

Inclusive Remembrance Culture in Europe

Transnational Report with perspectives from
Austria, Cyprus, Italy, Portugal and Serbia

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Transnational Needs Assessment Report on Inclusive Remembrance Culture in Europe

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1. Introduction

ReIMAGINE is an Erasmus+ project launched in October 2025, bringing together five partner organisations from across Europe: EDUCULT (coordinating organisation from Austria), Visual Voices (Cyprus), RightChallenge (Portugal), IoDeposito (Italy), and the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture Serbia (Serbia). Together, these partners represent a diverse range of national contexts, institutional profiles and community connections, and they have united as ReIMAGINE to rethink how Europe engages with its past.

The project recognises, as its starting point, that remembrance culture in Europe is both vital and contested. The twentieth century left profound and uneven legacies across the continent, from genocide, occupation and dictatorship to colonial violence, forced migration and political repression, much of which continues to this day. How these legacies are remembered, who is included in that remembering, and what purposes remembrance is made to serve are questions with real consequences for democratic life, social cohesion and the dignity of affected communities. ReIMAGINE understands that current remembrance cultures across Europe remain insufficiently inclusive, and that art offers a distinctive methodology to change this.

The role of art in this context, however, cannot be understood in isolation from the very different conditions under which artists work across the five partner countries. How artistic practice is defined, valued and supported varies considerably. Across all five countries, the research encountered artists working outside formal institutional frameworks, including those without access to formal artistic training, whose practices nonetheless constitute some of the most meaningful and methodologically rich contributions to inclusive remembrance. Acknowledging this diversity, rather than defaulting to a narrow definition of artistic practice, is central to the pluralistic ethos of ReIMAGINE.

1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Project

This report presents the findings of the participatory needs assessment conducted across all five partner countries between January and February 2026. Its primary purpose is to provide an insight into different approaches and diversified understandings of remembrance culture in Austria, Cyprus, Italy, Portugal and Serbia, with particular attention to questions of inclusion,

pluriversity¹, democracy, and the role of artistic approaches in expanding dominant narratives and creating new forms of engagement with the past.

The report offers perspectives on the current landscape of remembrance culture in each national context, identifying key actors, existing practices, structural challenges, and the communities and perspectives that remain underrepresented or excluded. It also synthesises these national perspectives into a comparative analysis that identifies shared patterns, important differences and collective needs across the five countries, pointing toward the principles and priorities that should inform the development of inclusive remembrance practices at both national and transnational levels.

The report is addressed to a broad audience, including policymakers, cultural institutions and remembrance organisations, educators and youth workers, and artistic practitioners working in the field of remembrance across Europe. It is intended to be practically useful as well as insightful, not only mapping the current state of the field, but identifying the concrete changes needed to support them.

The scope of the report is defined by the research conducted as part of Work Package 2 of the ReIMAGINE project. This included desk research and conceptual development carried out by all five partner organisations, the development of shared research guidelines to ensure consistency across national contexts, and the collection of qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and, in the case of Austria, an online survey. Findings from each country were compiled in country reports. Overall, the research engaged practitioners, educators, artists, researchers and civil society representatives across the five countries, whose insights and experiences form the empirical basis of the analysis presented here.

¹ A philosophical concept of a space where many different epistemological and cultural traditions can interact.

2. Methodology and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 Research design and comparative approach

The needs assessment followed an exploratory design that utilized a mixed-method approach and focused both on individual, as well as collective experiences and perspectives. By gathering perspectives from educators, artists, cultural professionals, and adults from civil society, particularly from underrepresented and marginalized communities, the exploratory needs assessment seeks to understand the current **practices, challenges, and needs** related to inclusive remembrance culture at the intersection of arts and education across the partner countries. The design comprised two stages:

Initially, data collection through a mixed-method approach was carried out individually in the five partner countries and consisted of the following to generate locally grounded insights:

- **Desk research** to map existing stakeholders active in remembrance culture in the respective countries (institutions, organizations, civil society/community stakeholders, individuals, ...) and identify underrepresented histories/stakeholders for the following steps
- **Semi-structured Interviews** with organizations and individuals active in remembrance, often in the roles of multipliers to gain both an overview and deeper insights
- **Focus groups** with organizations and individuals active in remembrance, often in multiplier roles, to facilitate discussion, collective reflection, and validation.
- In addition, an online survey was carried out in Austria (lead partner) to reach further stakeholders

The identification of key themes of remembrance culture prior to data collection as well as a clear research guideline with guiding themes and research questions assured the comparability of findings from each national context.

The findings were collected in **national reports on the current practices, challenges, and needs**. Subsequently, the findings were synthesized through a **cross-country comparative analysis**, which is the foundation for this report. Each country comprises a specific case and findings were compared along the pre-defined themes and questions from the research guideline using qualitative thematic analysis. The national data collection and subsequent cross-country comparative analysis followed a framework of six research aims:

- Overall: Understand how remembrance culture is currently perceived, understood, and practiced at the intersection of arts, education, and civic engagement in the partner countries.
- Identify which historical narratives, perspectives, and groups are dominant in current remembrance practices, and which are underrepresented or excluded.
- Explore experiences of inclusion, exclusion, and representation in remembrance culture, particularly from the perspective of marginalized and diaspora communities.
- Examine the role of artistic approaches in challenging, complementing, or expanding dominant narratives of remembrance.
- Identify practical challenges, gaps and needs faced by target groups in implementing inclusive remembrance practices.
- Identify good practices, expectations, and ideas from target groups regarding more accessible, participatory, and relevant forms of remembrance.

2.1.2 Data collection across the partner countries

Each partner carried out desk research for their contexts mapping stakeholders and practices of remembrance culture. Based on the desk research, the research team collectively identified key themes of remembrance culture that guided the subsequent data collection and provided the framework for the comparative analysis. Each partner then conducted 4-5 semi-structured interviews and one focus group with relevant stakeholders.

Overall, 22 interviews and 5 focus groups were conducted by all partners, with an additional small survey in Austria that garnered 9 responses, engaging a total of 56 target group representatives.

Interviews and focus groups engaged participants from a variety of different fields and backgrounds, including researchers, artists, educators, community organizers, civil society organizations, archivists, representatives of institutions or municipalities, museum curators, and individuals from different communities/ with personal and family histories tied to underrepresented or marginalized remembrance. Perspectives include, of course keeping in mind intersectionality: women and people of diverse gender identities, LGBTQIA+, migrant, diasporic, and displaced communities, Romani perspectives from several countries, Jewish perspectives, minorities and minoritised and racialised people in specific national contexts (Turkish-speaking Cypriots, Carinthian-Slovenes or Slovenian minority in Italy/Friuli-Venezia Giulia), as well as people outside urban areas.

We thank everyone who took part in the research and shared their perspectives, expertise, and (artistic) practices with us and want to acknowledge the vital and often underfunded, unpaid and underrecognized work that has already gone and continues to go into fighting for recognition and visibility of the histories of many different communities and people in the five countries. It should be noted that some of the ideas and frameworks shared by participants during the research constitute their own intellectual property, reflecting their ongoing work as researchers, artists and practitioners in the field.

