The sixth professional development seminar for teachers in European Jewish schools

29-31 October, Krakow

Final report

Underwritten by:
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Executive summary

Anyone who is at least a little bit familiar with Central and Eastern European Jewry knows that Jewish schools in this part of the world became the cornerstones of rebuilding Jewish identity. To nurture students - like it happened to me -, who then distribute their knowledge in their non-affiliated families, and who become the future leaders of the reemerging Jewish communities. Teens today were born already in the 21st century – most of them were born into the European Union and are growing up knowing their endless possibilities across borders. The question is not whether Jewish schools will continue to play an important role in keeping Jewish life, culture and community alive – the real question is how we can make them even better, stronger, and more inter-connected – so that future Jewish communities will be also be more united and resilient in a globalized world.

It has been already 6 years since the launching of the Centropa Jewish Network. We started as a small community of dedicated teachers in European Jewish schools, and aimed to create stronger bonds between students between those schools. As an international educational organization we knew that the only way to make change in schools is to invest first and foremost in practicing classroom teachers. Not only because they have good ideas, commitment, and dedication – that is also true – but also because at the end of the day they will decide how they teach their students, what projects they initiate, or what possibilities they expose their students to. Our strategy has paid off. Our so called veteran teachers are now the engines of our activities. Not only do they present their projects from previous years and share their experience, but they also coordinate our programs, come up with their own ideas, reach out to new teachers, and build CJN into their school’s life.

It was already the sixth time that we brought together teachers from European Jewish schools for a two-and-a-half-day seminar. The annual seminars for teachers are vital to our success – this is where real friendships and partnerships are born, lesson plans and educational ideas are created, and a community is being formed. This was the first time we organized it in Krakow, Poland, and we had 26 teachers, and half of them were new to our network. During the seminar we have deepened the connections between the teachers, and we provided a platform for new projects and partnerships. Here are the most interesting findings from this report:

- We have engaged three new Jewish schools in CJN;
- Teachers developed three various cooperation projects for celebrating the 70th birthday of Israel;
- 72% of the respondents to our feedback survey said it was absolutely useful to create lesson plans in groups, 60% said the same about our Café Dilemma program;
- 52% said they want to try out with their students the quiz game we showed them.

For more details, please read through this report, and be in touch should you have any questions!

Marcell Kenesei
Director of CJN
Five take-away quotes

“Wonderful seminar. Lovely people. Dedicated educators. Creative ideas. Inspiring Centropa leadership. After each Centropa conference - summer, fall, winter - I am reminded why I love this profession so much.” (Lowell Blackman)

“Learning about other schools: everyday life, dilemmas and projects. Meeting enthusiastic people who are looking to share and create something together. Learning about Centropa: the people behind and the material there is. I felt the importance of having this group for schools around the world.” (Irit Levinas)

“I met a lot of nice people, had the chance to see their backgrounds and how their schools deal with different challenges. For the first time I realized what Centropa actually does... and I am absolutely excited. The Centropa films should be introduced in every Jewish school.” (Stephan Wernli)

“As it was my first Centropa seminar, I returned home with a lot of materials that I can have access to use in my history lessons.” (Ömer Yavuz Topalömer)

“This seminar gave me an opportunity to speak to many well-educated and experienced people. There is nothing more significant than knowledge exchange and sharing our teachers’ ideas and achievements. Centropa is really an educational historical institute and teaches us to be a virtuoso in our hard teachers’ job.” (Maryna Pysanets)
Participants

