



ACTIVE TELLING  
ACTIVE LEARNING

# HUMAN LIBRARY

PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES FROM EUROPE FOR  
CITIZENS PROJECT **ACTIVE TELLING, ACTIVE LEARNING**

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# ABOUT HUMAN LIBRARY



## WHAT IS HUMAN LIBRARY?

**“Human Library is not a PR exercise in search of flashy titles, it is not an exhibition of rare objects and most particularly, it is not a recruiting agency for famous people. The Human Library is a dialogue instrument which brings people closer together in order to promote respect for human dignity and individual identity”.<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Ronni Abergel, Antje Rothemund, Gavan Titley, Péter Wootsch, Don't judge a book by it's cover, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Programme "Youth promoting human rights and social cohesion", Ungaria, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005.

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This handbook aims at providing guidance for the organisations, youth workers, teachers and public bodies who want to implement the Human Library method, giving examples of good and bad practices observed during the “Active Telling, Active Learning” (ACT) project in each of the partner countries. With the creation of an Handbook with video Books, the desire was collecting and preserving oral testimonies, so that we, and especially younger generations, have the opportunity to understand the events of WWII and can learn from past mistakes. The materials produced during the project could also be used in future initiatives for historical memory in the EU, for boosting awareness in schools, universities, municipalities and other institution, increasing the impact of ACT Project.

The choice of the Human Library method was based on the will to sensitize and activate younger citizens (the readers) on the core values deriving from the Union's citizenship. It is an effective method to engage and spread testimonies through direct telling, while reaching two diverse target groups – WWII witnesses (the books) and younger generations (the Readers). This technique, recommended by the European Council, will boost inter-generational dialogue between young people and direct and indirect witnesses of WWII. The method offers the possibility to create a long-lasting partnership with complementary organisations (NGOs, public bodies, schools, ...) in order to boost the impact of the project about EU remembrance.

## WHAT IS THE HUMAN LIBRARY METHOD?

The Human Library is a method used to create a positive framework for conversation between people who would not have the chance to talk in everyday life. It represents a different and more direct way to tackle prejudice or to spread testimonies about a specific topic with a different perspective given by direct or indirect witnesses. “Readers” can speak with, for examples, homeless people, migrants and asylum-seekers, witnesses of wars, and people facing any kind of discrimination. That is what makes this method an extremely effective tool to challenge stereotypes: it is possible to create a direct dialogue between people from different context, so to encourage tolerance and open-mindedness and celebrate differences. With this technique, people become “Living Books”, and can be borrowed and read during the event like any other book. To each one, a title is assigned, so to make the story and the topic clear for the readers. The voluntary involvement of the “Living Books”, while constituting an amazing opportunity for the whole community to grow, fosters active participations and citizenship among the people who make themselves available to tell their stories.

This method was born in Denmark in 2000, when a group of young people decided to face a violent episode of racism in a different way, by involving people in a dialogue on the issue at the basis of the problem. Human Library was used for the first time at the Roskilde Festival, an event run by Ronni and Dany Abergel, Asma Mouna, Christoffer Erichsen, at that time working at the Danish Youth NGO Stop Volden (“Stop the Violence”). The first event lasted four days with eight hours of conversations each day and more than 1000 people attending. From there, the method became common to be used in different countries and topics to boost dialogue and a better understanding of people.





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With this technique, people are turned into Living Books: each of them has a specific title, like a traditional book, which indicates the topic or the stereotype tackled. But rather than a book, participants can "borrow" a person. So, through dialogue, this method favours the encounter between people with different origins, experiences and lifestyles, thereby helping the listeners (or, better, the readers) to broaden their minds and promoting tolerance and respect for Human Rights. Since Human Library is a participatory method based on the voluntary engagement of witnesses in storytelling, it also helps to foster active citizenship and spirit of volunteerism among the citizens.

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## WHO CAN BE A HUMAN BOOK?

Anyone with something to say. It does not necessarily have to be someone who has experienced an event first-hand, but also someone who has experienced it indirectly, for example through family or friends. It is not necessary to make a sensational story about great events, but simply to have a story to tell that is important for the human book itself. There are no right or wrong interesting or boring episodes: every testimony has value in itself. No story is inferior to another, there are no main or secondary narrators.





## HOW AN EVENT OF HUMAN LIBRARY TAKES PLACE

As mentioned before, during Human Library events people become Living Books: they can be chosen by their titles from a catalogue and people attending the event can read them in small groups (1-3 people), leafing through the pages of his or her real life. The titles should be direct and touching, to stimulate the curiosity of the readers.

In the first phase, the book tells its own story without being interrupted, directing the story at will and taking the necessary time. Once the book has told his or her story, the readers can ask questions about what they have read or about other aspects in which they are interested. During the conversations, both the Readers and the Books need to bear in mind that there are not trivial questions. These events create spaces where difficult questions are expected, appreciated and answered. The more direct and spontaneous they are, the more the reader can in a way step into the world of the Living Book is talking with.

Anyway, the books must be treated with respect. Moreover, they also have the right to skip indelicate questions or end a conversation if they wish to. Thanks to this method, readers have the opportunity to confront realities even far from their own, so they can try to question their perspective and break down stereotypes and prejudices.



# GOOD AND BAD PRACTICES

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# ROMANIA



The idea of the ACT (Active Telling, Active Learning- The EFC project to the active sensibilisation of the young generations towards the cruelty of the WWII) project was salutary. It was presented a little later than it should have in relation to the topic. But it is all the more salutary. The presence of the survivors of the Second World War is increasingly less accessible and memories, of them and about them, are becoming less available to us. Even in the collective memory of Europeans, the experience of war fades away. Under the bombardment of media, the past seems to fade faster than we can understand. This is where good ideas, like the one that coagulated the ACT project, come. Unlearned lessons are meant to be repeated. The lesson of war is one that we would not want to repeat. That is the reason why the idea is salutary. It is a cordial opportunity to recover some useful lessons.

DESPITE OUR ANXIETIES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROJECT, IT WAS NOT DIFFICULT TO FIND “LIVING BOOKS”. IT WAS SOMEWHAT SURPRISING... AFTER WE STARTED SEARCHING, WE SAW WITH NEW EYES, IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT, THE ELDERLY NEAR US AND THE LOVERS OF HISTORY, THE SEEKERS AND STORYTELLERS. WE REALISED THAT SOME QUESTIONS ARE WAITING TO BE ASKED, TO BE SPOKEN, ALMOST LIKE IN THE LEGENDS ABOUT PARSIFAL AND THE GRAIL CASTLE. IF WE ASKED, THEY ANSWERED, WITH MUCH ENTHUSIASM.



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It was harder to convince some of the storytellers to take on the role of “Living Books”. They came full of solicitude, even excited, at the preparatory meeting, but they were reserved about their power, their skill, and their success as speakers in front of youngsters. “How can I speak?!”, “What to say to them?!”, “Well, does anyone want to hear something like this?!” are objections that we have constantly heard and worked to combat. The “Living Books” did well; it was simple after the first listeners sat in front of them. They knew what to say. The Human Library event History. Memory. Orality. Testimonies of World War II took place in 16.04.2019 at Baciú House in Braşov. The event was organized by the university in collaboration with the Mureşenilor House Museum (Baciú House belongs to the museum). The date of the event was not chosen at random: April 16th 1944 was the day of the first bombing of the Allied troops on Braşov. The second edition of the event happened on May 17th 2019, hosted this time by the Transylvania University of Braşov. At each of these editions, there were three „Living Books”.

THE LISTENERS, SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM THE BOD MIDDLE SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FROM THE FACULTY OF SOCIOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION, REACTED IN MANY WAYS TO THE “LIVING BOOKS”. WE SAW WONDER, MISTRUST, COMPASSION, PRIDE (FOR THE HEROIC EPISODES OR PROOFS OF PROFESSIONALISM PRESENTED), AND HORROR AND SUFFERING ON THEIR FACES. EACH OF THESE EXPRESSIONS SIGNALS THAT THE MESSAGE FOUND ITS RECIPIENT, THAT THE LESSON REACHED THOSE MEANT TO LEARN IT.

We consider the lessons on the war, which the „Living Books” stories highlighted, very efficient for the goal of the ACT Project. It would be a relief that today's Europe, where young listeners have grown up, is quiet. This feeling, confessed by some of the participants in the meetings with the “Living Books”, has in the background confidence, inexplicitly confessed, in those who decide today the fate of the continent. It is a trust that obliges.

Regarding the choice of the „Living Books”, we consider that what they have to share should be weighted by their skill to tell appealing stories. We noticed that listeners reacted to the way in which the stories were told, rather than to their dramatic content. We also noticed that the way in which the war stories were received was influenced by the sensibility towards the subject of the teacher who coordinated the listening students. The teacher's interest in the subject amplified the receptivity of the listeners. Because of this, the form in which these lessons will be highlighted is important, and therefore, must be chosen carefully. We think we should have paid more attention, from the beginning, in the program, to the multitude of possible perspectives regarding the same war event.

For instance, at a political level, relations between Romanians and Hungarians have long been tense in Transylvania. The Treaty of Trianon deeply dissatisfied Hungary and raised tensions, increasing the potential for their abrupt explosion in the street. The Vienna Diktat was considered by Hungarians to be worthy revenge. But that does not mean that Hungarians were the perpetrators and that Romanians behaved flawlessly during times of war. Absolutely not... There is always one more facet of the medal. We understood late in the development of the project that the memories of the storytellers do not capture events from all perspectives. Clearly, the war and its consequences were different for the many groups of inhabitants of Transylvania: Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Jews, or Roma... We did not intentionally choose “Living Books” with close perspectives, as we did not even notice in time the educational potential of presenting the same events from clearly different perspectives. But the weak point is simultaneously an invitation to deepen and prepare for another lesson.

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# ITALY

In Italy, the Human Library event for “Active Telling, Active Learning” has been implemented on 4th of June 2019, with the participation of two senior high school classes of a local institute. The involvement of a school is challenging but of primary importance to develop an identity and a sense of collective belonging, in order to build a collective memory and preserving EU fundamental values. The involvement of the schools need to be well considered and prepared. Teachers need to be clearly informed about the Human Library methodology and its implementation in order to avoid misunderstanding between the Human Library method and traditional interviews. They should be informed and trained about the meaning, rules and functioning of this specific technique.

Having a common goal, that is to tell the history we all share as European, brought out the most interesting and enriching aspects we noticed: on one side, the energy of the living Books while telling the stories of their families and, concerning the readers, the empathy and the attention paid in listening the testimonies and memories of the Books. The mood during the implementation of the event was the one desired, in which the youngsters had the possibility to put themselves in the shoes of the witnesses.



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A BIG PART OF THE PRE-IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OF THE HL EVENT IS THE RESEARCH ACTIVITY TO PREPARE A DATABASE CONTAINING ALL THE CONTACTS OF POSSIBLE LIVING BOOKS AND OTHER PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE AREA (IN THIS SPECIFIC CASE ORGANISATIONS AND WITNESSES OF WWII). ONCE CREATED, THIS DATABASE WILL BE USEFUL NOT ONLY FOR THE EVENTS THE PROJECTS REQUIRED, BUT ALSO FOR FUTURE INITIATIVES TO IMPLEMENT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

The choice of the venue and the rooms for the event is not a secondary aspect, these details being a factor of the success of the entire event. We noticed that one of the most useful thing to do before implementing a HL event is to create a short summary of every story which will be told, in order to be fully prepared for the event and its content. A good idea is also to provide every Book a tag indicating their name and the title of their story, like a cover of every traditional Book. As far as the execution of the event is concerned, it is fundamental to manage the time as effectively as possible, while on the other hand showing respect to the witnesses and their stories without interrupting them.

During the event, the participants have been divided into small groups, so that they could read different Books, turn-based. It would be appropriate to have a similar number of participants in each table, avoiding a big number of people around the same Book, in order to encourage conversations between different people and to boost the sharing. Except for the common rules of the Human Library method, a positive added value to our project was the involvement of international students, to increase the international dimension and the impact of the project.

At the end of the event, a final evaluation from all the participants is needed, to have the possibility to assess the satisfaction of both the Readers and the Books and to collect feedback and ideas to consider in future Human Library events.

FOR ALL OF THE ORGANISATIONS, WORKERS AND PUBLIC BODIES WHO WILL READ THIS HANDBOOK AND WHO WANT TO IMPLEMENT A HUMAN LIBRARY EVENT, THE BIGGEST ADVICE IS TO COMMUNICATE: HAVING A GOOD COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ALL THE PARTICIPANTS, BEING THEM READERS, ORGANISERS OR BOOKS, IS THE KEY FOR BOOSTING THE SUCCESS AND IMPACT OF THE EVENT.



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# SLOVENIA

In Slovenia, the Human Library event for “Active Telling, Active Learning” was implemented on 13th of June 2019 during the Week of Cultures. Before the event took place, Društvo za razvijanje prostovoljnega dela Novo mesto advertised it and its workers, who have many experiences regarding preparation of Human Library, prepared the witnesses. They also explained to the participants that wanted to attend the event, about the methodology of the Human Library: what is the meaning of it; the rules; and since the living Books were older people, the workers of DRPDNM stressed out the importance of patience. Preparing the Books, witnesses of the Second World War, for the event it is more challenging and demanding because they are not used to the methods of non-formal education and usually the facilitators need more time to explain to them about the Human Library.

Before the implementation of the HL project, the big part is the research and preparation of the database of the living Books that would want to tell their story (in our case the witnesses of WWII and the organisations that are working in the specific area). The database is useful not only for the Human Library event itself, since not everyone is comfortable talking about the past in front of others, but you can always record their stories for future generations. Before the event, we wrote the short summary of every Book, in order to prepare the content for the event and to disclose not only the topic but also the content to the future readers. Not just summary, we would suggest for the future organisers that it is advisable to give the Book the title, connected to the story.

IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO PREPARE THE RIGHT VENUE AND ATMOSPHERE WHERE THE EVENT WOULD TAKE PLACE. SINCE THE HUMAN LIBRARY TOOK PLACE IN THE MIDDLE OF JUNE AND THE TEMPERATURES WERE HIGH, WE HAD TO CONSIDER THAT ALSO. AT FIRST, WE PLANNED TO HAVE THE EVENT OUTSIDE, IN THE MAIN SQUARE, BUT AFTER CONSIDERATION, WE MOVED IT TO AN AIR-CONDITIONED SPACE, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE OUR BOOKS WERE OLDER PEOPLE AND IT WAS MORE DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO BEAR THE HIGHER TEMPERATURES. WE WOULD ADVISE EVERYONE INTERESTED TO PREPARE THE HUMAN LIBRARY EVENT, TO CONSIDER THE AUDIENCE, THE WEATHER, AND THE TOPICS AND PREPARE THE SPACE WHERE THE HUMAN LIBRARY WILL TAKE PLACE ACCORDINGLY.

When you consider preparing the Human Library event, especially when the Books are older people, such in this case, it is more challenging. You have to be very attentive towards them, since they need more time to understand the methodology of the HL. When the event itself takes place, they also need more time to tell the story.

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Most of the witnesses were children when they experienced the WWII and that is why you must be aware that their stories are very subjective and sometimes it can happen that they have forgotten the details of the past events. To every organization or person that has an intention to prepare Human Library event with witnesses of the Second World War, we would suggest that they communicate with their Books, if possible several times. This is also important because you can check if the story they are telling is truthful or they recreate their memoirs differently every time they talk about the events they went through. Also in most cases, the Books have problems to open up and tell their story, and that is why everyone preparing the event should be patient with them.

Considering the circumstances and the age of the Books, you have to manage the time when the reading takes place. Instead of five readings, which is standard for a Book during the event, you should consider lowering the number of readings to three. Besides, we would advise to divide participants into smaller groups, if possible all the groups should be the same number. If the group is smaller, the Book can stay focused on the story and the readers pay more attention.

After the HL event, it is desirable to have a reflection talk with the Books. Most of them will – most probably – just want to leave the venue, but it is the job of the facilitator of the HL event to keep them in place and make short reflection. This is important because by telling the story, they relived the painful past that brought back many emotions and the job of the organiser is to make sure that the Books feel good after the event.

Human Library events on topics of Second World War are very important. By preparing them, we keep the memory of the past events alive and we can learn about them first hand from the witnesses. Without living in the place where wars are raging, we can learn about the war and its consequences. These events are important also because of the fact that youngsters read life events, life stories of older generations and through them, they can learn. Human library is an amazing way for intergenerational transmission of cognition and informal education.

Human Library with the Books (witnesses of the WWII), when read, can teach the readers something else also. That history repeats itself because we do not open the Books, that are full of emotions and experiences that they got during difficult times; we open the books that are written by historians and their writings are objective, emotionless. People learn only when they go through something themselves or when they hear the story from someone who was present, when they see the eyes of the person during the emotional “lesson” they receive by reading the Book.

**SO, THIS IS THE ADVICE TO EVERYONE WHO DECIDES TO OPEN THE BOOK AND READ IT: REFLECT ON WHAT YOU HEARD AND THINK ABOUT THE WORLD TODAY. THINK ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE IS LIVING THE STORY YOU HEARD WHILE ATTENDING THE HUMAN LIBRARY EVENT.**



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# POLAND

A first event was organized by the partner – Zespół Szkół nr 1 in Wieluń. The meeting, even though the school is large, was very small, with three history witnesses invited and just nine students. An intimate atmosphere was created, and conversations took place in groups of maximum two people. Young people aged 16- 18 listened to the personal stories of people who grew up during the war. In case of school involvement in similar project, it is important to realize that such opportunities are an excellent chance for interactive history lessons, which may not be possible in future (for natural reasons). It is important to increase students' involvement and intensify internal promotional activities.





The second event took place in Wrocław, October 4th. The space was rented from Sector 3 - an institution supporting non-governmental organizations in Wrocław. We were able to engage 6 Living Books for whole event but some of them also contacted their colleagues and brought company (they were exchanging since some of the Living Books could not stay until the end). Consequently, participants had the chance to hear a lot of stories. We invited students from one of the high schools in Wrocław (age 17- 18) and we divided them into groups. Before starting, they also had the opportunity to familiarize with the catalogue of Living Books (not all unfortunately) and get to know the outline of the stories. It was a challenge to choose with the Living Books one completed story that they like to share. However, most of them spoke extensively about their lives, which on the one hand was interesting because it gave a full picture of realities during and after war, but on the other hand the time spent with a given group was extended. For our Living Books, half an hour was definitely too brief to talk, and in result some students got quickly tired when the conversations exceeded the set time. Some seniors were really interested in youngsters, so they asked them about their hobbies and grades at school. We observed also that telling the same stories for few times made Living Books emotional and a little bit tired.

#### Things to improve:

- lack of video
- conversations with Living Books, not all the Books agreed for the recording of the video, and we have to respect that
- attendance among students
- no participants from outside except school students – it would be good to have an open event
- discipline of guests to keep the chronology of the stories
- individual work on the story with Living Books to increase
- dissemination of the results of the activities
- preparing an online catalogue with stories so that participants can read it before the event
- evaluation at the end of the event

#### Advantages:

- conducting presentations among students regarding the Human Library method (before the event)
- publications in local media and school social media
- division in small groups, which made the youngsters more open to ask questions
- intimate and respectful atmosphere (good preparation from the teachers' side)
- the variety of experiences of the Living Books, which made each conversation valuable
- the involvement of Books in bringing photographs, maps and other materials
- a calm meeting place and sufficient space to have conversations.

For next events, in addition to people who are direct witnesses of the war, it is worth considering the involvement of professors and representatives of historical organisations, who could also lead an interesting discussion with young people. We also felt the need to internationalize these meetings, so that people from abroad can learn more about the history of Poland and its inhabitants.

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# CROATIA

As we were supposed to present Living Books on this event, we decided to organize and hold the event in the City Library of Slavonski Brod. The Library provided us with their multimedia room with seats for around 200 people.

The event took place on the 20th of September 2019. As our witnesses are getting older and older, two of them didn't feel good on that day, so we were left with three of our Living Books on the event. Also, one of the city journalists has joined us in storytelling, with the story about her father who died of natural causes during the WW2, but the cause of the death was confirmed 20 years later.

Students from several local high schools were invited to participate in the event, which was covered by local media (several news websites and two radio stations). We were worried about two factors here. The first one was the possible passivity of young students. Fortunately, this was not a thing – the students were actually asking a lot of questions and they have discussed with all of the witnesses a lot. The second factor was the local media. Some of the local media that got on the event was not very objective and there was a chance of writing one-sided stories about WW2.

The event started with the short 10-minute compilation of all five movies of our witnesses. After that, we have put four coffee tables around the room – three for our witnesses and one for a journalist. We have decided to separate students by their high school because we were thinking that this will make them less shy to ask the questions and to talk with the witness. Each group had 10 minutes to talk with each of the witnesses about their war story.

By selecting witnesses from various sides of the war, we were worried about how they would react when in the same room, as some of them were fighting for opposing ideologies (two of our witnesses is an antifascist partisan, yet another one was in the army of the Croatian puppet state). Fortunately, there was not any kind of incident or fight, but the lack of dialogue was noticeable.

AS AN EVALUATION, OUR YOUNG GUESTS HAVE GOT A TASK TO HIGHLIGHT WHAT THEY REMEMBERED ABOUT EACH WITNESS, AND WHAT DO THEY THINK ABOUT THE WAR. MANY OF THEM MENTIONED THE STORY OF OUR WITNESS WHO HAS FOUND THE BAG FULL OF CHOCOLATE DURING THE WAR. ON THE OTHER HAND, SEVERAL OF OUR GUESTS HAVE STATED THAT WAR WILL NEVER WAIT FOR YOU TO THINK WHICH SIDE YOU WILL TAKE OR YOU WANT TO LIVE.



# HUMAN BOOKS



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# ROMANIA

## MIRCEA VLADIMIR BÂRSAN (VOVA)

A talented and passionate storyteller with an infallible memory and a charm of the story that is captivating from the beginning, the artist Mircea Vladimir Bârsan brings to our attention the episodes of his family's transition from the territories occupied by Horthyist troops to the part of Transylvania that remained free during WWII. The narrator's father was a military legal counsel and his family was treated meanly, from when they received a permit to depart and until they crossed the border. Vova Bârsan also relates dramatic events during the Vienna Diktat, having protagonists acquaintances. The narrator also recalls some moments illustrating the consequences of the conflict after its conclusion.

<https://youtu.be/9I27fOzYmTw>

## RADU BELLU

A railway professional, keen on his profession and interested in the history of Romania, Radu Bellu tells us about the bombing of Bucharest and Ploiești, about the important role played by the Romanian Railway Palace in Bucharest in the rescue of human lives during the war, but also about one of the most dramatic events in the history of the royal family of Romania: their forced departure into exile. This event marked the dissolution of the monarchy, illustrating the brutality of the dictatorship born in the struggles of WWII.

<https://youtu.be/mvzefuawy5E>

## ALEXANDRU CORPADE

Flight, and the engines that make it possible, represent the passion of Al. Corpade, this aviation engineer who is very attached to the Brașov aerospace industry. He is a good friend of aviation professionals. Becoming a spokesman for the aeroplane, passionate aeronautical professionals, veterans of the aerospace industry in Brașov, expounds on his comrades' merits in his profession during the particularly difficult period of the WWII. He also tells the story of the life of his friend, Grațian Chirteș, a refugee from Transylvania after the Vienna Diktat.

<https://youtu.be/SgtxULaFBaA>

## GRAȚIAN CHIRTEȘ

A highly respected in the industry in Brașov, at the age of 96, Grațian Chirteș is a model of tenacity and perfectionism. He passed the frontier of Romania clandestinely, following a conflict with his former Hungarian friends from Transylvania. He was helped by a peasant woman who had a plot of land in the proximity of the frontier. She kept the frontier guards talking and thus, Grațian Chirteș managed to squeeze under the cover of the night. His effort during WWII led to providing brave Romanian aviators with flying machines that defended the heaven of homeland for years. Courageously and persistently, Grațian Chirteș faced the vicissitudes of the war and did his job even under the most difficult conditions.

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## TRAIAN DUMBRĂVEANU

A series of bizarre coincidences in the family life of an engineer from Braşov, in the field of aeronautical construction, are intertwined with Romania's destiny in the second world conflagration. Passionate about history, Traian Dumbrăveanu, the son of the engineer in question, investigates and shares the tragic moments of the bombing of Braşov by Americans starting on 16 April, 1944. The testimony, filtered through the eyes of this museographer and documented in archives, is based primarily on the experience directly lived by his parents.

[https://youtu.be/pg4\\_5LdKxII](https://youtu.be/pg4_5LdKxII)

## MARIA LELUȚIU

Caught unaware by the war at the age of five, Maria Leluțiu saw her mother forced to divorce to be able to remarry. Maria's father had died on the front, but there was no proof of this. