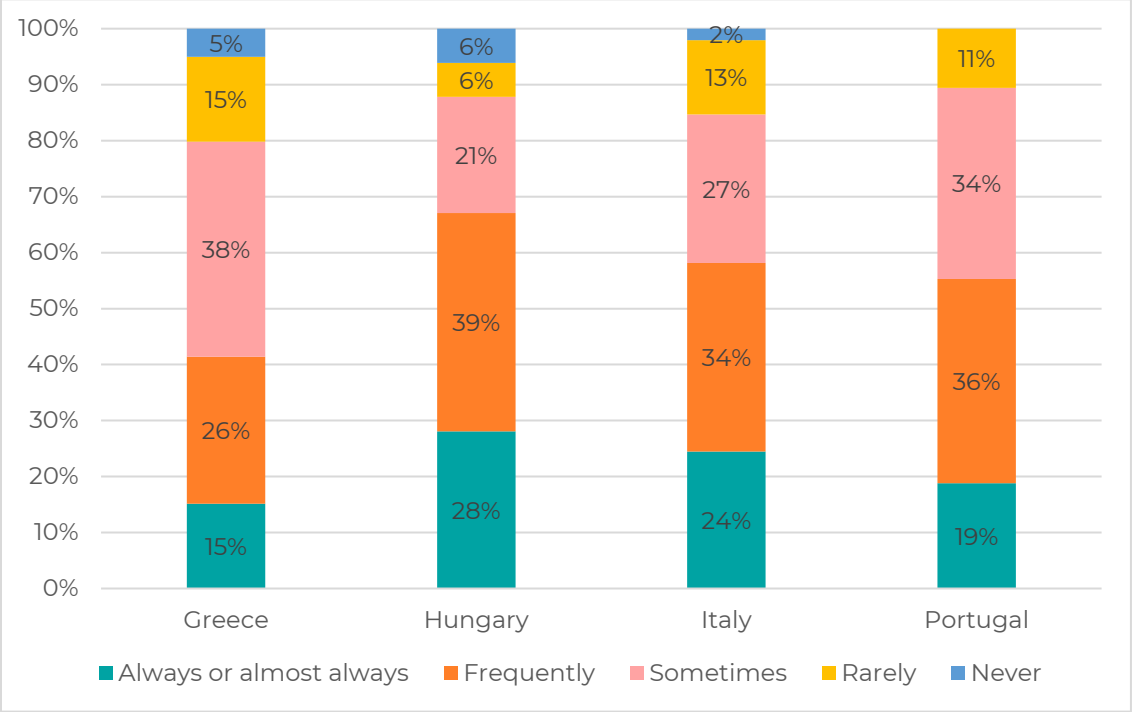
Furthermore, television and social media platforms are the least trusted sources of information across all four countries' students. Television ranks lowest in Hungary (as no one indicated it as 1st, 2nd and 3rd rank) and it is also not highly trusted in Greece (1%) and Portugal (4%). Social media platforms fare similarly poorly, with trust levels of 12% in Greece, 10% in Hungary, 8% in Italy and 7% in Portugal. These general patterns suggest that students in all countries place greater trust in traditional, familial and educational sources over digital or social platforms. This might also reflect a broader trend of scepticism towards the accuracy and reliability of social media and AI-driven content, while traditional methods continue to be perceived as more trusted.

FIGURE 5 RANKING OF TRUST IN INFORMATION SOURCES, BY COUNTRY (IN %)

SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 364)

In discussing trust, the questionnaire also specifically examined how students engage in fact-checking behaviours when it comes to online information. The data presented in Figure 6, illustrates that students across most countries tend to engage in frequent verification of the authenticity and accuracy of online content: Hungary reported 39%, Italy 34% and Portugal 36%, except in Greece where the highest percentage of students indicated that they check the validity of online information only occasionally (38%). Among the countries, Hungarian students exhibited the highest level of attentiveness, with 28% claiming they always or almost always verify the information they encounter online. Interestingly, in Portugal, all respondents affirmed that they do not neglect to check the authenticity of online information. The tendency for Hungarian students to consistently verify information could suggest a greater awareness of misinformation, while the occasional checking habits observed in Greece require further exploration into the factors influencing their behaviour. However, a closer examination of Greek students' open responses suggests that their occasional verification may result from a lack of time, motivation or a tendency to investigate only when encountering particularly extreme content. This is explained in more detail in the next paragraph of the analysis.

FIGURE 6 FREQUENCY OF CHECKING THE VALIDITY OR TRUTHFULNESS OF ONLINE INFORMATION, BY COUNTRY (IN %)



SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 364)

Students who reported checking the validity of online information frequently, sometimes or rarely could provide reasons for their decision-making process. For the main reasons, most students indicated that they only verify information when they have the time and motivation or when a topic is of particular interest to them. As a Greek student put it: *"Most of the time I don't check the validity of the information adequately, due to my boredom and limited free time, even though I know I have to do it."*

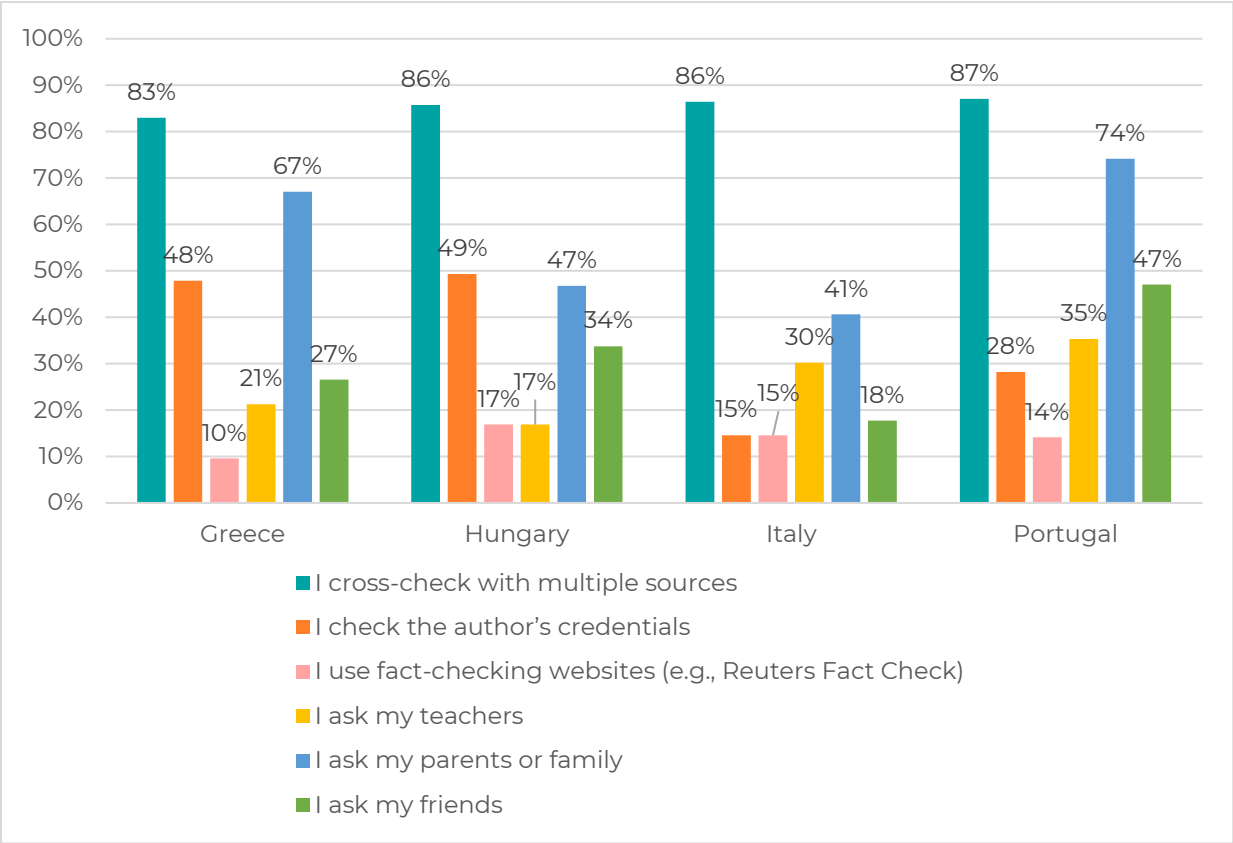
The need for accurate sources for school projects was also a common reason, guaranteeing they use reliable information in their work. External pressure, such as the expectation that a teacher would review their sources, also motivated some students to check accuracy. As an Italian student explained: *"...Whether it is for an important project (e.g., if I was doing research for school I check, whereas if it concerns, for example, the life of an influencer I don't check because I'm not that interested)."* A Portuguese student similarly noted*: "I'm aware that the information we're exposed to on the internet is often false, so I usually believe and trust websites that I already know are correct, but when I'm not sure, I only look for validity if it's for a school assignment."*

Another key factor influencing their decision to fact-check was trust in the website – students were more likely to verify information if they encountered a source, they found unreliable, lacked credibility or contained questionable content (e.g., disturbing claims or information that seemed false). As a Hungarian student said, "*I check if it contains information that is shocking or unbelievable to me. If it contains information that contradicts my previous knowledge."* A Greek student added: "*Unrealistic news that appears to have been distorted for television purposes or news posted on websites of questionable credibility. (For those cases) I try to cross-check with multiple sources."*

Furthermore, poor website quality, such as unprofessional writing, grammatical errors or vague arguments, also caused scepticism among students. Additionally, some respondents mentioned fact-checking when they recognised a political agenda in a news source, assuming that such cases might require extra exploration. As a Hungarian student put it: "*(It is based on) how trustworthy is the website, what is its reputation, do they participate in political news reporting (or not)."*

In terms of how they check the credibility of information (see Figure 7), the most frequently chosen method was cross-checking with multiple sources across all countries. This was consistently the top choice for students, with preference rates ranging from 83% to 87%. The second most popular method varied: in most countries, students choose to ask their parents or family members, while in Hungary, checking the author's credentials ranked second, with asking family members coming in third. Furthermore, an interesting trend regarding cultural differences emerged from the data: Italian and Portuguese students were more likely to consult their parents or family members for validation compared to their Hungarian and Greek peers, who appeared less inclined to rely on family as a primary source. Additionally, it can be noted that children were the least likely to use fact-checking websites.

FIGURE 7 PREFERRED METHODS FOR VALIDATING INFORMATION, BY COUNTRY (IN %)



SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 352)[61]

Related to the topics above, we also specifically asked students for their views on what they think about online media and fake news (see Figure 8Figure **8** below). The survey results revealed national differences in how students perceive social media news reliability, their ability to assess credibility and their attitudes toward misinformation. While scepticism about social media as a news source is common across all countries, the degree of distrust varies. Portuguese students were the most doubtful, with 22% strongly and 41% somewhat disagreeing (63% in total) that most social media news is reliable. Hungarian students followed closely with 58% disagreeing in total (17% strongly and 41% somewhat disagreeing), whereas Greek and Italian students were slightly more open to trusting social media, though scepticism still dominated in both groups (with 51% and 47% total disagreement, respectively).

When it comes to determining whether the news is credible, Greek students struggled the most, with 43% somewhat and 9% strongly agreeing (52% in total) that they find it difficult to assess credibility. In contrast, Portuguese students were the most confident, with 45% somewhat disagreeing that it was difficult to determine news credibility. Hungarian students were more divided, with 32% remaining neutral, while Italian students leaned slightly toward confidence, though 36% were neutral

[61] This question only appeared to those respondents who indicated that they check the validity or truthfulness of the information they come across online with a certain degree of frequency.

and 35% somewhat agreed that checking credibility can be challenging. These trends suggest that Greek students may feel the most overwhelmed by misinformation, whereas Portuguese students may either feel more confident in their evaluation skills or be less aware of the risks.

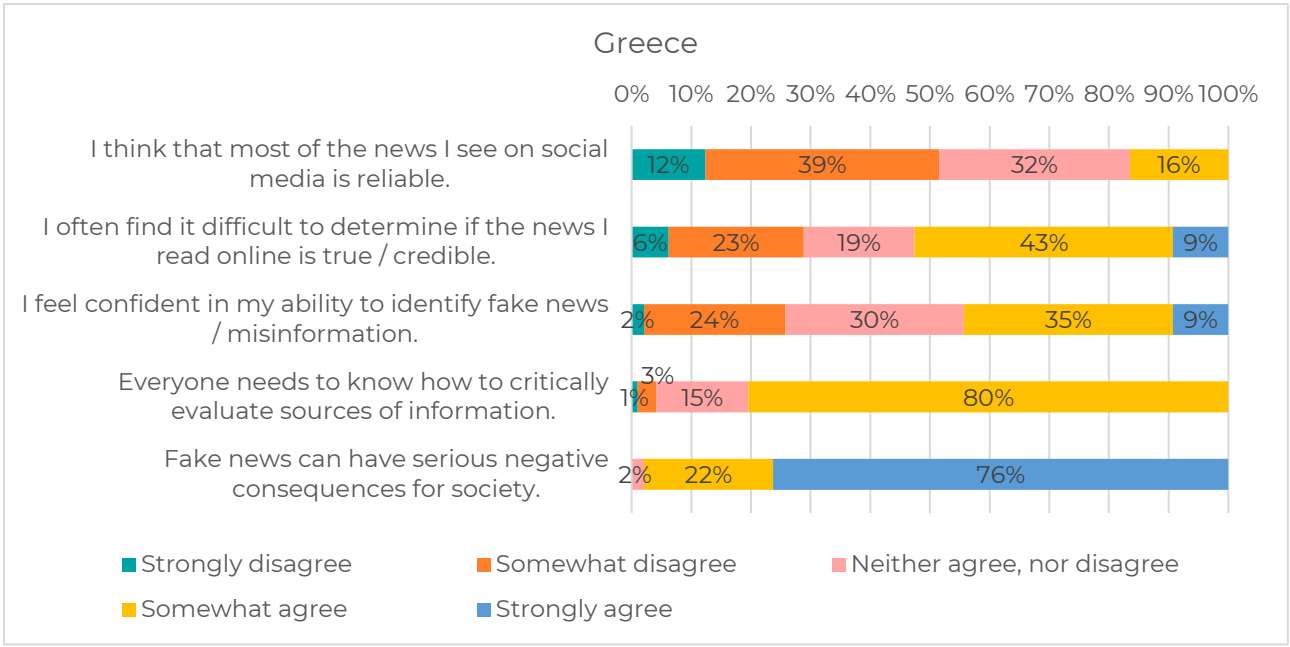
Students' self-reported confidence in identifying fake news also varied across countries. Portuguese students showed the highest confidence levels, with 45% somewhat and 26% strongly agreeing (71% in total) that they can identify misinformation. Hungarian students followed closely, with 34% somewhat and 27% strongly agreeing (61% in total), reflecting a relatively high sense of ability. In contrast, Greek and Italian students were more undecided, with 30% of Greek students and 32% of Italian students remaining neutral, indicating uncertainty about their ability to detect fake news, although overall agreement was still remarkable, with 47% of Greek students and 44% of Italian students expressing confidence in their ability to identify misinformation.

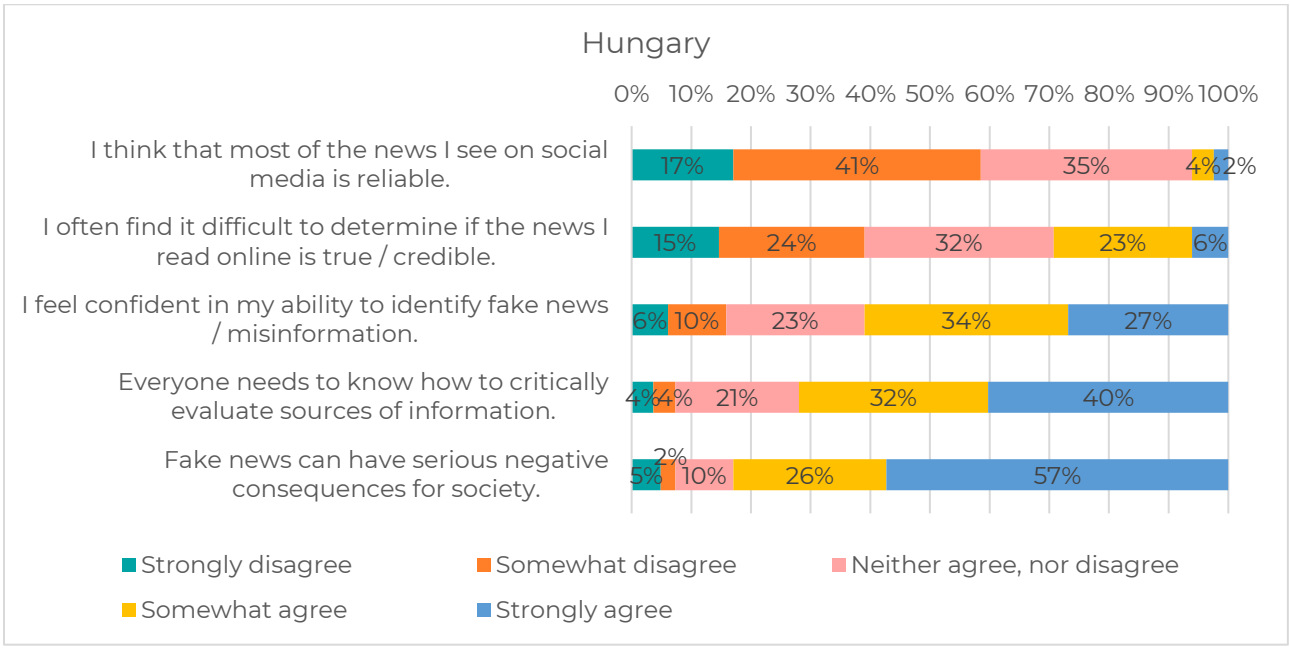
Despite these differences, students across all countries overwhelmingly agreed on the importance of media literacy and critical thinking. In Greece, an overwhelming 80% somewhat agreed that evaluating sources critically is crucial, the highest among all countries. Hungarian students also demonstrated strong agreement, with 72% in total (32% somewhat and 40% strongly agreeing). Portuguese (79%) and Italian (88%) students also widely supported this idea, reinforcing that media literacy is seen as a necessary skill.

Similarly, the belief that fake news has serious societal consequences was nearly universal, with only a small percentage of students expressing neutrality or disagreement. Greek students displayed the strongest agreement, with 76% strongly and 22% somewhat agreeing, followed closely by Hungarian (57% strongly and 26% somewhat agreeing), Italian (57% strongly and 32% somewhat agreeing) and Portuguese (55% strongly and 32% somewhat agreeing) respondents.

These results suggest that while students vary in their confidence in assessing misinformation, they share a common understanding of its dangers and the need for attention to fake news. A clear gap emerges between their scepticism about social media reliability and their self-reported confidence in identifying online misinformation. This contradiction could point to overconfidence or a lack of deeper media literacy, further reinforced by the significant number of neutral responses. However, on a positive note, the high levels of awareness of fake news' consequences reflect the critical thinking skills among the students.

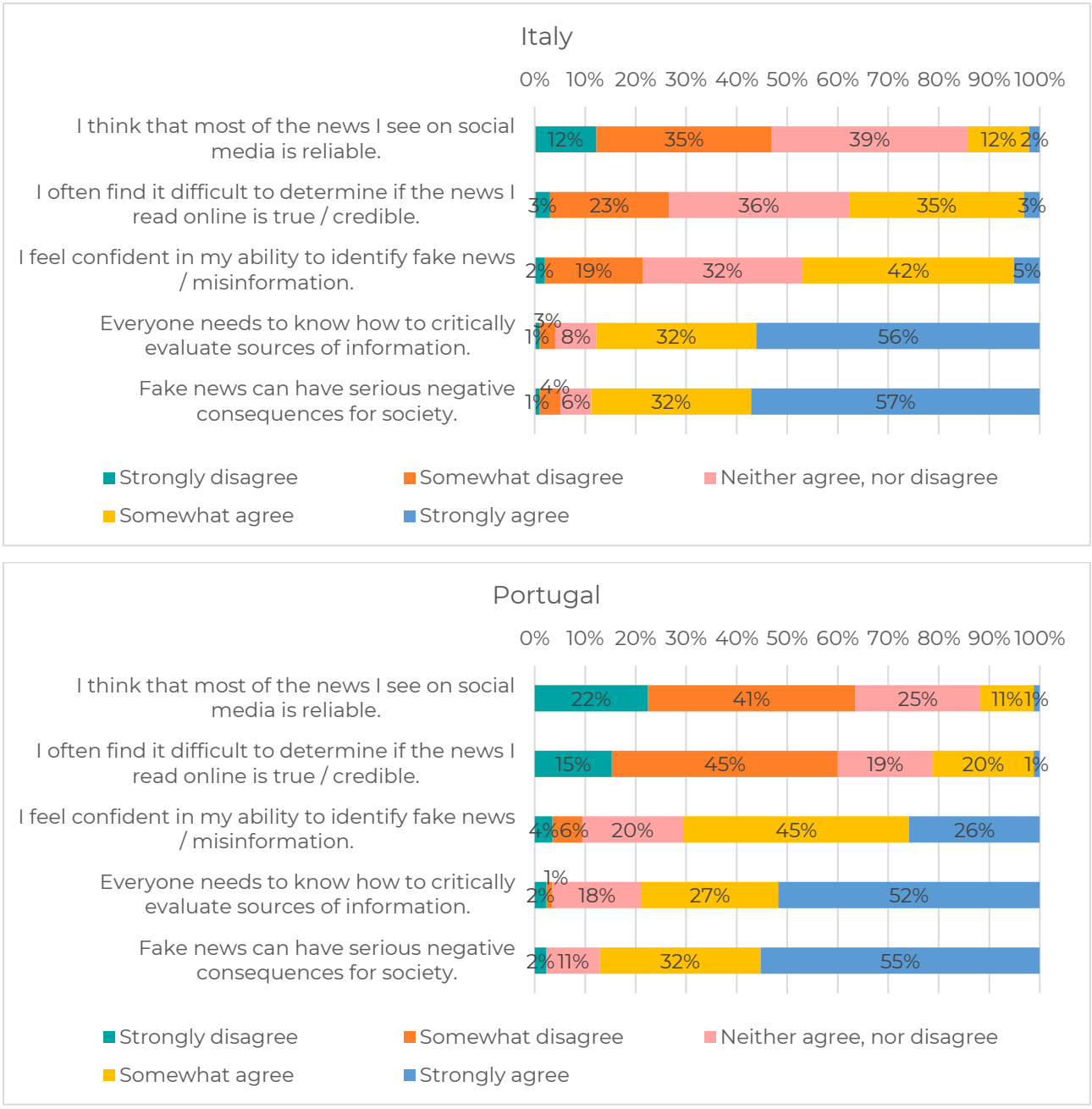
FIGURE 8 AGREEMENT WITH DIFFERENT STATEMENTS ON FAKE NEWS IN ONLINE MEDIA, BY COUNTRY (IN %)





SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 362)

FIGURE 9 AGREEMENT WITH DIFFERENT STATEMENTS ON FAKE NEWS IN ONLINE MEDIA, BY COUNTRY (IN %)

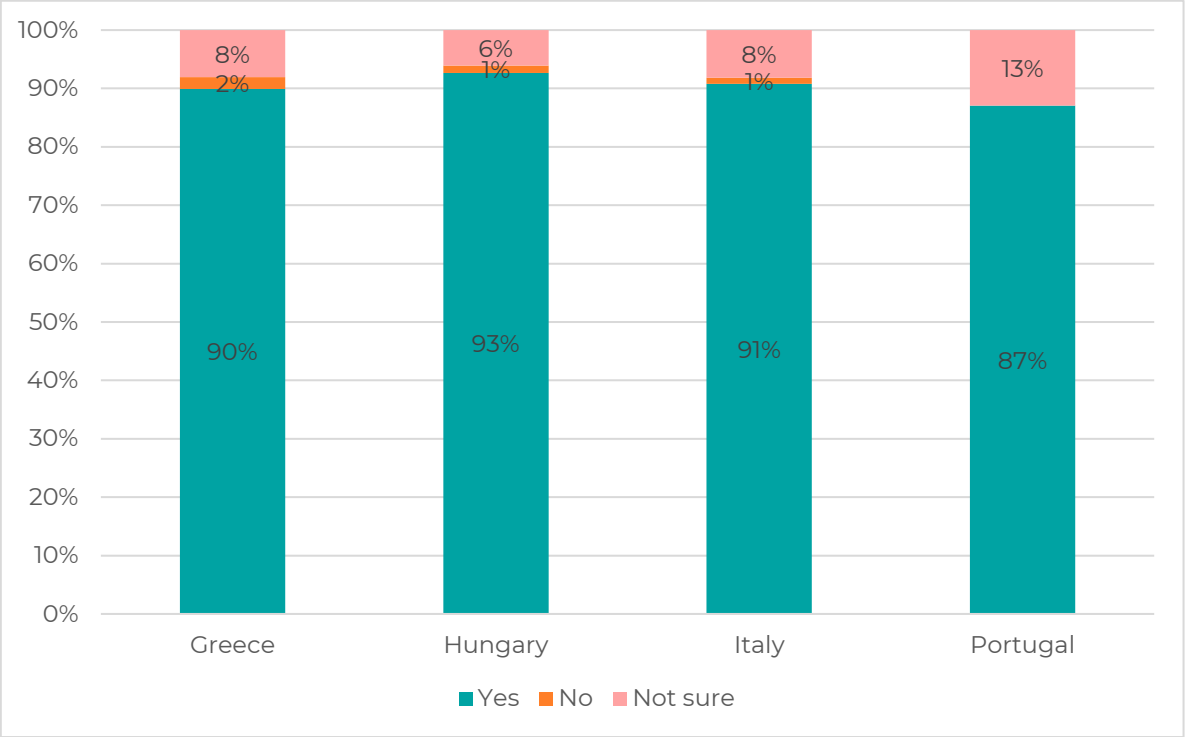


SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 362)

4.5 Encountering fake news, misinformation and distortions

In the questionnaire, we also examined misinformation and distortions of reality in general (see Figure 10), asking students whether they had encountered fake news and, if so, in what forms. The vast majority of students (ranging from 87 to 93%) said that they had already encountered fake news or information that distorted the facts. For example, in the case of Portuguese students, no one indicated that they had never encountered such phenomena, although it is striking that there were the largest number were unsure whether they had or not (13%). This suggests that Portuguese students were the most uncertain about this type of information. However, the overwhelming majority of students felt confident that they had previously encountered such information.

FIGURE 10 ENCOUNTERING FAKE NEWS OR INFORMATION THAT DISTORTS THE FACTS, BY COUNTRY (IN %)

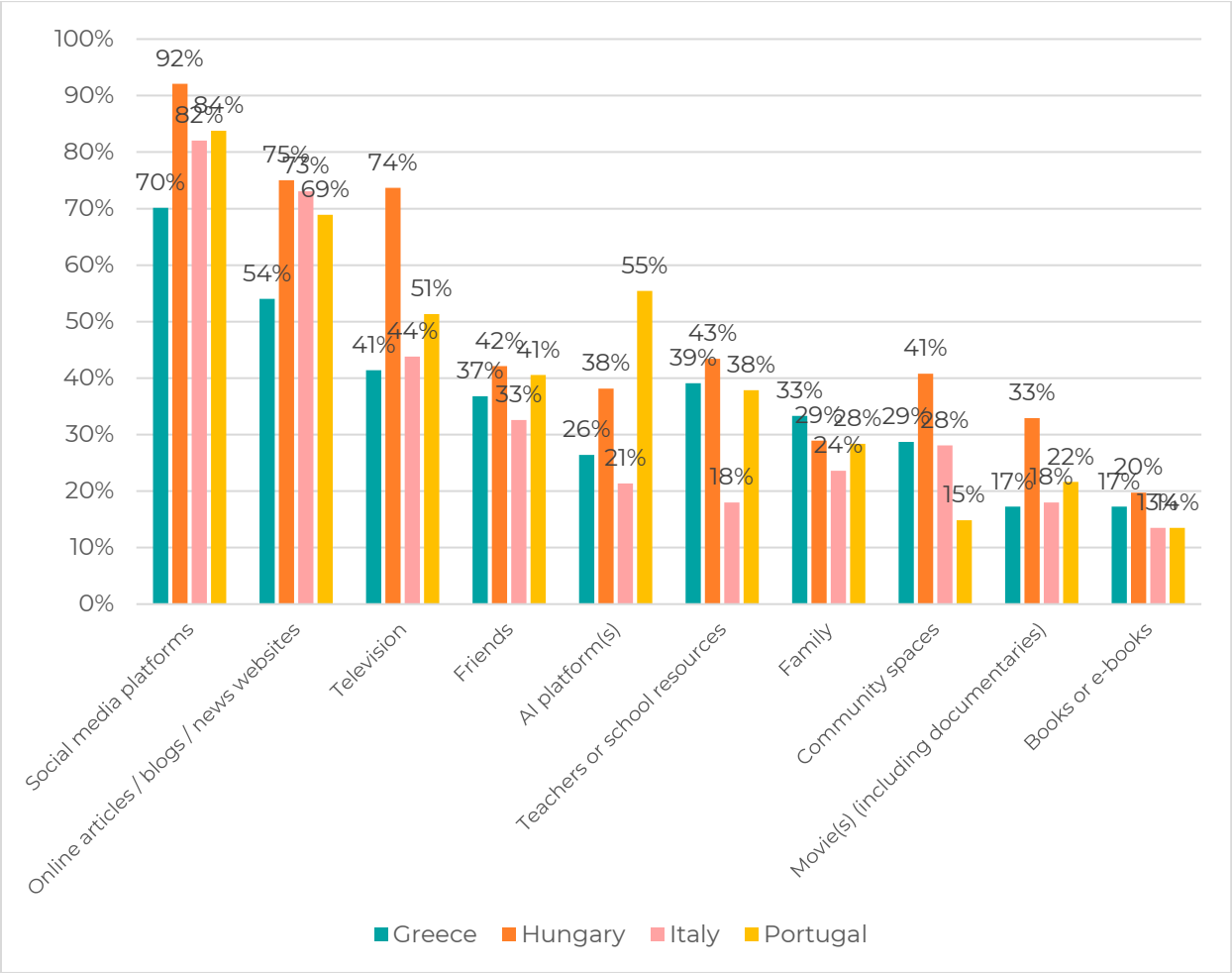


SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 364)

In terms of having encountered this type of information, social media platforms were the most frequently mentioned sources in all countries where students had encountered fake news, with rates ranging from 70% in Greece, 82% in Italy, 84% in Portugal and 92% in Hungary (see Figure 11 below). Online articles, blogs or news websites consistently ranked second, reported by 54% in Greece, 69% in Portugal, 73% in Italy and 75% in Hungary. For the third most common source, television was cited by all countries except Portugal, where it was replaced by AI platforms (55%); and television was ranked fourth in Portugal at 51%. Interestingly, television has a much higher value in Hungary (74%) compared to other countries; while books or e-books were the least frequently mentioned sources in all countries, tied with movies, including documentaries in Greece. These patterns highlight the dominance of digital

media as primary sources where students encounter misinformation, along with television. The data also suggests that Hungarian students encountered distortions across almost all platforms more frequently than their peers from other countries. This trend could be rooted in the country's political environment, the state of the media or a heightened sensitivity to misinformation within their social surroundings.

FIGURE 11 SOURCES WHERE STUDENTS HAVE ALREADY ENCOUNTERED FAKE NEWS OR DISTORTED INFORMATION, BY COUNTRY (IN %)

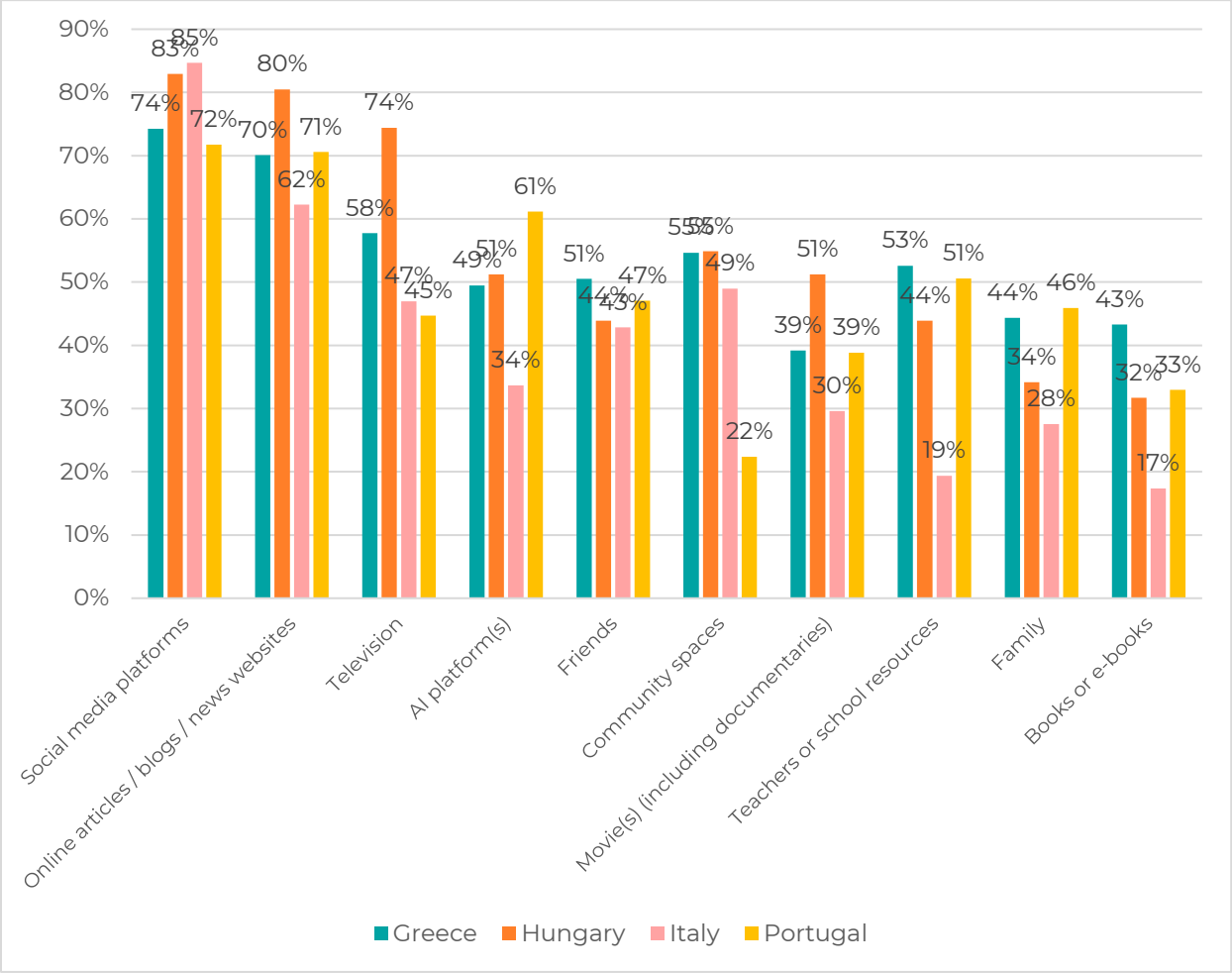


SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 326)[62]

[62] This question only appeared to those respondents who indicated that they have encountered fake news or information that distorts the facts.

As shown in Figure 12 below, which includes all students' responses – even those who had previously expressed uncertainty or stated they had not encountered fake news yet – the results for the potential sources of fake news remained consistent with earlier findings on the location of misinformation. This consistency underscores the reliability of the previously identified sources for fake news or distorted information among the students.

FIGURE 12 POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FAKE NEWS OR DISTORTED INFORMATION, BY COUNTRY (IN %)

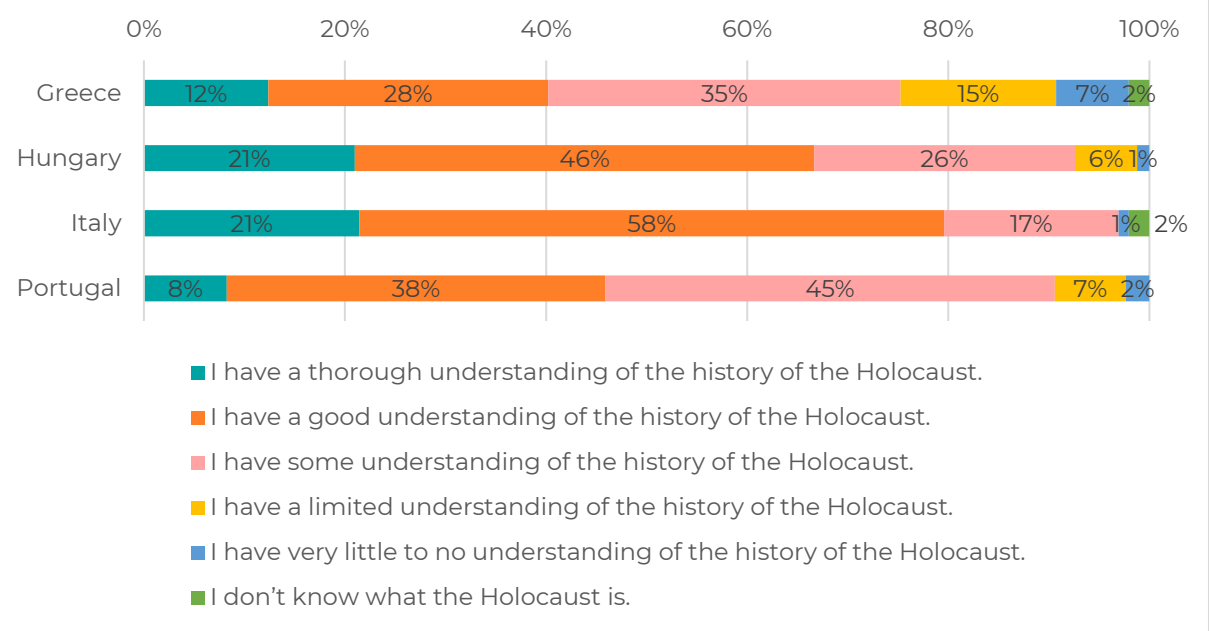


SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 362)

4.6 Students' knowledge and perceptions of the Holocaust and Holocaust distortion

Students also had the opportunity to express their views and share their thoughts on the Holocaust, revealing various perspectives. As Figure 13 shows, the familiarity of Holocaust history among students varies by country, highlighting the diverse educational backgrounds and cultural influences. In Greece, most students indicated having some understanding (35%), followed by a good understanding (28%). Hungarian students reported a higher familiarity, with 46% stating a good understanding and 26% some understanding, and 21% a thorough understanding. Similarly, in Italy, more than half of the respondents (58%) reported a good understanding, and 21% had a thorough understanding, making it the country with the highest proportion of students demonstrating strong familiarity with the history of the Holocaust. In Portugal, 45% of students had some understanding, while 38% reported a good understanding. Only four students, from Greece and Italy, indicated that they did not know what the Holocaust was; and they were not asked any further questions about the topic of the Holocaust.

FIGURE 13 FAMILIARITY WITH THE HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST, BY COUNTRY (IN %)

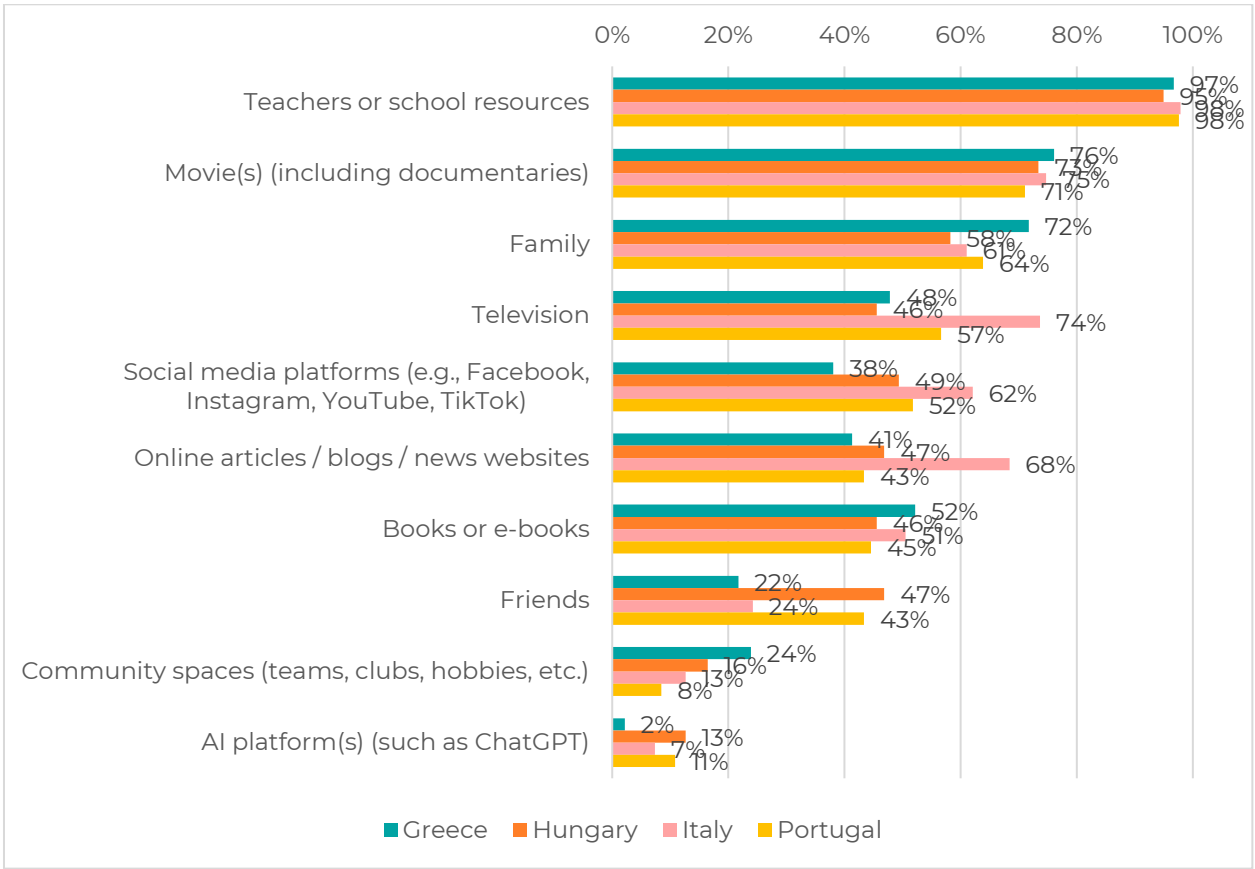


SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 361)

Through their answers, students reflected on where they had learnt information about the history of the Holocaust (see Figure 14 below). In all four countries examined, the students identified teachers or school resources as the primary sources of information about the topic. Specifically, Greece reported 97%, Hungary 95% and Italy and Portugal 98%. Following this, films, including documentaries, were the second most common sources, with rankings ranging slightly: 76% in Greece, 73% in Hungary, 75% in Italy, and 71% in Portugal. Family discussions were the third most cited source in Greece (72%), Hungary (58%) and Italy (64%), while in Portugal, it ranked fourth (with 64%). Importantly, students

mentioned AI platforms, such as ChatGPT as the least cited source across all countries. These findings reveal a strong dependence on formal or traditional education, which may reflect the critical role educators play in conveying historical narratives and fostering awareness about significant events, such as the Holocaust. Conversations within the home and with family also play a role in shaping students' understanding of the Holocaust. The varying levels of reliance on family discourse could reflect cultural differences in how history is talked about within different nationalities across these countries. Interestingly, the low mention of AI platforms as a source of information across the countries suggests that students may not yet view AI as a credible or valuable resource for learning about historical events, although they use it frequently when it comes to gathering information (see earlier in Figure 4). This could indicate students' concerns about misinformation in online space or a preference for traditional learning methods. In general, the findings highlight the continuing importance of educators and familial contexts in the historical education of students.

FIGURE 14 SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST / EXPOSURE TO HOLOCAUST EDUCATION, BY COUNTY (IN %)



SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 349)[63]

[63] This question only appeared to those respondents who indicated that they did not know what the Holocaust was to some degree.