This year, we hosted 26 teachers from 17 schools, 15 countries in our CJN seminar. The majority of the participants teach in middle or high school. 12 participants were new, while 14 already participated in Centropa events earlier, such as seminars or Summer Academies. We are especially glad that this year we welcomed teachers from 3 schools which are completely new in the Centropa Jewish Network: the King David High School from Liverpool, UK, the Colegio Hatikva from Valldoreix, Spain, and the Jüdische Schule Noam from Zürich, Switzerland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>City/Country</th>
<th>Subject</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diana Gherasimiuc</td>
<td>Lauder-Reut Educational Complex</td>
<td>Bucharest, Romania</td>
<td>History, Jewish studies</td>
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<td>Roy Nissim</td>
<td>Lauder-Reut Educational Complex</td>
<td>Bucharest, Romania</td>
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<td>Judit Markos</td>
<td>Lauder Javne School</td>
<td>Budapest, Hungary</td>
<td>English language</td>
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<td>Zsuzsa Halmos-Kovács</td>
<td>Lauder Javne School</td>
<td>Budapest, Hungary</td>
<td>Literature, linguistics</td>
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<td>Zsuzsa Hofmann</td>
<td>I. E. Lichtigfeldschule</td>
<td>Frankfurt, Germany</td>
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<td>Engin Arik</td>
<td>Ulus Jewish School</td>
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<td>Ömer Yavuz Topalömer</td>
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<td>Viktoriia Kadiuk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryna Pysanets</td>
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<td>Lucy Needham</td>
<td>King David High School</td>
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<td>World faiths, music</td>
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<td>Lowell Blackman</td>
<td>Atid Lod High School of Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samantha Benson</td>
<td>Partnership for Jewish Schools (PAJES)</td>
<td>London, United Kingdom</td>
<td>Educational director</td>
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<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leah Zazon</td>
<td>Ironi Gimel</td>
<td>Nesher, Israel</td>
<td>History</td>
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<td>Vratislav Skřivánek</td>
<td>Lauder School of Prague</td>
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<td>Kateřina Benková</td>
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<td>Peppe Freud</td>
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<td>Georgia Asvesta</td>
<td>Jewish Primary School of Thessaloniki</td>
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<td>Elementary school teacher</td>
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<td>Irit Levinas</td>
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<td>Sofija Pavinskaite</td>
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<td>Anna Grządowska</td>
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<td>Piotr Ulatowski</td>
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<td>Dorota Wodnicka</td>
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<td>Tomislav Simic</td>
<td>Lauder Hugo Kon Elementary School</td>
<td>Zagreb, Croatia</td>
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<td>Matea Gospodinovic</td>
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<td>Stephan Wernli</td>
<td>Jüdische Schule NOAM</td>
<td>Zürich, Switzerland</td>
<td>History, Literature, Geography, IT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shilo Cohen</td>
<td>Jüdische Schule NOAM</td>
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Group work

One of the main aims of our CJN seminar is to bring teachers together so that they can share ideas and experiences, build partnerships, and form projects together. Therefore, during the seminar we provide several opportunities for them to work in small group settings, where each participant can contribute to the discussion.

One the first day, teachers watched a selection of Polish Centropa films, and worked in small groups on lesson plans for the films they liked the most. The lesson plans were later shared with the other groups, and feedback was given. We learned that one of the main difficulties of these sessions are the different background of the teachers: they all teach various age groups and subjects, therefore it is a challenge to find common ground and create a lesson plan which fits everyone's needs. Nevertheless, teachers in general found the session useful – 72% of participants said in the feedback survey that it was absolutely useful for them, while for another 12% the session was somewhat useful.

As in 2018 Israel celebrates the 70th anniversary of its independence, during the seminar we encouraged teachers to think together about possible cross-border Yom Ha'atzmaut project ideas, which connect Jewish schools from all over the world. After the brainstorming session,
each group presented their ideas and received feedback. Many great project ideas were born, which will hopefully be realized during the school year.

For the second time, we included the ‘Café Dilemma’ discussions in our seminar program. During this session, teachers read about short dilemma situations connected to Jewish education and school life, and in small groups they had to discuss how they would solve the situation. The Café Dilemma is a special opportunity for teachers from all around the globe to discover that they share similar challenges, and they can try to find the solutions together. According to our feedback survey, 60% of the teachers found the session absolutely useful, and they emphasized the importance of learning about the practices in other Jewish schools, discovering similarities and differences, and feeling a sense of ‘connectedness’ to colleagues from other countries.
During this seminar, we introduced to teachers a new method in education, which we earlier successfully tested at the Centropa Summer Academy. The method is an online, real-time quiz game, which can be played with various age groups and numbers of people depending on the topic. For the CJN seminar, we created a quiz about the Polish and Ashkenazi Jewry, and used mentimeter.com to share it with the teachers. The main advantage of the game is that it can be played real time, and the questions, the correct answers, as well as the scores of teams appear immediately on a screen. Teachers enjoyed this game very much, they were excited about the competition, and learned new things along the way. According to our feedback survey, 52% of the teachers would like to try out this game with their students.