2.1.3 Limitations of the study

While the research aimed to include a wide range of perspectives connected to underrepresented histories, often through the engagement of multipliers, the scope of the research remains limited to around 9-10 people per country who took part in data collection. This reflects both practical constraints, including available time and budget, as well as varying levels of stakeholder responsiveness during outreach. Furthermore, the scope of the research should also be understood in light of what pluralistic remembrance means: it encompasses inherently diverse, intersectional, personal, familial, collective, as well as competing perspectives and histories. Capturing this plurality is not feasible within one study. Instead, the research prioritized an exploratory overview of gaps, needs, and challenges.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presented here serves a dual purpose: it provides a shared language for understanding the findings across varying national contexts, and it situates ReIMAGINE within broader conversations in the fields of memory studies, arts education and democratic civic life. The aim, therefore, is to establish working concepts that are practically meaningful, while also guiding the development of the project's subsequent activities – the Digital Platform for Collective Memory and the Training Toolkit for educators and cultural professionals.

This report draws on a set of interconnected concepts of remembrance culture that together frame the comparative analysis across the five partner countries. These concepts are not imposed as rigid categories, but have emerged through the research process itself, shaped by the questions, experiences and reflections of the practitioners, educators, artists and community members who participated in the needs assessment. The main conceptualisations the ReIMAGINE partners work with revolve around the following two questions:

- What is remembrance culture? What do we mean when we talk about remembrance culture?
- How can we conceptualize pluralism and inclusion in contemporary Europe? What do we mean by these terms, and how do they differ?

Defining remembrance culture

Remembrance culture refers to the ensemble of practices, institutions, narratives and symbolic forms through which societies engage with the past. It encompasses official state commemorations and national holidays, but also the informal, every day and community-based ways in which the past is remembered, through family stories, artistic works, local rituals, archival practices, and material culture like monuments, photographs and heritage sites. Through the research carried out, we have learnt that remembrance culture is never simply about the past. Instead, it is also about the present. It reflects current social hierarchies, political priorities, and cultural values, and it also plays an active role in shaping collective identity, civic belonging and understanding of justice and fairness.

Crucially, remembrance culture is plural and contested. In all five partner countries, the research revealed not a single, unified memory of the twentieth century, but a landscape of competing narratives – between official and unofficial histories, between prevalent communities and marginalised groups, between state-sanctioned commemoration and grassroots memory-making. These tensions are a defining feature of living with the past in diverse societies. How they are navigated, whether through exclusion or dialogue, through imposition or participation, determines whether a remembrance culture reinforces existing inequalities, or contributes to a more inclusive public life.

For the purposes of this report, remembrance culture is understood broadly as encompassing formal and informal practices alike, across multiple sites such as schools and universities, museums and memorial institutions, public space, community organisations, artistic and cultural production, and digital environments. This breadth of practices reflects the reality that was encountered in the research, where the most significant and transformative acts of remembrance were often taking place outside institutional walls.

Pluralism, Inclusion and the Role of Arts in Democratic Remembrance

Across all partner countries, the research reveals a remembrance culture that is fundamentally shaped by power, i.e., by decisions about whose histories are told, whose suffering is acknowledged and validated, and whose contributions are rendered visible. Addressing these

patterns requires a commitment to pluralism and inclusion in remembrance culture. During the research, participants frequently distinguished between these two concepts. Pluralism refers to the recognition and visibility of diverse histories and perspectives, focusing on whose stories appear in public spaces, whose suffering is named in official commemoration, and whose contributions are acknowledged in educational materials. Inclusion, in comparison, concerns who has genuine access to and participation in remembrance processes, with a focus on who can shape narratives, influence the use and distribution of resources, and see themselves addressed as active participants rather than objects of commemoration.

Both dimensions are necessary. Pluralism without inclusion can reproduce tokenism, while inclusion without pluralism runs the risk of domesticating difference, rather than genuinely engaging with it. Together, they point toward a more democratic understanding of remembrance – one that recognises overlapping and interconnected histories of marginalisation rather than treating different communities' experiences as separate or competing.

Connecting Art and Remembrance

Art plays a distinct and irreplaceable role in this context. Across all five countries, artistic practices were defined as particularly powerful tools for engaging with the past in ways that institutional remembrance practices often cannot. Theatre, visual art, oral history, documentary film, photography, music, public performances, installations and digital storytelling create spaces where multiple and contradictory truths can coexist, where emotions and experiences are taken seriously alongside historical knowledge, and where audiences are invited into active reflection rather than being a passive participant. Importantly, artistic approaches can reach communities who may not engage with academic and institutional forms of remembrance for a multitude of reasons. Several participants noted that art's particular strength lies in what it does not claim; unlike textbooks or official commemorations, which often assert singular truths, artistic works embody multiple perspectives, and leave space for personal and collective meaning-making. This capacity makes art a genuine methodology through which to create more inclusive and participatory remembrance practices.

Remembrance in the context of democracy and social cohesion

Finally, our research also situates remembrance culture within the broader context of democracy and social cohesion. Across all five partner countries, participants framed inclusive remembrance as a democratic necessity. The capacity of citizens to engage critically with the

past is understood as foundational to civic life. Remembrance culture that excludes, simplifies or instrumentalises the past for political, religious or other ends that are not aimed at collective welfare, thereby actively damaging democratic participation. It alienates communities whose histories are neglected, and it reduces social complexities to identity-based confrontation. Conversely, remembrance culture that is genuinely inclusive, participatory and connected to the present has the potential to strengthen solidarity across difference, to foster empathy and mutual recognition, and to support the development of active, informed and critically engaged citizens. This understanding runs through the entirety of the report and provides the foundation for the recommendations it puts forward.

3. Findings

3.1 Case Studies: National Contexts in the Partner Countries

The five partner countries involved in ReIMAGINE each bring a distinct historical experience and cultural landscape to the discussion on remembrance. While they share a common European frame of reference, their remembrance cultures have been shaped by very different twentieth century histories, from colonial rule and partition, and dictatorship and democratic transition, to genocide and civil conflict, and the complex legacies of socialism and empire. This section offers an overview of the key features of remembrance culture in each country, drawing on the national needs assessments carried out. Rather than providing exhaustive national accounts, it aims to highlight the most significant patterns, tensions and opportunities identified in each context, laying the groundwork for the comparative analysis that will follow.

Austria

Austrian remembrance culture has undergone a profound, albeit slow and contested transformation over the past four decades. For much of the postwar period, Austria positioned itself as the ‘first victim’ of National Socialism, a narrative that allowed the country to deflect responsibility, and resulted in delayed public reckoning with the country’s role in Nazi crimes. The so-called ‘Waldheim Affair’ of the 1980s marked a turning point, forcing a confrontation with Austria’s role as perpetrator, and shifting remembrance towards the recognition of these crimes and its victims. This shift however is marked by different timelines for different victim groups, which continues today. The Holocaust and specifically the Shoah now occupy a central place in official Austrian remembrance. As significant as this shift is, it has not unfolded equally for all persecuted groups. The dominant focus on National Socialism and Jewish victims of the Holocaust has left many other histories and communities at the margins. The experiences of other victim groups, including Roma and Sinti, LGBTQIA+² people, people with disabilities, Carinthian Slovenes, migrant communities, and politically persecuted people such as socialists and communists – both under National Socialism, and beyond - remain insufficiently recognised in mainstream remembrance culture. Recognition of these groups has only come gradually, and almost always because of sustained community pressure rather than political initiative. As one research participant put it, progress is moving ‘very, very slowly’. At

² LGBTQIA+ is used as a category/terminology for analysis and does not correspond to the self-identification of historical subjects. It reflects the current state of research, which recognises a broader spectrum of persecuted identities (cf. Kai*Brust)

the same time, this reckoning with the past remains an incomplete, ongoing, and at times contested endeavour, especially given the instrumentalization of the past by populist right-wing parties.