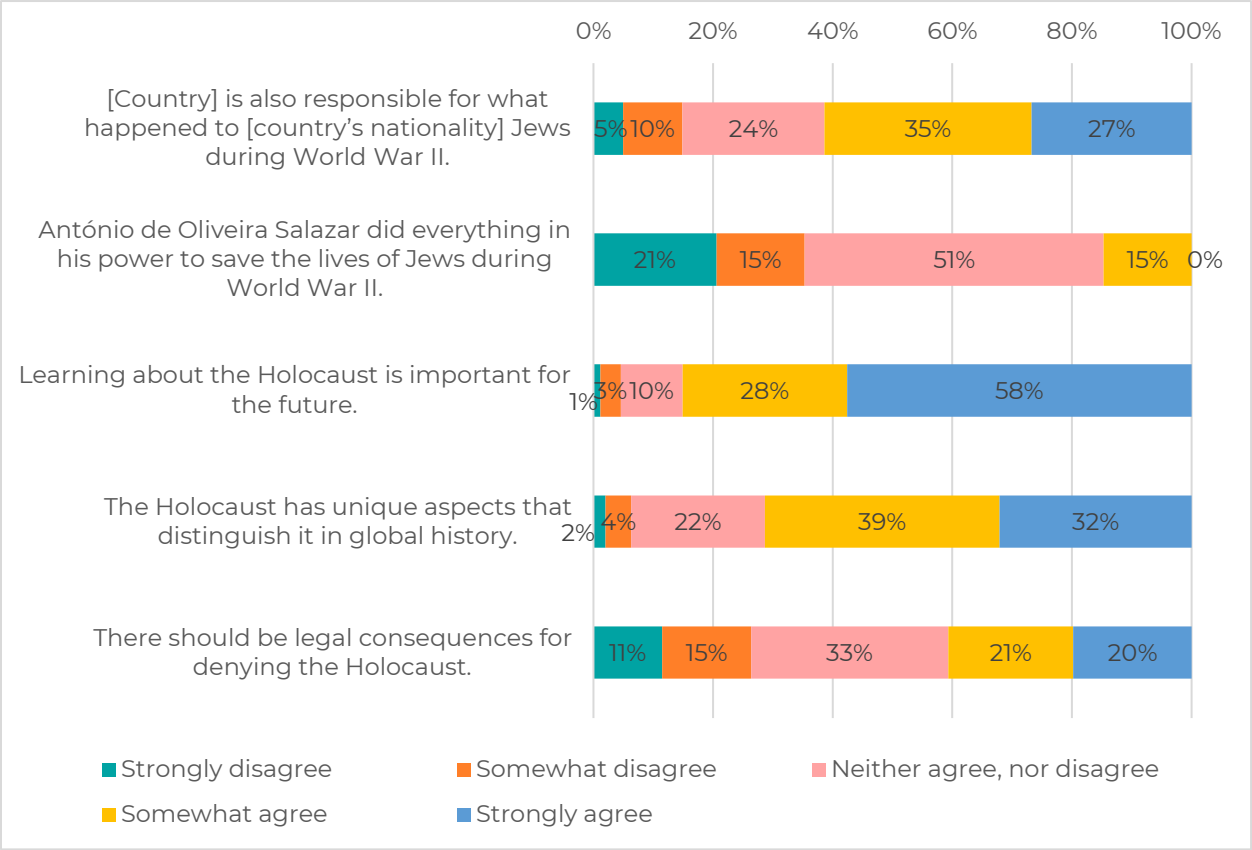
As the most critical aspect of the survey, the results revealed several important trends regarding students' perceptions of the Holocaust and most importantly, its related distorted narratives (see Figure 15 and Figure 16 below). The statements addressed topics such as historical responsibility for the Holocaust, its role and impact on the future, Holocaust denial and various distorted narratives, asking students to take a stance on these issues. The analysis of agreement with each statement has been presented in an overall or aggregated manner, as the country-level breakdown did not reveal significant deviations from the general trends. However, where outstanding national differences emerged compared to the overall data, these have been specifically highlighted within the main analysis. For a more detailed, country-specific breakdown of Figures 14 and 15, see Annex 3 on page 80 and Annex 4 on page 82.

As shown in Figure 15 below, the highest proportion of neutral responses (33%) was observed for the statement on the legal consequences of Holocaust denial, where only 41% of students agreed (21% somewhat and 20% strongly) that Holocaust denial should have legal consequences. This suggests that students may not fully grasp the moral and ethical responsibilities tied to historical accuracy and remembrance. Alternatively, it would be interesting to explore their attitudes toward the denial of other historical catastrophes, as their responses may also reflect a broader resistance to support legal consequences for such issues rather than a specific stance on the Holocaust.

Similarly, 24% of Greek, Hungarian and Italian students were neutral on the statement that their country is responsible for what happened to Jews during World War II, but the majority of students (62%) agreed with this statement. For Portuguese students, this stance was rephrased to reflect Antonio de Oliveira Salazar's role, claiming that he did everything in his power to save Jewish lives during the war. Here, half of the Portuguese students (51%) responded neutrally, but a significant 36% disagreed with this statement in some form, with 21% strongly and 15% somewhat disagreeing. This strong neutrality among Portuguese students may arise from their limited knowledge of their country's or government's role in the Holocaust, indicating a potential gap in their historical awareness or understanding. However, it is also possible that many have simply never been exposed to information about Salazar's actions regarding Jewish people during the Holocaust.

Furthermore, we can observe the greatest levels of agreement for the statements emphasising the importance of learning about the Holocaust for the future (86% agreement in total) and the Holocaust's unique character in history (71% agreement in total), indicating strong consensus among students on these issues. The relatively low levels of disagreement on many statements indicate that there is generally a recognition of the Holocaust's significance; however, the notable proportion of neutral responses raises questions about the depth of students' understanding or engagement with these issues. While there may be uncertainty or disagreement on more specific narratives, there is a general understanding of the Holocaust's significance in fostering historical awareness and preventing future atrocities, which is confirmed by the students' open responses to the main messages of their lessons on the Holocaust (see at the end of paragraph 4.7 for more details).

FIGURE 15 STUDENTS' AGREEMENT LEVELS ON VARIOUS STATEMENTS CONNECTING TO THE HOLOCAUST (INCLUDING TOPICS SUCH AS HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY, THE FUTURE, UNIQUENESS AND DENIAL), OVERALL (IN %)



SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 266[64] FOR THE FIRST, 83[65] FOR THE SECOND AND 349 FOR THE REMAINING STATEMENTS)

On the distorted narratives (see Figure 16), a significant proportion of students strongly rejected victim-blaming narratives, with 62% strongly and 20% somewhat disagreeing (82% in total) with the statement that Jews are partially responsible for what happened to them during the Holocaust. Similarly, the majority rejected the idea that the Holocaust was a result of wartime conditions rather than a systematic genocide, with 46% strongly and an additional 27% somewhat disagreeing (73% in total). These responses highlight a strong awareness of the systemic and intentional nature of the Holocaust. Another statement that caused considerable disagreement was the claim that the impact of the Holocaust is often exaggerated, where 36% strongly and 32% somewhat disagreed (68% in total).

However, responses to the statement that the number of Jews who died during the Holocaust has been greatly exaggerated were more polarised. While 30% strongly disagreed, a concerning 21% strongly agreed, reflecting a troubling minority belief in Holocaust distortion. Notably, at the national level (see Annex 4 on page 82), Hungarian students were more likely to strongly reject this claim, while

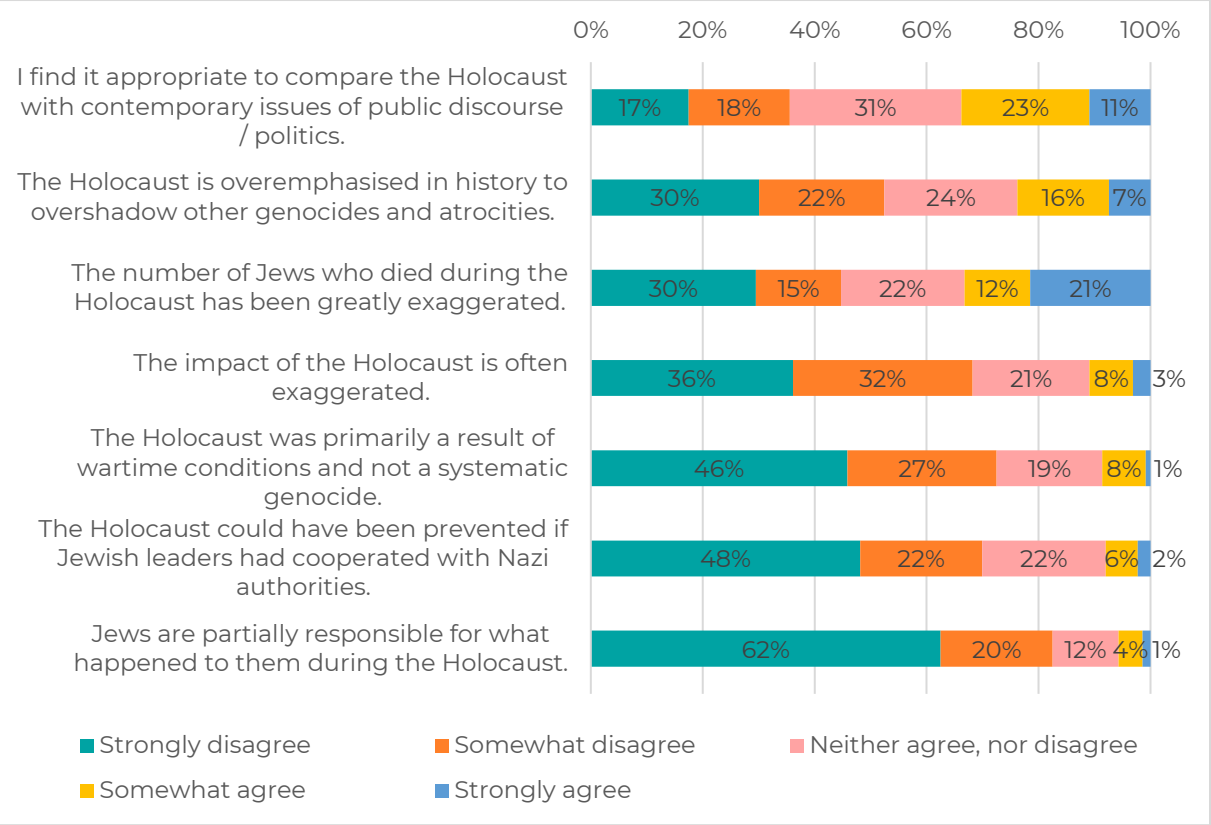
[64] The first statement was rephrased specifically for Portuguese students.
[65] This variation of the sentence applied to Portuguese students.

Italian students stood out with a higher proportion strongly agreeing, compared to the other countries. This polarisation highlights the continued need for Holocaust education to address misconceptions and distorted narratives.

Students also expressed mixed opinions about the statement that the Holocaust is overemphasised in history to overshadow other genocides and atrocities. While 52% disagreed (30% strongly and 22% somewhat disagreed), 24% remained neutral, suggesting some uncertainty or ambivalence among students. Similarly, the statement *"I find it appropriate to compare the Holocaust with contemporary issues of public discourse or politics"* received varied responses, with 31% neutral, 40% in agreement and 35% in disagreement. In this case (see Annex 4 on page 82), Hungarian students were more likely to strongly disagree, whereas Italian students leaned toward somewhat agreeing, compared to the other countries. These differences indicate potential national variations in how historical comparisons are perceived.

Beyond these two specific national trends, responses to the other statements largely mirrored the overall patterns across all countries, as also mentioned earlier. It is interesting to note that Italian students had the fewest neutral responses overall, suggesting a stronger tendency to take a definitive stance on these issues. In contrast, Portuguese students' responses were the most evenly distributed across the response categories, indicating a more balanced or uncertain perspective. Overall, the findings reveal a stronger resistance to Holocaust denial and victim blaming, but also polarisation and uncertainty about certain distorting narratives, such as the exaggeration of the number of Jewish victims and the comparison of the Holocaust with other contemporary issues in public political discourse. These general trends reinforce the need for further education and discussion to address both strong beliefs and areas of hesitation or uncertainty in students' understanding of Holocaust-related narratives.

FIGURE 16 STUDENTS' AGREEMENT LEVELS ON VARIOUS STATEMENTS CONNECTING TO THE HOLOCAUST DISTORTION, OVERALL (IN %)



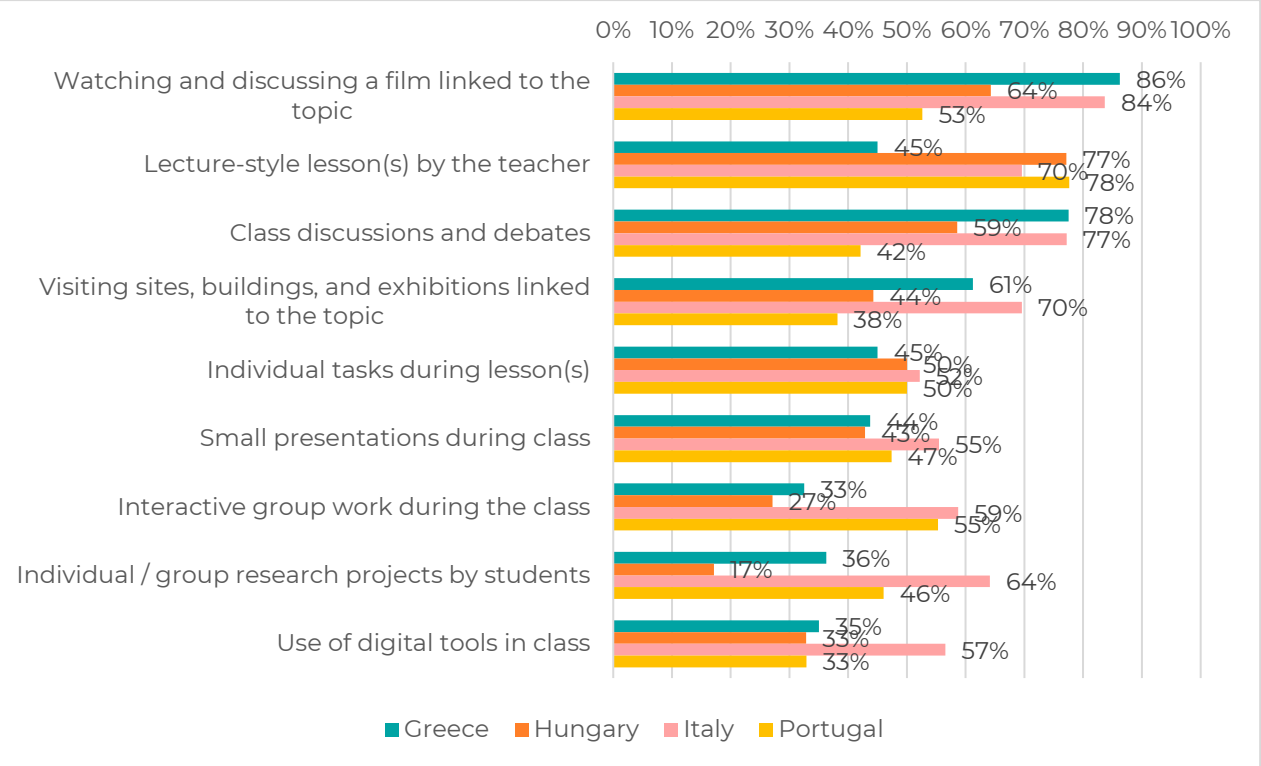
SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 349)

4.7 Students' classroom experiences with the topic of the Holocaust

Lastly, we also wanted to know about students' experiences of the education system, when learning about the Holocaust. According to the responses, 91% of students have had a lesson on the topic of the Holocaust in school, with 9% reporting they had not. When asked how they learned about the Holocaust in school (see Figure 17), the responses varied by country: for Greek students, the most common methods were watching and discussing films (86%), class discussions and debates (78%) and visiting related sites and exhibitions (61%). For Hungarian respondents, lecture-style lessons (77%) were the most common, followed by watching and discussing films (64%) and class discussions and debates (59%). Italian students had a mix of film discussions (84%), class debates (77%) and site visits or exhibitions (70%), with lecture-style lessons also marked by 70%. Portuguese respondents reported lecture-style lessons (78%), interactive group work (55%) and watching films (53%). It can be seen that watching films and lecture-style teaching were the two most common, but a high proportion of Greek and Italian students had opportunities to visit exhibitions and sites and to learn about the Holocaust more interactively through discussions and debates. However, it is important to keep in mind that the survey primarily reached higher-status students (see Demographics and background information from

the beginning of the survey chapter) who were taught by teachers who were willing to participate in the project, meaning these sampling characteristics likely caused significant bias in the results.

FIGURE 17 METHODS OF LEARNING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST IN SCHOOL, BY COUNTRY (IN %)



SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 318[66])

When it comes to how teachers' approach teaching about the Holocaust (see Figure 18), most students expressed that their teachers are very respectful and thorough. Italian students seemed to appreciate this the most, with a remarkable 83% feeling positive about their teachers. Hungarian students followed closely behind, with 63% giving similar feedback, while Greek and Portuguese students reported 56% and 50%, respectively. In general, when asked about their teachers' handling of other sensitive historical topics, students again shared mostly positive experiences. Italian students were the most satisfied, with 74% acknowledging a respectful approach, while 68% of Hungarian students felt the same. Portuguese and Greek students showed positive responses at 56% and 50%. Interestingly, both Hungarian and Portuguese students found their teachers' handling of these other sensitive topics to be about 5% better than their experiences discussing the Holocaust.

[66] This question only appeared to those who had lessons on the Holocaust.

FIGURE 18 TEACHERS' APPROACH TO TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST AND OTHER SENSITIVE HISTORICAL TOPICS, BY COUNTRY (IN %)

SOURCE: DECONSTRUCT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 2024 (N = 318[67] AND 351)

In response to the question regarding the main message conveyed in the students' Holocaust education, approximately half of the students highlighted historical facts – such as the Nazis and the Nazi regime and its leader Hitler, their ideology, the systematic genocide and its brutality and the suffering of innocent Jewish people. As one Hungarian student summarised*: "The Nazi ideology and scapegoating was the main reason for the extermination of Jewish minorities during WWII."*

However, several students highlighted the broader moral lessons of these classes. Many of them interpreted the core message as a warning that the Holocaust was a horrific event in human history that must never be repeated. As one Greek student put it: *"One of the darkest chapters in world history. A strategically organised atrocity that must be remembered, so that it will not be repeated. It*

[67] This question only appeared to those who had lessons on the Holocaust.

shows how humans are alienated from basic morals and humanity through fanaticism and the unwilling support of extreme political groups."

Students also frequently mentioned the dangers of propaganda, discrimination and racism, emphasising that these issues persist in various forms today. *"The extreme atrocities and discrimination during the Holocaust stigmatised not only Jews but entire generations of people. There is still hidden racism in Europe that lurks for occasions for controversial discussions of a racist nature."* – stated a Greek student. As two Portuguese students added*: "… the Holocaust may have been a long time ago, but there is still a lot of discrimination because of religion (not just against Jews, but against other religions too).", "There is a lot of hatred in the world between different races. Measures need to be taken because this problem still exists today."*

Furthermore, a few students explicitly stated their concern that such atrocities could happen again. As a Greek student stated*: "(The main message is) That we humans do not learn from our mistakes. Instead of improving on our ancestors we slowly end up making the same mistakes."* A Portuguese student also mentioned: *"(The main message is) That the Holocaust was a monstrous and inhumane thing and that, despite learning about it at school and knowing how bad it was, it is possible that it will happen again."* One Portuguese student even highlighted the survival of Nazi communities: *"The message I took away was that the Holocaust was a great disaster, … and people suffered who didn't deserve it, and suffered in a way that we don't even think is human. I also learnt that nowadays there are still many Nazis, but they're more secretive."*

Other students highlighted the importance of remembrance, tolerance and learning from the past to foster societal progress. *"From these lessons, I grasped the evilness behind people and the importance of keeping the memory alive, which can prevent such actions from happening again."* – stated an Italian student.

Additionally, several responses stressed that remaining indifferent is not an option – that individuals must stand up for the truth and actively fight against hatred to prevent history from repeating itself. As one Greek student put it, *"The importance of resistance and of expressing our disagreement with extreme regimes."* Another Greek respondent reflected on the consequences of indifference, stating, *"The Holocaust was one of the black and dark pages of history. People at the time were not informed and due to a lack of critical thinking, they were fooled by the authorities and allowed what happened to take place. We must be vigilant because every person who is killed also stains our own hands, as we have shown tolerance."* A similar sentiment was expressed by an Italian student, who emphasised the need for personal responsibility: *"It is important not to remain indifferent to the injustices shown in society, regarding any aspect. It is also important to always make a critical reflection on what we are told to do before following a mass idea."* This idea was echoed by a Portuguese respondent also, who highlighted moral duty: *"The Holocaust teaches us that we must never practise hatred or remain indifferent; we must always fight for justice."*

4.8 Conclusion of the survey findings

The survey revealed several interesting trends regarding students' attitudes toward cultural diversity, media literacy, Holocaust distortion and education. Again, it is important to note that when evaluating the results, we should consider that the majority of students surveyed were from higher economic backgrounds and attended classes where teachers considered it important to participate in the research and viewed the Holocaust as a significant topic – which could potentially lead to significant biases in the results.

First of all, regarding students' information consumption habits, they primarily gather information from online articles, blogs and news websites, but family is also recognised as another important source of information. Despite this, teachers and school resources are still viewed as the most reliable information sources along with family, highlighting the continuing significance of traditional school settings and the trust students place in their educators as effective gatekeepers of knowledge.

Additionally, the vast majority of students reported varying frequencies in checking the validity of online information. When they do not verify information, it is often due to a lack of time, interest or motivation. The role of the family is evident here as well; when it comes to checking the validity or truthfulness of information students across all four countries preferred cross-checking information and consulting their parents and family members.

Concerning their perceptions of online news, most students in all four countries believed that much of the news on social media is unreliable. However, self-reported confidence in identifying fake news varied, with students from Portugal and Hungary expressing greater confidence. For all four countries, social media platforms were identified as the most likely sources of fake news, followed by other online content such as articles, blogs and news websites. Interestingly, books and e-books were highlighted as the least likely sources to encounter fake news or misinformation. Remarkably, Hungarian students identified television as a significant source of distorted information more than their peers from the other three countries, who also reported encountering fake news more frequently than students from the other countries.

In terms of cultural diversity, all four countries' students acknowledged discrimination as a problem within their own contexts. However, Hungarian students largely agreed that it is acceptable for landlords to prefer tenants from the majority society, suggesting a belief that society benefits when its members share the same cultural background. Therefore, while the issue of discrimination was recognised, there is a potentially conflicting attitude toward diversity among Hungarian students.

According to the topic of the Holocaust, the findings revealed that the vast majority of students felt they had a thorough or good understanding of Holocaust history. Most had learned about it primarily through school, films, documentaries and family. Additionally, the overwhelming majority of students considered Holocaust education and knowledge essential for the future. However, it is concerning that a minority of students still agreed that the number of Jews who died in the Holocaust is greatly exaggerated, with a higher proportion of Italian students expressing this view compared to

their peers. Also, many students were uncertain or hesitant about whether the Holocaust received exaggerated emphasis in history compared to other genocides and atrocities.

To conclude, the results indicate stronger resistance to Holocaust denial and victim blaming from the students' side but also reveal some polarisation and uncertainty regarding certain distorted narratives, such as exaggerating the number of Jewish victims and comparing the Holocaust to contemporary issues of public discourse or politics. These findings highlight the need for further education and discussion to address both beliefs and areas of uncertainty in students' understandings of the Holocaust and its remembrance, and more generally, to tackle distorted narratives, fake news and misinformation in their daily lives.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The general situation regarding Holocaust education and distortion in Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Portugal reveals a complex interplay between historical memory, cultural attitudes, and educational practices. The historical and cultural contexts of these countries significantly shape both the teaching of the Holocaust and the challenges of addressing distortion. Greece and Hungary, for instance, contend with deeply rooted antisemitism and a troubling prevalence of Holocaust distortion in public discourse and educational settings. By contrast, Portugal, while exhibiting relatively low levels of distortion, faces difficulties in integrating Holocaust education into its national narrative due to its peripheral role in Holocaust history and the legacy of its neutral stance during World War II. Italy, on the other hand, grapples with persistent myths, such as the "good Italian versus bad German" narrative, which overshadows its role in the persecution of Jews. At the same time, it has shown a strong commitment and investment into teaching about the Holocaust, and lesser so, distortion.

Educators across these countries consistently report significant challenges. Among the most pressing are inadequate resources, limited curriculum time, and insufficient training opportunities. These barriers hinder their ability to teach the Holocaust comprehensively and to effectively counteract distortion. Moreover, misconceptions and resistance among students, often reflecting broader societal prejudices or misinformation, underscore the need for systemic improvements. Teachers frequently encounter a lack of understanding or interest from colleagues and institutional inertia, which further complicates efforts to address this sensitive subject.

The expertise and training of educators play a pivotal role in shaping their ability to address Holocaust distortion. Teachers with specialised training demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the issue, employing diverse methods to engage students and counter misinformation. However, even those teachers have a hard time understanding or preventing distortion in class and their work and social environment. The lack of widespread, accessible training perpetuates disparities in teaching effectiveness. Teachers who lack formal preparation often struggle to define distortion and address it effectively in the classroom. This gap highlights the urgent need for targeted professional development programs.

Teachers emphasised Holocaust education's role in promoting tolerance, historical understanding, and moral lessons, with many highlighting memories to prevent history's repetition and

address racism and discrimination. Some prioritised historical accuracy, with one stating, *"We as educators have the responsibility of transmitting the truth."* Others viewed Holocaust education as essential for preserving history and combating distortion, emphasising the need for teacher training and curriculum reforms, as one noted, *"Schools must be prepared to talk about these subjects to counter distortion effectively."* Educators also stressed historical awareness, empathy, and critical thinking, while some expressed a moral responsibility, with one asking, *"How can I, at this moment, demystify something that is rooted in people's brains, including mine?"*

Institutional support emerges as a critical factor in determining the depth and quality of Holocaust education. Countries that have committed to initiatives such as IHRA membership and national Holocaust education programs have made strides in fostering awareness and understanding. Yet, gaps in resource allocation and policy enforcement remain, leaving many educators to rely on their own initiatives to compensate for systemic shortcomings.

Despite these challenges, Holocaust education has the potential to resonate deeply with students. Experiential and empathy-driven approaches – including survivor testimonies, creative projects, and visits to historical sites – can foster critical thinking, emotional engagement, and ethical reflection. However, educators note an increasing tendency among younger generations to perceive the Holocaust as a distant historical event. This underscores the importance of innovative teaching strategies that connect the Holocaust to contemporary issues, making it relevant to students' lives.

Last, but not least, media literacy, fact-checking, and fake news emerge as major factors in Holocaust distortion and beyond. This alarming trend grows disproportionally in our era and threatens to erode historical accuracy and public trust in credible information. The proliferation of conspiracy theories, denial narratives, and distortion through social media platforms necessitates a robust investment in Holocaust teaching.

In addition, the survey revealed several interesting trends regarding students' attitudes toward cultural diversity, media literacy, Holocaust distortion and education. Again, it is important to note that when evaluating the results, we should consider that the majority of students surveyed were from higher economic backgrounds and attended classes where teachers considered it important to participate in the research and viewed the Holocaust as a significant topic – which could potentially lead to significant biases in the results.

First of all, regarding students' information consumption habits, they primarily gather information from online articles, blogs and news websites, but family is also recognised as another important source of information. Despite this, teachers and school resources are still viewed as the most reliable information sources along with family, highlighting the continuing significance of traditional school settings and the trust students place in their educators as effective gatekeepers of knowledge.

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In terms of cultural diversity, all four countries' students acknowledged discrimination as a problem within their own contexts. However, Hungarian students largely agreed that it is acceptable for landlords to prefer tenants from the majority society, suggesting a belief that society benefits when its members share the same cultural background. Therefore, while the issue of discrimination was recognised, there is a potentially conflicting attitude toward diversity among Hungarian students. According to the topic of the Holocaust, the findings revealed that the vast majority of students felt they had a thorough or good understanding of Holocaust history. Most had learned about it primarily through school, films, documentaries and family. Additionally, the overwhelming majority of students considered Holocaust education and knowledge essential for the future. However, it is concerning that a minority of students still agreed that the number of Jews who died in the Holocaust is greatly exaggerated, with a higher proportion of Italian students expressing this view compared to their peers. Also, many students were uncertain or hesitant about whether the Holocaust received exaggerated emphasis in history compared to other genocides and atrocities.

To conclude, the results indicate stronger resistance to Holocaust denial and victim blaming from the students' side but also reveal some polarisation and uncertainty regarding certain distorted narratives. These findings highlight the need for further education and discussion to address both beliefs and areas of uncertainty in students' understandings of the Holocaust and its remembrance and more generally, to tackle distorted narratives, fake news and misinformation in their daily lives.

Some key recommendations stem from the instructor's views and the student's survey. Key suggestions include a call for curricular reforms that integrate Holocaust education more comprehensively into national syllabi, the expansion of teacher training programs, and the adoption of interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches that link Holocaust studies with broader discussions on human rights and contemporary manifestations of antisemitism. Additionally, the study advocates for greater engagement with digital resources to ensure accessibility and foster critical engagement with online sources. These programs should integrate the guidelines established by IHRA and emphasise interdisciplinary methodologies.

Given the increasing prevalence of Holocaust distortion in digital spaces, it is imperative to equip both educators and students with the necessary tools to critically engage with online content. The development of digital toolkits aimed at identifying and debunking misinformation will serve as a

foundational resource in this effort. Furthermore, the promotion of interactive, evidence-based educational platforms will encourage critical engagement with conspiracy theories and misinformation. Systematic monitoring mechanisms should also be established to track online narratives and facilitate coordinated responses in collaboration with relevant institutions.

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Annex

Annex 1: Students' questionnaire

1. Please write your age below:
2. Please indicate your gender:
Woman
Man
Non-binary
3. Where is your school located?
Capital city
Country town or bigger city
Other (smaller) city/town
Settlement
4. What grade are you in this school year?
9th
10th
11th
12th
5. What is your mother's (foster mother's) highest level of education?
Primary education or less
High school / secondary education degree
Vocational education degree
Bachelor's degree / College degree
Master's degree / Single-cycle university degree
Doctoral degree
I do not know / Not relevant
6. What is your father's (foster father's) highest level of education?
Primary education or less
High school / secondary education degree
Vocational education degree
Bachelor's degree / College degree
Master's degree / Single-cycle university degree
Doctoral degree
I do not know / Not relevant
7. Which of the following best describes your household environment? Please select all that apply to you.
We have a computer or laptop at home.
We have access to the internet at home.

We have a collection of more than 20 books at home.
We go on vacation at least once a year.
We have a dedicated study space for schoolwork at home.
We have a car.
I have my own smartphone.
I have my own room.
8. In which region do you live?
9. To what extent do you agree with the following sentences?
A country's minorities enrich its culture.
Discrimination against minorities is a significant problem in my country.
Society is better when everyone shares the same cultural background.
It is acceptable for landlords to choose tenants from the majority over minority groups.
Strongly disagree
Somewhat disagree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Somewhat agree
Strongly agree
10. When you need to gather information about something, what source(s) do you usually use? Please, select all that apply to you.
Teachers or school resources
Family
Friends
Community spaces (teams, clubs, hobbies, etc.)
Books or e-books
Television
Movie(s) (including documentaries)
Social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok)
Online articles / blogs / news websites
AI platform(s) (such as ChatGPT)
Other, please specify:
11. How often do you check the validity / truthfulness of the information you come across online?
Always or almost always
Frequently
Sometimes
Rarely
Never
12. Please explain what influences your decision to check or not check the validity of information.
13. How do you check the validity of the information? Please select all that apply to you.

I cross-check with multiple sources
I check the author's credentials
I use fact-checking websites (e.g., Reuters Fact Check)
I ask my teachers
I ask my parents or family
I ask my friends
Other, please specify:
14. How much do you trust the following sources for information? Please rank the options below in order, from most trusted to least trusted, by dragging each option to the right column.
Teachers or school resources
Family
Friends
Community spaces (teams, clubs, hobbies, etc.)
Books or e-books
Television
Movie(s) (including documentaries)
Social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok)
Online articles / blogs / news websites
AI platform(s) (such as ChatGPT)
15. Have you encountered information that distorts the facts? // Have you ever encountered fake news?
Yes
No
Not sure
16. Where did you encounter this information? Please select all that apply.
17. What do you think, where could you encounter this type of information? Please select all that apply
Teachers or school resources
Family
Friends
Community spaces (teams, clubs, hobbies, etc.)
Books or e-books
Television
Movie(s) (including documentaries)
Social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok)
Online articles / blogs / news websites
AI platform(s) (such as ChatGPT)
Other, please specify:

18. To what extent do you agree with the following sentences? Please indicate your answer in each row below.
I often find it difficult to determine if the news I read online is true / credible.
Fake news can have serious negative consequences for society.
I feel confident in my ability to identify fake news / misinformation.
Everyone needs to know how to critically evaluate sources of information.
I think that most of the news I see on social media is reliable.
Strongly disagree
Somewhat disagree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Somewhat agree
Strongly agree
19. How familiar are you with the history of the Holocaust? Please mark the most relevant sentence for you.
I have a thorough understanding of the history of the Holocaust.
I have a good understanding of the history of the Holocaust.
I have some understanding of the history of the Holocaust.
I have a limited understanding of the history of the Holocaust.
I have very little to no understanding of the history of the Holocaust.
I don't know what the Holocaust is.
20. Where have you heard about the Holocaust? Please select all that apply to you.
Teachers or school resources
Family
Friends
Community spaces (teams, clubs, hobbies, etc.)
Books or e-books
Television
Movie(s) (including documentaries)
Social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok)
Online articles / blogs / news websites
AI platform(s) (such as ChatGPT)
Other, please specify:
21. To what extent do you agree with the following sentences? Please indicate it for each of the sentences below.
The number of Jews who died during the Holocaust has been greatly exaggerated.
The Holocaust is overemphasised in history to overshadow other genocides and atrocities.
The Holocaust could have been prevented if Jewish leaders had cooperated with Nazi authorities.
The Holocaust was primarily a result of wartime conditions and not a systematic genocide.

I find it appropriate to compare the Holocaust with contemporary issues of public discourse / politics.
Strongly disagree
Somewhat disagree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Somewhat agree
Strongly agree
22. Please read the sentences and mark to what extent you agree with each.
Jews are partially responsible for what happened to them during the Holocaust.
A) [Country] is also responsible for what happened to [country's nationality] Jews during World War II.[68] B) António de Oliveira Salazar did everything in his power to save the lives of Jews during World War II.[69]
There should be legal consequences for denying the Holocaust.
Learning about the Holocaust is important for the future.
The impact of the Holocaust is often exaggerated.
The Holocaust has unique aspects that distinguish it in global history.
Strongly disagree
Somewhat disagree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Somewhat agree
Strongly agree
23. Have you had a lesson or lessons in school about the Holocaust?
24. In the following section, please recall the lesson(s) where you learned about the Holocaust.
Yes
No
25. In what ways did you learn about the Holocaust in school? Please select all that apply to your experience.
Individual tasks during lesson(s)
Watching and discussing a film linked to the topic
Visiting sites, buildings, and exhibitions linked to the topic
Interactive group work during the class
Small presentations during class
Individual / group research projects by students
Use of digital tools in class
Class discussions and debates
Lecture-style lesson(s) by the teacher

[68] Only for Greek, Hungarian and Italian students.
[69] Only for Portuguese students.

Other, please specify:
26. What is the main message you took from this / these lesson(s)? Please describe in your own words.
27. How would you describe your teacher's approach to teaching about the topic of the Holocaust?
28. How would you describe your teacher's approach to sensitive historical topics?
Very respectful and thorough
Respectful but somewhat superficial
Neutral and fact-based
Avoidant and uncomfortable
Inconsistent or varies by topic
I haven't noticed a specific approach
Other, please specify:

Annex 2: Country breakdown of parents' and foster parents' educational background

What is your mother's (foster mother's) highest level of education?							
	Primary education or less	High school / secondary education degree	Vocational education degree	Bachelor's degree / College degree	Master's degree / Single-cycle university degree	Doctoral degree	I do not know / Not relevant
Greece (n = 99)	0%	5%	13%	28%	38%	11%	4%
Hungary (n = 82)	2%	17%	11%	35%	22%	6%	6%
Italy (n = 98)	11%	38%	9%	11%	28%	1%	2%
Portugal (n = 85)	0%	9%	5%	34%	32%	11%	9%

What is your father's (foster father's) highest level of education?							
	Primary education or less	High school / secondary education degree	Vocational education degree	Bachelor's degree / College degree	Master's degree / Single-cycle university degree	Doctoral degree	I do not know / Not relevant
Greece (n = 99)	0%	11%	15%	33%	22%	12%	6%
Hungary (n = 82)	0%	17%	28%	18%	18%	9%	10%
Italy (n = 98)	19%	26%	17%	5%	24%	2%	6%
Portugal (n = 85)	5%	19%	5%	27%	24%	7%	14%

Annex 3: Country breakdown of students' agreement levels on various statements connecting to the Holocaust (including topics such as historical responsibility, the future, uniqueness and denial)

Greece (n = 92)					
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Greece is also responsible for what happened to Greek Jews during World War II.	5%	15%	27%	39%	13%
Learning about the Holocaust is important for the future.	0%	1%	5%	26%	67%
The Holocaust has unique aspects that distinguish it in global history.	1%	3%	21%	39%	36%
There should be legal consequences for denying the Holocaust.	4%	12%	30%	27%	26%

Hungary (n = 79)					
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Hungary is also responsible for what happened to Hungarian Jews during World War II.	8%	13%	28%	23%	29%
Learning about the Holocaust is important for the future.	1%	6%	18%	25%	49%
The Holocaust has unique aspects that distinguish it in global history.	4%	8%	34%	30%	24%
There should be legal consequences for denying the Holocaust.	19%	16%	27%	18%	20%

Italy (n = 95)					
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Italy is also responsible for what happened to Italian Jews during World War II.	2%	2%	17%	40%	39%
Learning about the Holocaust is important for the future.	1%	1%	7%	27%	63%
The Holocaust has unique aspects that distinguish it in global history.	0%	3%	22%	48%	26%
There should be legal consequences for denying the Holocaust.	2%	9%	36%	26%	26%

Portugal (n = 83)					
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
António de Oliveira Salazar did everything in his power to save the lives of Jews during World War II.	21%	15%	51%	15%	0%
Learning about the Holocaust is important for the future.	2%	6%	12%	31%	48%
The Holocaust has unique aspects that distinguish it in global history.	4%	4%	13%	37%	42%
There should be legal consequences for denying the Holocaust.	23%	23%	39%	11%	5%

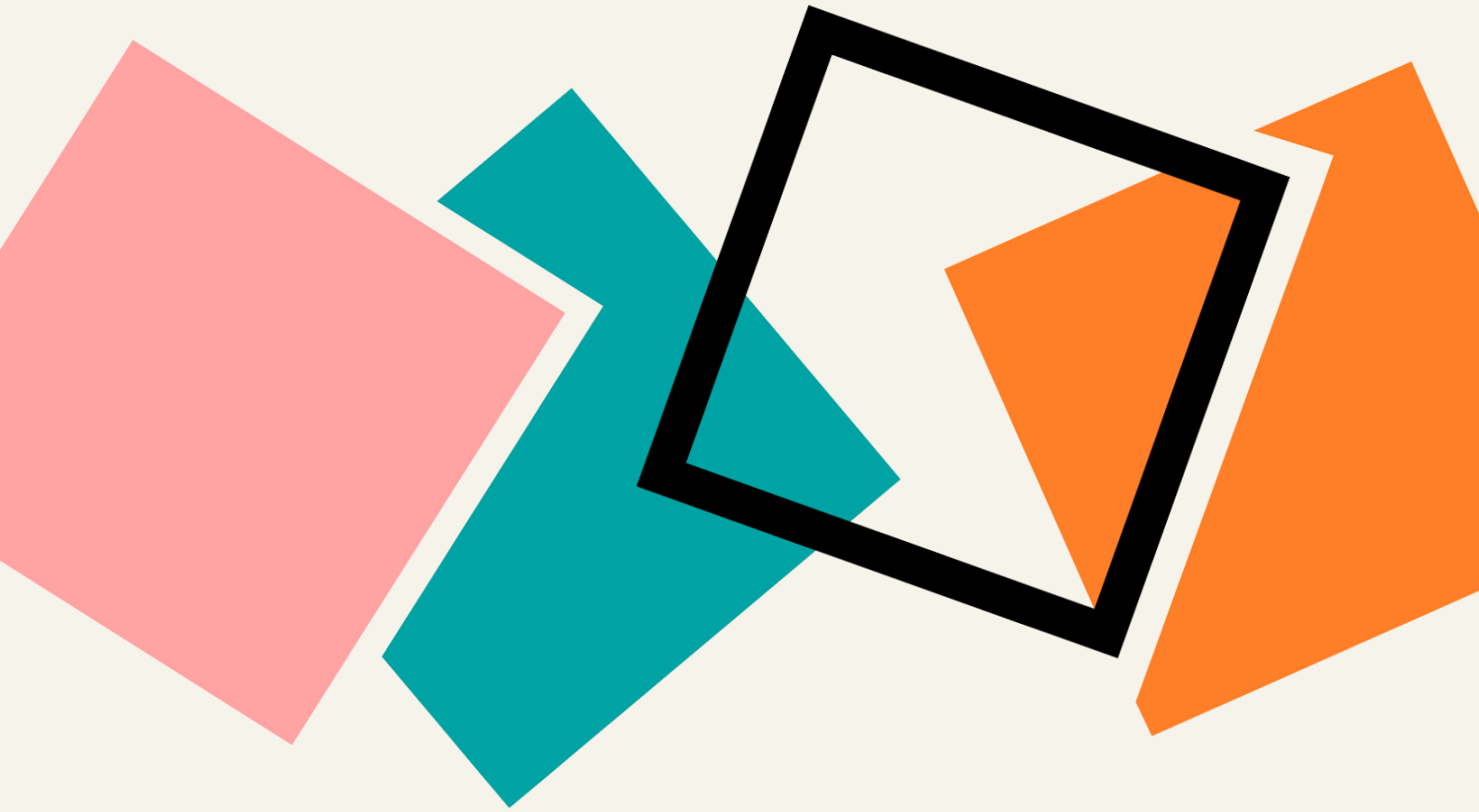
Annex 4: Country breakdown of students' agreement levels on various statements connecting to the Holocaust distortion

Greece					
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I find it appropriate to compare the Holocaust with contemporary issues of public discourse / politics.	13%	20%	37%	18%	12%
The Holocaust is overemphasised in history to overshadow other genocides and atrocities.	25%	21%	24%	22%	9%
The number of Jews who died during the Holocaust has been greatly exaggerated.	22%	14%	36%	18%	10%
The impact of the Holocaust is often exaggerated.	35%	35%	20%	8%	3%
The Holocaust was primarily a result of wartime conditions and not a systematic genocide.	49%	25%	16%	9%	1%
The Holocaust could have been prevented if Jewish leaders had cooperated with Nazi authorities.	43%	16%	28%	9%	3%
Jews are partially responsible for what happened to them during the Holocaust.	67%	20%	10%	3%	0%

Hungary					
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I find it appropriate to compare the Holocaust with contemporary issues of public discourse / politics.	33%	20%	24%	18%	5%
The Holocaust is overemphasised in history to overshadow other genocides and atrocities.	34%	15%	25%	18%	8%
The number of Jews who died during the Holocaust has been greatly exaggerated.	49%	20%	18%	6%	6%
The impact of the Holocaust is often exaggerated.	37%	27%	20%	10%	6%
The Holocaust was primarily a result of wartime conditions and not a systematic genocide.	41%	27%	25%	6%	1%
The Holocaust could have been prevented if Jewish leaders had cooperated with Nazi authorities.	51%	15%	24%	5%	5%
Jews are partially responsible for what happened to them during the Holocaust.	46%	27%	18%	4%	6%

Italy					
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I find it appropriate to compare the Holocaust with contemporary issues of public discourse / politics.	7%	12%	28%	36%	17%
The Holocaust is overemphasised in history to overshadow other genocides and atrocities.	41%	24%	18%	12%	5%
The number of Jews who died during the Holocaust has been greatly exaggerated.	21%	12%	11%	5%	52%
The impact of the Holocaust is often exaggerated.	37%	39%	18%	5%	1%
The Holocaust was primarily a result of wartime conditions and not a systematic genocide.	54%	31%	7%	7%	1%
The Holocaust could have been prevented if Jewish leaders had cooperated with Nazi authorities.	51%	29%	16%	4%	0%
Jews are partially responsible for what happened to them during the Holocaust.	69%	17%	6%	7%	0%

Portugal					
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I find it appropriate to compare the Holocaust with contemporary issues of public discourse / politics.	19%	22%	33%	18%	8%
The Holocaust is overemphasised in history to overshadow other genocides and atrocities.	19%	29%	29%	14%	8%
The number of Jews who died during the Holocaust has been greatly exaggerated.	29%	16%	24%	17%	14%
The impact of the Holocaust is often exaggerated.	36%	27%	27%	8%	2%
The Holocaust was primarily a result of wartime conditions and not a systematic genocide.	39%	24%	29%	8%	0%
The Holocaust could have been prevented if Jewish leaders had cooperated with Nazi authorities.	48%	25%	20%	5%	1%
Jews are partially responsible for what happened to them during the Holocaust.	65%	18%	14%	2%	0%



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