Our veteran teacher from Lod, Israel, Lowell Blackman told us: „What I really liked was the team idea and the technology here. Which kid wouldn’t like having a quiz game where they could use their phone or some e-device?“
Teacher presentations

We at Centropa believe that teachers are the best to teach other teachers; by sharing their own experiences, they can inspire and help their colleagues’ work.

During the CJN seminar, we asked two veteran teachers, Sofija Pavinskaite and Leah Zazon to present how they used Centropa films in class, and what kind of school projects they have built around it. We also presented the CJN video competition, which was announced in this school year for the third time. Veteran teachers who have created films with their students before and who work as the coordinators of the competition talked about their experiences, and motivated their colleagues to take part. Diana Gherasimiuc, our coordinator from last year talked about how to create successful walking tour videos; Sofija Pavinskaite, coordinator of the My community category explained how she worked with her students; Lowell Blackman, coordinator of the Family History category gave a presentation about the Roots project in his school; while Georgia Asvesta showed the winner project of her school from last year. After each presentation, teachers had the opportunity to ask questions. According to our feedback survey, participants found these presentations of their colleagues useful.

Kateriná Benková, English and social studies teacher from Prague told us: “It's extremely motivating to show that other teachers use the film and provide inspiring ideas (that work!) straight away. I would also appreciate some first-hand experience, trying the activities ourselves.”
Working with Centropa materials

During the seminar, participants had the opportunity to get an in-depth knowledge about the wide variety of materials Centropa has to offer. First, the Centropa database of interviews and photos was showed, along with useful tips of how to search and save the materials. Second, teacher watched several different Centropa films, and discussed in small groups how they could use them in their class.

What teachers said about their favorite films:

“El otro camino is one of the best Centropa films to use in the classroom because it has a variety of everything: maps, different cultures, history from different ages that is connected.” (Sofija Pavinskaite)

“Haya-Lea Detinko - Surviving Stalin’s Gulag: It was very emotional and it contains a lot of different themes to be covered in class.” (Kateriná Benková)

“I liked all the films we watched because each video shows a special part of Jewish life in the 20th century. "Erna Goldmann" is a story based in Frankfurt with a profound and systematic historical view which is extraordinarily useful for teaching Jewish history in Germany/Frankfurt.” (Zsuzsa Hofmann)

As the CJN seminar was located in Krakow, this year we put a special focus on the Polish Centropa stories, and our materials from the city of Krakow. One of the most peculiar educational resource we have is a walking tour application of Krakow, which follows the footsteps of the Centropa interviewee Teofila Silberring. The application is available in four languages for IPhone, Android and Windows phones, and guides the user through the most important milestones of the life of Teofila Silberring, such as her house as a child, the synagogue her family regularly visited, the school where she went to, the ghetto where she was forcibly taken, and the Schindler factory where she worked for the Righteous Gentile Oscar Schindler.
During the seminar, teachers watched the Centropa film about Teofila Silberring, and took a walking tour with the app. 72% of the participants found the app absolutely useful, and they emphasized the importance of the genuine personal experience and the use of new technology.

Teachers told us about the Silberring app:

“I think that the app is so cool. It is really a way to impersonate the Centropa films even more than they already are! It was almost surreal to take the walk after watching the movie, with the pictures in the app with the narrator telling the story. Standing outside of the buildings hearing the stories! Must say this is really guiding 2.0. and takes learning to another level. This way you can touch the history on spot! Love it!” (Peppe Freud)

“I was listening to the story a day before but when we walked on the same streets and places where she used to live, I felt overwhelmed. I think it is a great tool, which really managed to emphasize the experience of learning about life during the war.” (Irit Levinas)

“It was the first time I followed an app like this! I think it was amazing! I didn’t have any technical problems and I found it very user-friendly. I could use it in my classroom just because it tells the Teofila’s story in sections and of course because kids love any kind of technology.” (Georgia Asvesta)
Ideas for the future

CJN video competition

At the end of the seminar, participants departed with several project ideas for their students. After the success of the last two years, Centropa introduced the CJN video competition for students for the 2017-2018 school year, and according to the feedback survey, more than 80% of the participating teachers would be interested in taking part in it.

Celebrating Yom Ha’atzmaut together

As in 2018 Israel celebrates the 70th anniversary of its independence, during the CJN seminar a whole afternoon session was dedicated to thinking about Yom Ha’atzmaut projects which would connect Jewish schools from all over the world. Teachers came up with various ideas; the best ones will be chosen in January 2018, and Jewish schools can join and take part in them.

Expanding networks

We were very happy to welcome Samantha Benson, director of Education of Partnership for Jewish Schools (PaJeS) on our seminar. PaJeS specializes in providing support and network for Jewish Schools in the United Kingdom, and from this year, a partnership has been formed between them and the Centropa Jewish Network. This promising new cooperation will help CJN to expand in the UK, involve more teachers and schools in our programs, and share ideas and experiences.

From the 2017/18 school year, we also provide Centropa workshops for European Jewish schools, where we introduce to teacher faculties the Centropa materials and programs, and the Centropa Jewish Network. The next workshop will take place in the Noam Jewish School from Zürich in January. This workshop is also a result of the CJN seminar and the networking opportunity it provided.

New cooperations

The CJN seminar is peculiar as it provides opportunity for teachers from all around Europe and Israel for personal encounters. As teachers spend three intensive days together by sharing ideas and experiences, they also come up with ideas for cooperation and possible cross-border projects. After this year’s seminar, elementary school teachers from Thessaloniki and Barcelona started building a partnership: students from these schools write letters to each other in English and Hebrew, and share how they spend the school year and celebrate the various Jewish holidays. We are looking forward to see how this project evolves during the year.
Appendix

Seminar program

Day 1
29th October, Sunday (Location: Galicia Jewish Museum)

12:00 - Arrivals + Registration – lunch available

13:30 – Introduction
  • 13:30 – 14:00 - Ice breakers for:
    1. Getting to know each other personally
    2. Getting to know each other’s schools
  • 14:00 – 15:00 - Centropa welcome by Marcell Kenesei and Bori Pál
    1. Introducing Centropa and the Centropa Jewish Network
    2. Showing centropa.org – our interactive website of Jewish family stories and related educational materials and projects
    3. Discussion of the treasure hunt pre-seminar assignment
    4. Introducing our international and professional network of classroom teachers in Europe, in the US and in Israel

15:00 – Centropa Polish stories I.
  • Watching the Centropa film about Teofila Silberring
  • Sofija Pavinskaite presents about how she uses the film in class
  • Introduction of the Silberring mobile app – Centropa’s application for discovering Jewish Krakow

16:00 - Coffee break

16:15 – Centropa Polish stories II.
  • Watching Centropa films about Mieczyslaw Weinryb and Haya-Lea Detinko
  • Introduction of the Centropa Polish Source Book

17:00 - Working on lesson plans in small groups based on our films

18:00 – Presenting lesson plans – groups give feedback

18:45 – Welcome dinner in the Jewish Community Centre of Krakow (Miodowa 24, 31-055) where we will learn of their activities
Day 2
30th October, Monday

8:30 – Walking tour in the Kazimierz district, in the footsteps of Teofila Silberring Centropa interviewee

11:00 – Return to Museum, Coffee break. Reflection & feedback about the Silberring app.

11:30 - About CJN video competition - student competition based on projects that were developed in the framework of the CJN
  - Introducing the competition and its rules
  - Showing student films from the last years
  - Lowell Blackman, Diana Gherasimiuc, Sofija Pavinskaite and Georgia Asvesta present about how to make successful short films with students

13:00 – Lunch at Galicia Jewish Museum

14:00 – Breaking into smaller groups and brainstorming about (cross-border) project ideas – for the competition or for other occasions.

15:00 – Polish Quiz – presentation of a fun online quiz program which can also be used in class

15:30 – coffee break

15:45 – Preparing for Yom Haatzmaut – what has Centropa to offer?
  - Presenting our stories and films in connection with Israel/Palestine
  - Leah Zason presents about how she teaches about immigration to Palestine

17:00 - Presentation of Samantha Benson (PAJES) about UK Jewish school projects

17:30 – Brainstorming together about a cross-border CJN project for Yom Haatzmaut, connecting Jewish schools Europe, US and Israel

19:00 – Free evening, dinner on your own.

Day 3
31st October, Tuesday

8:30 – Continuing from yesterday: ideas for Yom Haatzmaut and Israel related projects

10:00 – More about Centropa: Films, exhibitions, Summer Academies.

10:30 – Coffee break

11:00 – Café dilemma – a discussion session to talk about our challenges in education

12:00 – Feedback session

13:00 - Lunch in Galicia Jewish Museum

End of seminar – participants depart.