Civil society organisations, grassroots initiatives, artists and community groups play a very important role in filling these gaps left by public remembrance, organising commemoration ceremonies, producing counter-narratives, and carving out space for intersectional perspective that institutional remembrance has not yet embraced. Their work is vital but also precarious, as much of it relies on short-term project funding or unpaid activism, with little sustainable institutional backing.

A further challenge identified during the research is the tendency to treat remembrance as a purely historical exercise that is disconnected from the present. Participants consistently called for a strong link between the past and present, one that makes visible how historical exclusions and injustices continue to shape Austrian society today, including in relation to migration, racism and other forms of ongoing discrimination. Remembrance, in this view, therefore, becomes a practice of civic responsibility, with real stakes in the here and now.

Cyprus

Remembrance culture in Cyprus unfolds across a physically and politically divided island. The events of 1974³, that led to the division of Cyprus, casting a long shadow over public memory, shaping what is remembered and how, and who is included in or excluded from dominant narratives. Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities have developed largely separate, and for the most part, irreconcilable cultures of remembrance, each organised around its own sense of loss, victimhood and historical justice. Even the language used to describe the same events differs immensely.

Official remembrance on both sides of the divide tends to be structured around conflict and war, reinforcing ethnic separation and leaving little room for any histories that don't fit this binary framework. Monuments, national holidays and school curricula reflect and reproduce dominant community narratives, while the everyday histories of coexistence and shared cultural life reach little attention. As the research made clear, this continued focus on conflict

³ i.e. the coup d'état backed by the Greek military junta with the aim of annexation of Cyprus by Greece, and the subsequent Turkish military intervention and occupation of parts of the island in the north, that led to the ongoing division of the island into the Republic of Cyprus (Greek-Cypriot led, internationally recognized and member of the EU) and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (only recognized by Turkey). See also <https://unficypr.unmissions.org/en/events-summer-1974>.

has effectively become the ‘master narrative’, which marginalises entire communities whose histories fall outside of this frame.

Among those consistently excluded are women, whose contributions to social and political life as caregivers, resisters, community builders and heads of households, are largely absent from official accounts. Afro-Cypriot communities, Roma and other ethnic minorities remain structurally invisible in education, archives, and overall public discourse. LGBTQIA+ communities have virtually no presence in collective memory. Turkish Cypriots, despite being one of the island’s two dominant communities, frequently experience marginalisation within European cultural frameworks, institutions that claim to represent them, and generally in the context of wider geopolitical narratives that reduce their identity to an affiliation with Turkey, rather than recognising a distinct Cypriot belonging.

Despite these challenges, the research also identified a vibrant landscape of alternative remembrance practices. Artists, researchers and community organisations are challenging dominant narratives, bringing marginalised histories to the front, and creating space for dialogue across communities. Bicomunal initiatives demonstrate that shared engagement with the past is possible, despite taking place in a deeply divided context, without the pressure to agree.

Italy

Italy’s remembrance culture is characterised by richness and fragmentation in equal measure. Remembrance institutions, civil society organisations, national anniversaries and artistic initiatives all engage with the country’s twentieth century history, but this landscape is uneven, marked by persistent tensions between official narratives, and the experiences of communities whose histories remain marginalised, and instrumentalised politically.

It is worth noting that the legal and social status of fascism in Italy remains complex and contested. While the Republican Constitution formally repudiates fascism, the boundary between commemoration and glorification is subject to ongoing legal interpretation, and events that openly celebrate fascist symbols and figures continue to take place. This ambiguity shapes the terrain on which remembrance culture operates, and makes the distinction between Nazism and fascism a politically charged one, with a tendency in public discourse to demonise the former while treating the latter with greater ambivalence.

The dominant frameworks of public remembrance in Italy centre of well-documented and institutionally recognised events, like the resistance to Nazi-Fascism, the Shoah, and more recently, the post-WWII eastern border massacres known as the ‘foibe’. The experiences of

migrant communities, Roma, Sinti and Camminanti, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ and women, however, remain significantly underrepresented in mainstream remembrance culture. Italy's colonial history, and the violence carried out in the Horn of Africa and Libya is conspicuously absent from school textbooks and public discourse, with curricula that still tend to frame this period in more celebratory rather than critical terms.

A further concern raised consistently across interviews and focus groups is the political instrumentalization of memory. In recent years, institutional remembrance in Italy has increasingly reflected nationalist priorities, with certain historical events selectively amplified while others are suppressed or reframed. A recent example is the institutional strengthening of Remembrance Day on 10 February, which commemorates the Foibe massacres and the exodus of Italians from Istria and Dalmatia. Under the current government, this commemoration has been given significantly greater prominence through state ceremonies, school programmes and new monuments, with a narrative that emphasises Italian victimhood while largely omitting the preceding Italian fascist occupation and repression of Slavic populations in the same region. This dynamic makes genuine pluralism in remembrance culture harder to achieve, as the terms of public debate become polarised and communities with alternative or minority perspectives, such as the Bangladeshi community in Monfalcone find themselves outnumbered and excluded.

At the same time, Italy, and particularly the cross-border region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, has a remarkable concentration of civil society organisations, artists and cultural initiatives working to expand dominant narratives. The layered history of the region, which sits at the intersection of Italian, Slovenian and broader Central European culture, allows for a particularly rich and fertile ground for multidisciplinary and transnational approaches to remembrance.

Portugal

The Portuguese remembrance culture is predominantly shaped by three interconnected events – the Estado Novo dictatorship under António de Oliveira Salazar and Marcelo Caetano (1933-1974), which lasted over 4 decades, the Colonial War fought in Africa (1961-1974), and the democratic transition which was initiated by the Carnation Revolution of 25th April 1974. The democratic revolution, in particular, occupies a special place in national identity, and is commemorated annually and embedded in civic education as well.

This transition to democracy brought about important changes. Archives were made accessible, victims of political repression were formally acknowledged, and the arts became a vital space for confronting silenced histories. Literature, theatre, cinema and music all played

an important role in processing the experience of dictatorship, and to this day, the tradition continues, with contemporary artistic production revising colonial history, racism, migration and gender equality in ways that institutional discourse still primarily avoids.

However, significant gaps still remain. The structural realities of the dictatorship era, such as widespread poverty, forced migration, illiteracy, domestic violence and the systemic repression of women and working-class communities are insufficiently integrated into mainstream remembrance. Colonial violence and its long-term consequences do receive growing attention, but permanent memorialisation often remains absent, and political polarisation further reduces complex historical analysis to ideological confrontation. For example, despite documentation in archives of the 1934 Porto Colonial Exhibition, no public marker exists at the site, while material traces of the 1940 Lisbon world exhibition remain prominent. This asymmetry speaks volumes about which memories are considered worthy of preservation.

A distinct feature of Portuguese remembrance is the importance of local and community-level remembrance. Much of the most meaningful work currently happening in Portugal on remembrance is being undertaken by municipalities, community associations and grassroots initiatives, and are often sustained by individual commitment rather than structural support. Oral history, verbatim theatre, photo-elicitation and participatory archiving are widely used as methodologies for bringing marginalised voices to the forefront. These practices, although often effective, are very fragile, as they depend on personal commitment and temporary funding.

Serbia

Remembrance culture in Serbia is shaped by a very complex and contested historical landscape, in which the consequences of the Second World War, the legacy of socialist Yugoslavia and the unresolved traumas of the 1990s conflicts all compete for space in public memory.

Official remembrance in Serbia often contains narratives of collective suffering and national victimhood, while multi-perspective, or critical interpretations of history are rare in institutional settings. One pattern clearly identifiable in the research is the instrumentalization of one historical period to avoid confronting another. For example, when the conflicts of the 1990s come up in public discourse, attention is often directed towards WWII and Jasenovac concentration camp, allowing for sidestepping deeper and more uncomfortable questions of responsibility and accountability. It is important to note that in the research discussions

themselves, the participants often gravitated more towards the 1990s than WWII, suggesting that these events remain very much alive in collective memory.

The legacy of socialist Yugoslavia is another aspect that adds a layer of complexity. The official ideology of ‘brotherhood and unity’ did not allow for an open discussion on wartime atrocities and ethnic tensions, and many of the unresolved contradictions of that time resurfaced violently in the 1990s.

Minority histories, particularly Roma experiences, remain largely invisible in mainstream Serbian remembrance. While Roma are sometimes acknowledged as victims of historical violence, their perspectives are rarely central to research, dominant public narratives or institutional commemoration. The research identified that Roma are expected to be obedient and grieving victims, while narratives of resistance, agency or pride are not welcome in the public sphere. This has contributed to a sense of disengagement and disappointment among many Roma, who have experienced extensive tokenistic inclusion without any meaningful change, including decision-making or process-stirring power.

Civil society plays an important and corrective role in Serbia’s remembrance culture. Several organisations such as ERIAC Serbia, Terraforming and Krokodil were highlighted as those that drive inclusive and pluralistic approaches, using personal stories and artistic methods to address those that official narratives leave out. However, these organisations operate largely on short-term international funding, without stable structural support that would allow for more lasting and systemic impact.

3.2 Comparative analysis across national contexts

A recurring insight across all five national research processes is that remembrance culture is fundamentally shaped by power. What is remembered, how it is commemorated, whose suffering is acknowledged, and whose contributions are rendered visible are never neutral choices: they reflect and reinforce the structures of inclusion and exclusion that organise social and political life more broadly.

In each partner country, official and institutionally supported remembrance tends to privilege certain historical narratives, typically those that are associated with national founding myths, majority ethnic or cultural communities, and episodes of conflict that are understood through a singular ideological lens. What the research consistently shows is that marginalized narratives are not simply absent, but actively excluded. In Austria, public remembrance has historically centred on the Holocaust and National Socialism, while the experiences of Roma and Sinti, Carinthian Slovenes, LGBTQIA+ people, migrants and people with disabilities have

been recognised only slowly, partially, and often through sustained community struggle. In Cyprus, remembrance is overwhelmingly structured around the division of the island and the events of 1974, marginalising women, Afro-Cypriot communities, Turkish Cypriots in certain institutional contexts, and any history that does not fit the dominant framework of intercommunal conflict. In Italy, narratives of resistance to fascism coexist with a relative silence on colonial history and on the experiences of migrant, Roma, and other minority communities. In Portugal, the democratic transition of 1974 brought important reckonings with the Estado Novo dictatorship, yet structural poverty, colonial violence, gender inequality and the lives of working-class and rural communities remain insufficiently integrated into mainstream memory practices. In Serbia, the fragmentation of public memory, particularly around the 1990s conflicts, leaves minority histories, and especially Roma experiences, largely invisible in official narrative frameworks.

3.2.1 Inclusion and representation in remembrance culture

The question of who is included in, and who is excluded from collective memory lies at the very heart of remembrance culture. Across all five countries, the needs assessment revealed a consistent pattern: official and institutionally supported remembrance tends to reflect the perspectives and priorities of dominant social groups, while the histories of women, minorities, migrants, LGBTQIA+ communities, working-class and colonised people remain marginalised, distorted, or simply absent. This section looks at those patterns closely, identifies the structural conditions that sustain them, and highlights opportunities that exist for more pluralistic and intersectional approaches.

Whose histories are remembered? Dominant narratives in national contexts

In each partner country, public remembrance revolves around a relatively narrow set of historical reference points, ones that reflect the priorities of majority communities and state institutions. In Austria, the Holocaust and National Socialism dominate; in Cyprus, the events of 1974 and the division of the island; in Italy, the Resistance to Nazi-Fascism and selected episodes of postwar history; in Portugal, the dictatorship and the democratic revolution; in Serbia, the Second World War and, more ambivalently, the conflicts of the 1990s. The histories they centre are real, important and in many cases still painfully unresolved. However, their dominance leaves many other experiences unmapped.

Colonial histories and their ongoing consequences are largely absent from public discourse in Italy and Portugal, despite being central to understanding both countries' twentieth-century trajectories. In Serbia, the wars of the 1990s remain insufficiently processed in official

context. In Cyprus, histories of everyday coexistence, shared labour and multicultural life are overpowered by the relentless focus on conflict and division. In Austria, remembrance that extends beyond the National Socialism paradigm, including migration histories, BIPOC experiences and colonial entanglements, is only just beginning to find institutional recognition. What emerges, therefore, is a remembrance culture that is simultaneously overemphasised in some areas and silent in others.

Marginalised voices and underrepresented perspectives

Research for the needs assessment has identified several groups whose histories are consistently underrepresented across the five national contexts.

Gendered Experiences: The histories and perspectives of women are oftentimes absent from historical narratives and official commemorations, or only remembered in one-dimensional ways (e.g. women as wives and mothers). Their contributions as heads of household, caregivers, (informal) workers, resistance fighters, etc. rarely appear in curricula, monuments or public ceremonies. Similarly, men are often reduced to remembrance centring on masculinity, e.g. roles in relation to combat; experiences beyond the battlefield and combat are less present. Furthermore, experiences beyond binary genders are almost entirely absent from official remembrance.

Ethnic and racialised minorities: Roma and Sinti communities face marginalisation across all five countries. In official and public memorial practices, they are often assigned tokenistic roles that rarely reflect their own perspectives or priorities. In Serbia, for example, Roma experiences remain structurally excluded from curricula and institutional commemoration. In Cyprus, Afro-Cypriot histories are almost entirely absent from education and public discourse, a structural gap that, as described by one participant, did not allow people to situate their own family histories within the broader historical framework. In Austria, so-called “autochthone Minderheiten” (autochthonous minorities) like Roma and Sinti, Carinthian-Slovenes, or Burgenland Croats are officially recognized, but still marginalized in public remembrance; similarly, the perspectives of Italian Slovenes are marginalized in public remembrance in Italy.

LGBTQIA+ communities: Queer histories have virtually no presence in the official remembrance cultures of any of the five partner countries. The criminalisation and social marginalisation of LGBTQIA+ people throughout much of the twentieth century left a historiographical gap that most institutions have been very slow to address. In Austria, a memorial for victims of National Socialism persecuted as ‘homosexual’ was only installed in Vienna in 2023, nearly eighty years after the end of the war. In Cyprus, LGBTQIA+ experiences

remain largely invisible in a socially conservative context, though bicomunal activist groups are beginning to carve out alternative spaces of visibility and solidarity.

Migrant, diasporic and displaced communities: The histories of people who moved, whether due to colonial displacement, political persecution, forced expulsion, economic necessity or out of choice remain largely absent from dominant remembrance frameworks. In Austria, for example, migration tends to be treated as a recent and external phenomenon, rather than an intrinsic part of the country's history. In Portugal, permanent memorialization of colonial violence remains largely absent from the remembrance landscape. In Italy, the histories of recent migrant populations also remain peripheral.

Intersectional perspectives: A central gap that was repeatedly highlighted in the research was that of intersectional perspectives. It became clear that underrepresented groups in remembrance are seen as homogenous and one-dimensional, with little public awareness or room for intersectionality. This became especially clear in cases where intersectional perspectives don't fit the dominant narrative, e.g. with resistance fighters that belonged to victim groups. Even with the recognition of more and more groups in remembrance, the lack of room for intersectionality represents a central challenge to pluralism.

3.2.2 Current practices of remembrance

Across the five partner countries, remembrance practices take a wide variety of forms – from state-organised ceremonies and publicly funded memorial institutions to intimate family rituals and spontaneous community interventions in public space. What the research reveals, overall, is that remembrance is not a single, unified activity but a layered and often contested field, in which official and unofficial practices coexist, sometimes reinforcing and sometimes actively challenging one another. This section maps the main forms of remembrance practices identified across the national contexts, organised around three broad dimensions: institutional and state-led practices; civil society, community and grassroots initiatives; and emerging digital and participatory forms.

Institutional and state-led remembrance practices

In all five partner countries, the state plays an important role in shaping remembrance culture, through the funding of memorial sites and museums, the designation of national commemorative days, the design of school curricula, and the symbolic participation of political figures in public ceremonies. These institutional frameworks define, to a large degree, which histories are granted public visibility, and which are not.

The forms this takes vary across national contexts. In Austria, state-supported remembrance is structured around institutionalised commemoration of the Holocaust and National Socialism, with major memorial sites such as Mauthausen Memorial and Schloss Hartheim (a killing centre of the Nazi ‘euthanasia’ programme) functioning as established centres of research, documentation and educational outreach. National holidays and symbols of the Second Republic anchor a particular narrative of Austrian identity, while the National Fund for Victims of National Socialism provides a formal mechanism for recognition and reparation. In Italy, the Ministry of Education promotes remembrance through national competitions, teacher training programmes and designated commemorative days, including Holocaust Remembrance Day and the Day of Remembrance for victims of the foibe massacres, while the Ministry of Culture supports contemporary artistic production and urban regeneration through culture. In Portugal, the 25th of April is formally commemorated as a national holiday, and the national curriculum includes the study of the dictatorship, the Colonial War and the democratic transition within citizenship and human rights education. In Serbia, state institutions including ministries of culture and education, memorial centres and museums such as the Museum of Genocide Victims shape dominant narratives through funding priorities and official commemorative events. In Cyprus, official remembrance is organised along ethnic community lines, with government-authorized ceremonies, school curricula and monument-building programmes that overwhelmingly reflect the dominant narratives of each community.

Yet across all five contexts, the research identified significant limitations in state-led remembrance. Institutional frameworks tend to privilege established and politically convenient narratives, leaving limited room for diverse or critical perspectives. Political stakeholders hold considerable symbolic power - their attendance or absence at commemorative events, and the degree to which they publicly acknowledge responsibility, sends strong signals about whose histories are valued. Several participants noted how right-wing political movements have increasingly instrumentalised remembrance for nationalist purposes, further narrowing the space for pluralistic engagement. And while major memorial institutions often demonstrate growing awareness of accessibility and inclusive educational formats, their embeddedness within national political frameworks can slow down or constrain meaningful change.

Civil society, community-based and grassroots remembrance initiatives

Alongside state-led remembrance, a rich and diverse landscape of civil society organisations, community groups, grassroots initiatives and individual practitioners are doing some innovative and inclusive work on remembrance across all five partner countries.

This work takes many forms. In Austria, community organisations and activist groups, including those representing Roma and Sinti, LGBTQIA+ communities, Carinthian Slovenes, migrant and BIPOC communities, organise annual commemoration ceremonies, vigils, name readings and memorial walks. They maintain community archives and oral history collections, advocate for the recognition of missing on inadequate memorials, and produce counter/narratives that challenge the dominant Holocaust-centred framework of Austrian remembrance. In Serbia, organisations such as ERIAC Serbia, Terraforming and Krokodil play a leading role in promoting inclusive remembrance practices, addressing Roma histories, the conflicts of the 1990s and other marginalised experiences through educational programmes, exhibition and research. In Cyprus, bicomunal initiatives, from folk music choirs performing in both Turkish and Greek, to LGBTQIA+ activist groups collaborating across communities, to participatory art and mapping projects, all create spaces for shared engagement in a deeply divided context. In Portugal, community associations, local practitioners and individual artists sustain oral history projects, verbatim theatre productions, participatory archiving and photo-elicitation work, often in non-urban areas that are largely left out in remembrance practices led by national institutions. In Italy, a dense network of cultural associations, particularly in the cross-border region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, combines historical research, contemporary art practice and community engagement in ways that reflect the region's complex and layered identity.

A distinct feature of this landscape visible across all partner countries is the degree to which communities have organised themselves into more structured grassroots initiatives in response to the failure of official remembrance. Where state institutions have been slow to recognise or actively exclude particular histories, affected communities have created their own infrastructures. These initiatives embody a fundamentally different approach to remembrance, one that is participatory, relational and rooted in lived experience.

It is important to note, however, that this work is largely precarious. Across all five countries, civil society and community initiatives on remembrance heavily rely on short-term project funding, international grants, unpaid activism, and individual dedication. Many organisations must actively fight for a seat at the table in remembrance-related dialogues and policy processes, rather than being engaged and recognised as co-decision makers. This structural fragility is one of the most consistently recognised challenges in the research, and is one of the most urgent areas for policy attention.

Emerging digital and participatory forms of remembrance

Digital and participatory approaches represent one of the most dynamic and rapidly evolving dimensions of contemporary remembrance culture. Across all five contexts, the research identified growing experimentation with formats that move towards active engagement, actively inviting audiences to not only observe commemorations, for example, but to contribute to, shape, and co-create them.

Digital tools are increasingly being used to document, preserve and disseminate memories that might otherwise be lost. In Portugal, platforms such as FotoMemória and Lugar do Real provide online access to community-based photographic collections, thereby democratising access to visual heritage. In Cyprus, interactive digital projects such as the Ledra Palace: Dancing on the Line initiative have used augmented reality to allow visitors to explore contested histories in personalised ways. In Serbia and Austria, podcasts, digital storytelling projects and online archives produced by and for marginalised communities are reaching audiences who may otherwise never enter a memorial institution. Younger generations particularly are experimenting with social media and digital platforms as spaces for an alternative format of commemoration, via Instagram accounts, digital mapping projects, and gamified memory platforms, often drawing on oral history and folk traditions that would otherwise escape the dominant focus on trauma and official narratives.

Participatory methodologies remain equally significant. Oral history interviews, photo-elicitations, co-creative processes involving artists and communities, and public assemblies that crowdsource memories are all approaches that treat remembrance as a living, relational and democratic practice.

However, these emerging forms are not without their challenges. Digital preservation raises questions about long-term sustainability and archival standards. Participatory processes on the other hand require time and resources that are not always available within project-based funding. Nonetheless, the most promising and inclusive forms of remembrance actively involve communities in the making of memory, rather than employing a top-down approach.

3.2.3 The role of arts in remembrance culture

This section explores what art brings to the remembrance landscape that other forms of engagement cannot. Research across the five countries shows that art functions not as decoration, but as a distinct methodology for engaging with the past, one that has qualities that set it apart from institutional or educational approaches to remembrance.

The potential of art in remembrance

Research participants identified a unique quality in artistic engagement: the capacity to openly ask questions, to accommodate contradiction and complexity, rather than simplifying it into a single account. This is seen as a strength, as memory is by nature plural, contested and incomplete, and the most meaningful engagements with the past are those that acknowledge this reality.

This specific quality carries particular importance in contexts of deep historical division. In Cyprus, where Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities hold different understandings of the same historical events, art provides a space or possibility for encounters that do not require agreement as a precondition for participation. In Serbia, artistic formats create possibilities for the personal and emotionally grounded engagement that institutional contexts tend to discourage.

A further key feature of artistic practices is their engagement with space and time. Art does not only make the past something that is experienced in the present, but it also orients that experience into the future, inviting participants to reflect on what kind of remembrance culture they wish to build, moving forward. This capacity to bridge past, present and the future is one of art's most distinctive contributions to inclusive remembrance. Walks through contested urban landscapes, site-specific installations, performative rituals and participatory theatre engage with memory both intellectually and spatially, making the past something that is experienced. This embodied dimension produces a different form of engagement, which, according to many research participants, shifted their understanding of difficult histories.

Art as challenge, catalyst and the need for structural support

Research for the needs assessments reveals that artistic interventions create new facts in the public sphere, compelling institutions to engage with histories that were ignored previously. Communities use creative practice to become visible, and gain acknowledge that formal political processes have denied them. These reflect the capacity of art to intervene in and contribute to public discourse beyond existing frameworks.

This political dimension of artistic practices, however, is not without its risks. Research participants across several countries described the professional and social consequences faced by artists and cultural practitioners who engage with politically sensitive histories, including marginalisation, censorship and restricted access to institutional support. These consequences and pressures directly shape what work is produced, by whom, and under what condition it reaches the audiences. It is therefore clear that the freedom to engage critically

and creatively is not equally available, and artists who choose to engage with remembrance through the arts must reckon with the potential consequences.

Additionally, the research draws attention to the structural challenge of short-term funding. Most transformative artistic objectives identified in the research are part of short-term or isolated initiatives, instead of being embedded within institutional frameworks. While their impact is genuine, the long-term influence remains limited as a result. Therefore, there is a dire need to move beyond one-off artistic projects towards sustained, structurally supported programmes for arts-based remembrance.

3.2.4 Education and remembrance

Education is one of the primary arenas in which remembrance culture is transmitted, contested and renewed across generations. Schools, universities and non-formal learning spaces play an active role in shaping which histories young people encounter, and how they are framed.

Art-based learning in remembrance education

In all five partner countries, formal education systems engage with 20th century history and remembrance to varying degrees. In Austria, education on WW II and the Holocaust is well established within the curriculum, and is considered central to human rights education, with excursions to memorial sites included. In Portugal, the national curriculum includes the study of the dictatorship, the Colonial War and the transition to democracy. In Italy, commemorative days are designated and are accompanied by educational activities, competitions and teacher training programmes. In Serbia, where WWII features prominently in the curricula, the events of the 1990s received little attention. In Cyprus, curricula feature the dominant narratives of each community, and contribute to reproducing the binary frameworks of collective memory.

Across all five contexts, however, the research highlighted several gaps between what is mandated and what actually reaches students in meaningful ways. Politically approved and well-documented historic events tend to get most of the attention, while the experiences of marginalised communities, colonial histories and gender dimensions receive insufficient attention. In several countries, participants noted that schools can feel like spaces where remembrance is more performative rather than exploratory.

In this context, art-based approaches to remembrance education become especially significant, and are described as being more effective in creating genuine engagement with difficult histories, with examples defined in the previous section. In conclusion, what these

approaches share is a commitment to active, embodied and relational learning, engaging students as participants in meaning-making. They are also more accessible across different learning styles, linguistic backgrounds, and socio-economic contexts, instead of text-heavy or lecture-based formats, making them important for addressing gaps in inclusive remembrance.

Challenges in connecting historical memory with contemporary social realities

One of the most consistently identified challenges is the tendency of formal education to treat remembrance in a way that is disconnected from social realities of the present. Participants described a dominant mode of remembrance education in which students learn about past events without being supported to draw any meaningful connections between those events, and the world they are living in today. The implicit message, therefore, is that history is something that happened to other people at another time, and all is now resolved. This undermines the development of critical thinking, a well-rounded perspective, and above all, a participatory attitude. Approaching contemporary reality without taking the past into account risks leading to a short-sighted future.

This disconnect takes different forms. In Austria, for example, participants pointed to a tendency to treat the Holocaust like a closed chapter, in which the country has already done the necessary work of acknowledgement, rather than using it as a lens through which to examine present-day forms of exclusion, racism, antisemitism and political violence.

Connecting historical memory to contemporary social realities therefore requires a pedagogical shift towards remembrance being very much a lived practice. This means, for example, creating space for students to bring forth their own experiences, identities and questions into the learning process, engaging actively with community knowledge and local histories, and using artistic and participatory methodologies to make the relationship between the past and the present more tangible.

3.2.5 Key differences in findings across national contexts

While the analysis has revealed strong commonalities across the five partner countries, there are also important differences in the nature, focus and dynamics of remembrance culture.

Perhaps the key difference lies in the historical events around which remembrance is primarily organised – genocide in Serbia, Nazi rule in Austria, political division in Cyprus, dictatorship and colonial empire in Portugal, and a complexity of resistance, civil war and border identities in Italy. The resulting remembrance cultures are therefore also different in their dominant symbols and characteristics.

The relationship between state and memory also varies considerably. In Austria and Portugal, the state has played an active, if imperfect, role in institutionalising certain forms of critical remembrance, including the formal acknowledgment of perpetrator responsibility in Austria and the constitutional embedding of democratic transition in Portugal. In Serbia, by contrast, state institutions are widely perceived as obstacles to rather than enablers of pluralistic remembrance, with civil society carrying a disproportionate share of the critical work. Cyprus presents a unique situation in which the state itself is divided, producing parallel and competing official memory infrastructures. Italy occupies an intermediate position, with a dense institutional landscape that is nonetheless increasingly subject to diverse political pressures that narrow rather than expand the space for inclusive engagement.

Furthermore, the position of minority communities within remembrance culture also differs across contexts in significant ways. In Serbia, the exclusion of Roma communities is well documented. However, it receives little space for reflection among the public or in the media, or in museums and textbooks. In Austria, the struggle for recognition is ongoing across multiple groups simultaneously, with Roma, LGBTQIA+ communities, migrants and Carinthian Slovenes each navigating various forms of marginalisation. The divided island of Cyprus impacts the remembrance culture present there, with any experience that does not fit neatly into the narrative of intercommunal violence being rendered invisible. In Portugal and in Italy, colonial histories and the experiences of racialised communities represents the most significant gap in mainstream remembrance.

For several of the partner countries, geography also emerges as a differentiating factor. Portugal stands out for the degree to which meaningful remembrance work is concentrated at local and community level, often in rural and non-urban areas that are largely invisible to national institutions. In Italy, the border region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia demonstrates how geographic and cultural transitionality can become a productive space for transnational and multilingual memory work. In Cyprus, the physical division of the island means that geography is itself a memory practice, with crossing points, buffer zones and abandoned buildings all carrying immense historical and political significance.

3.2.6 Barriers, challenges and needs

Structural barriers and opportunities for inclusive remembrance

The exclusions described above are reproduced by structural conditions, funding arrangements, institutional practices, politics and social hierarchies, that shape who has access to remembrance culture and on who's terms.

Money plays an important role in this dynamic. In all five countries, public funding tends to be for established organisations and dominant narratives, while initiatives that challenge these narratives must fight for every resource. Further, the decision-makers for funding are, in most cases, belonging to majority-community backgrounds, with limited diversity observable in the leadership of cultural institutions and government bodies.

Access to remembrance is also shaped by other barriers, such as language, socio-economic status, physical accessibility, geographic location and educational background. Many memorial institutions, public commemorations and educational programmes presuppose levels of literacy, mobility and cultural familiarity that many do not have.

However, the findings also reveal some opportunities. Across all five partner countries, examples exist of remembrance practices that work differently, giving communities real co-ownership of their own histories, that connect the past with the present. Participatory design, intersectional thinking, sustained community involvement, and a commitment to relevance points towards what more inclusive remembrance could look like at scale. These are further explored in Chapter 10, through concrete examples of promising practice from across the partner countries.

Key challenges and needs

The needs assessment has revealed a remembrance landscape that is, in many respects, rich in creativity, commitment as well as community energy. However, it is also a landscape marked by structural challenges that limit the reach, sustainability and inclusivity of remembrance work. The challenges summarised below together define the most urgent areas of need that ReIMAGINE, and the broader field must urgently address.

a. Fragmentation of remembrance initiatives

Remembrance work is characterised by a proliferation of initiatives that tend to operate in isolation from one another, with limited coordination between the local, national and transnational levels. Several valuable projects exist but they rarely connect to form more coherent frameworks. This fragmentation, therefore, must be addressed, as it limits impact and prevents the kind of sustained and systemic change that the field needs.

b. Limited institutional support and resources

The most transformative remembrance work identified across the research is disproportionately carried by civil society organisations, community groups and individuals who remain consistently underfunded. Short-term project grants, unpaid activism and

personal dedication therefore sustain much of what exists. Stable, long-term institutional and financial support is therefore critical, failure of which will leave the field of remembrance structurally fragile.

c. Political sensitivities and contested histories

Remembrance culture has also been found to be subject to political pressures that shape what can be said, commemorated and publicly acknowledged. The instrumentalization of memory for nationalist or ideological purposes, the risk of professional or social marginalisation who challenge dominant narratives, and the difficulty to engage honestly with contested histories in increasingly polarised political climates all contribute to constraining the space available for critical and pluralistic remembrance work.

d. Barriers to accessibility and participation

Remembrance culture, as it is currently structured, is not equally accessible to all. Language barriers, socioeconomic inequalities, (physical) inaccessibility, geographic disparities between urban and rural, and a lack of multilingual provision all play a role in limiting who can meaningfully participate. Beyond the practical barriers, there remains also a deeper question of who feels addressed and included.

e. Gaps in representation and inclusive practices

As documented previously, several communities remain consistently underrepresented, or absent from dominant remembrance cultures. Women, LGBTQIA+ people, Roma and Sinti, migrants, Afro-descendant communities and working-class populations often find their histories barely reflected in official commemorative frameworks. Furthermore, a significant gap remains when it comes to intersectional perspectives. Closing these gaps therefore requires greater diversity in the narratives being told, and fundamental changes in who holds decision-making power over how remembrance is designed and funded.

f. Challenges in connecting the past with present-day issues

A recurring concern is the tendency to treat remembrance as a historical exercise, completely disconnected from the social and political realities of today. Remembrance also often gets caught between ambiguity and ambivalence, thereby allowing power(ed) perspectives to maintain their dominance. Participants emphasised the need for remembrance practices that make visible the continuities between historical injustices, and contemporary forms of discrimination, exclusion and inequality.

3.2.7 Good practices and emerging approaches

Across the five partner countries, the needs assessment identified a range of initiatives that stand out for their effectiveness in building more inclusive and participatory remembrance cultures. This section draws on those examples to identify the key characteristics of transformative remembrance practices, and illustrates what they look like in action.

Characteristics of effective and inclusive remembrance initiatives

They generate recognition. The most effective initiatives do more than just add marginalised groups to existing narratives. They create the conditions for people who have been systematically excluded to recognise themselves as historical actors with agency and significance. This shift from symbolic visibility to genuine self-recognition emerged as a meaningful characteristic of remembrance initiatives.

They are process oriented. Effective initiatives treat the process of memory-making as valuable. The process of gathering testimonies for example, rehearsing a performance, or creating an archive creates relationships and builds trust.

They operate across generations. The most impactful practices actively create dialogue between older and younger generations. This intergenerational dimension is where memory is tested, reinterpreted and then kept alive.

They create lasting change beyond the project itself. The most significant good practices identified are the ones that leave something behind, such as a community archive that continues to be used, a methodology that educators adopt in their practice, or a network of relationships that sustains future collaboration.

They do not choose between emotional engagement and critical reflection. Instead, they hold both together, creating experiences that are not only resonant, but also build historical understanding.

More often than not, these effective practices are initiated and carried out by communities and individuals belonging to underrepresented groups and receive little to no structural support. In cases where the state or institutions implement/fund initiatives, the following aspects have emerged as markers of good practice:

- They involve communities at every level in significant ways and pay for the contribution/involvement

- While involving communities, they also take up responsibility for pluralistic remembrance themselves and don't place the burden exclusively on underrepresented communities
- They involve long-term strategies to continue to take over responsibility for remembrance
- They introduce meaningful measures to make remembrance accessible to members of the community at its centre (e.g. by including multiple languages (importantly, also the relevant minority languages), making institutions barrier-free, etc.).

Selected good practices examples from the partner countries

The following good practices have been selected from across the five national contexts for their illustrative value. Below, they are presented thematically to highlight the different dimensions of effective remembrance practices.

a. Art as a tool for historical self-recognition

In Cyprus, a photographic project by researcher and artist Serap Kanay portrayed individuals with potential African heritage using personal and family archives. By rendering Afro-Cypriot subjectivities visible as empowered and legitimate identities, the project created space for participants and audiences to recognise their own experiences within the images and to speak openly about histories that had previously had no public language. It marked the first time the term 'Afro-Cypriot' was formally acknowledged in academic and public discourse.

In Austria, the Omofuma memorial, erected without official permission by sculptor Ulrike Truger to commemorate the killing of Marcus Omofuma⁴ by Austrian police during deportation, shows how artistic intervention can force engagement of institutions with their histories of racist state violence. Through consistent community pressure, the memorial eventually found a permanent home in a central public space in Vienna.

b. Theatre and the democratisation of historical significance

In Portugal, a verbatim theatre production on women manual labourers transformed the accounts of working-class women into public narrative, leading to formal recognition by authorities, and national media coverage. This illustrates how art can function as a catalyst for symbolic reparation. A related production on child labour challenged romanticised ideas of

⁴ Marcus Omofuma was a Nigerian asylum seeker who died due to police brutality on 1 May 1999.

rural resilience, and reframed early age labour as structural inequality, resulting in strong criticism by audiences who previously had not encountered this reality in formal education.

c. Cross-border memory and multilingual practice

In the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region of Italy, a strong network of cultural organisations has developed approaches to remembrance that reflect their transnational and multilingual character. Situated at the intersection of Slovenian, Italian and broader central European histories, many organisations work across linguistic and national boundaries, and combine archival research, artistic practice and community engagement to address histories that do not necessarily fit in single national narratives.

d. Bridging division through shared cultural practices

In Cyprus, the Cypriot Folk Songs Choir brings together Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot performers who perform traditional folk songs with bilingual translations, bringing to the forefront the shared cultural heritage of both communities. Further, LGBTQIA+ activists collaborate across both communities to create peacebuilding performances.

e. Education, participation and the reform of historical knowledge

In Serbia, the exhibition 'Combing through Time: Untangling Hidden Histories of the Roma Genocide' is an example of how community-rooted research and artistic presentation can introduce marginalised histories into the public consciousness. Further, projects that work with private family photographic archives through photo-elicitation have been adapted into school contexts, where students produced short videos using family photographs. These examples show how community-based methodologies can be translated into publicly engaging and replicable educational practices.

f. Technology for memory

In Cyprus, the Ledra Palace: Dancing on the Line project used augmented reality and sensor-based interactive design to allow visitors to explore the contested history of a very significant building that could not be accessed in person. The project thus created an immersive learning experience that made politically sensitive material approachable and accessible.

g. Bridging past, present and future

In Austria, artist Muhammet Ali Baş uses different formats to connect remembrance culture to present day struggles and imaginations of the future. Through his 'situation rooms' memories of different futures are imagined and collected, asking participants how they want to

remember the past in the future, thus building a practice of remembrance that doesn't only look towards the past, but builds bridges to the future.

4. Towards a Transnational Framework for Inclusive Remembrance

The findings presented in this report point clearly toward the need for a shared framework that can guide the development of more inclusive practices across European contexts. Such a framework can offer a set of common principles, orientations and areas of focus that together define the conditions under which inclusive remembrance is most likely to flourish. This section draws on comparative analysis to outline what such a framework would look like, focusing on three interconnected dimensions – the potential of arts-based approaches, the strengthening of cross-sectoral collaboration, and the structural conditions needed to support pluralistic remembrance cultures in the long run.

The potential of arts-based approaches to remembrance

The evidence gathered across the five partner countries makes for a strong case for arts-based approaches as a central, rather than supplementary component of inclusive remembrance work. What this research demonstrates is not only that art can be useful in this context, but that certain things cannot be achieved without it.

A transnational framework for inclusive remembrance should therefore recognise arts-based practice as a primary methodology, with the resources and institutional support that it requires. This means, for example, investing in artist residencies and collaborative projects that are rooted in specific communities and their histories, developing training programmes to equip educators and cultural practitioners with the skills to integrate artistic approaches into their work, and creating platforms for the exchange of artistic methodologies across national contexts, so that approaches developed in one country can inform, and inspire action elsewhere.

Strengthening collaboration between education, culture and civil society

A clear finding of the research has been that the most effective remembrance work happens at the intersection of sectors that rarely communicate with one another. Educators, artists, cultural institutions, civil society organisations, and community groups each bring distinct yet complementary strengths to the field.

A transnational framework should therefore prioritise the creation of structures for cross-sectoral collaboration, moving beyond the project-by-project partnerships that currently characterise much of the field. This requires investment in shared physical and digital spaces,

where practitioners from different sectors can meet, exchange and develop joint approaches. Furthermore, it requires a rethinking of funding mechanisms, which rarely support interdisciplinary sector initiatives. At the transnational level, networks and exchange programmes that bring together practitioners from across the partner countries can help to build a shared vocabulary, identify common challenges and develop approaches that are responsive to both local specificity and broader European patterns.

The research has shown consistently that the communities most affected by gaps in remembrance culture are also the ones with the most knowledge, creativity and commitment to address them. Therefore, it is equally important that civil society and community organisations are recognized as genuine partners in these collaborations.

Supporting pluralistic remembrance cultures

Building a genuinely pluralistic remembrance culture across Europe requires structural change in how public funding is allocated, who holds decision-making power, what is taught in schools, and how the state relates to communities whose histories it has historically marginalised or ignored.

At the policy level, this means advocating for remembrance frameworks that are legally and institutionally mandated to include diverse perspectives, and that hold public bodies accountable for the gaps in representation that this report has documented. This would take the shape of reformation of curricula to reflect the complexity of European histories. It would also entail ensuring that the recognition of marginalised communities takes place (through memorials, educational materials) and is backed by political will and resources.

5. Recommendations

The findings of this needs assessment point to a number of concrete actions across different levels of responsibility. The following recommendations are addressed to the key audiences best placed to drive change in each area.

For policymakers

- **Establishment of sustainable, long-term funding mechanisms** for community-led and civil society remembrance initiatives, moving away from short-term grants, towards structural support.
- **Reforming the national curricula** to include colonial histories, minority experiences, migration and displacement as key components of historical education.
- Ensuring **diversity in leadership and governance** in publicly funded cultural and memorial institutions, including meaningful representation of minorities in decision-making roles.
- **Protecting and expanding civic space for critical and pluralistic remembrance work**, including safeguards against the political instrumentalization of memory.
- Recognising and formally **commemorating the histories of communities that are currently absent from official memory**, for example through establishing missing memorials and adding commemorative days to official calendars.

For cultural institutions, remembrance organisations

- Moving from tokenistic representation towards **genuine co-creation with communities** whose histories are being addressed, and ensuring that affected communities have real influence over the narrative.
- Developing **accessible formats across language**, physical access, geographical reach and educational background, so that remembrance does not remain structurally limited.
- Building **partnerships with other civil society organisations and grassroots initiatives**, recognising them as equal partners.
- Investing in **long-term preservation and contextualisation** of community archives, oral histories and digital collections.
- Creating **platforms for transnational exchange** of practices and methodologies that contribute to a shared European remembrance culture, across borders.

Educators, youth workers

- Seeking out and using **educational resources produced by and for marginalised communities**, including podcasts, artworks, oral histories, and community archives.
- **Creating space in the classroom/workshop for students' own identities and family histories** to be brought forth, in dialogue with broader historical narratives.
- **Connecting historical memory more explicitly to contemporary social realities**, and supporting young people to draw and recognise meaningful links between past injustices, and present-day forms of discrimination and inequality.
- **Integrating arts-based and participatory methodologies into remembrance education** as a standard approach.
- Pursuing **professional development opportunities in inclusive remembrance methodologies**, and advocating within institutions for the time and resources to implement them meaningfully.

Artistic practitioners

- **Engaging critically with questions of risk and responsibility** when working with contested histories, and building support structures for colleagues who face professional or social consequences.
- **Using digital tools and platforms thoughtfully**, ensuring that digitally produced remembrance work is preserved, and is accessible over the long term.
- Prioritising **genuine community engagement and partnership** in the design and delivery of remembrance projects, ensuring that artistic agency does not override the perspectives of the communities involved.
- **Advocating for sustainable funding models** that allow arts-based remembrance work to develop depth and continuity over time.

6. Conclusion

The needs assessment has produced a picture of remembrance culture in Europe that is both troubling, and in other ways, encouraging. Troubling, because the gaps recognised are not marginal. Across all contexts, the histories of women, Roma communities, LGBTQIA+ people, migrants, working-class populations, and colonised peoples remain inefficiently represented in official memory. Encouraging, as the research has also found that in every country, practitioners, communities and organisations are doing extraordinary work to challenge these patterns, often with very limited resources, and have reached several positive milestones that have already made remembrance culture more pluralistic and inclusive on a wider level.

What the comparative analysis therefore revealed is that the challenges identified are not unique to one national context. Instead, they reflect structural conditions that transcend borders and that require coordinated, transnational responses alongside national ones.

Running through all five national contexts, however, is one consistent finding – that art matters, and counts immensely as a tool through which to engage with the past in ways that are honest, accessible, participatory and also humanising.

The report, therefore, is not only documenting the needs, but also putting forth recommendations. The practitioners, communities and organisations whose work has been described in this report demonstrate that more inclusive, democratic, and meaningful forms of remembrance are not simply a distinct aspiration, but a present reality, although one that remains fragile and inconsistent. The task ahead, therefore, is to collectively create conditions under which reality can become the norm, rather than the exception.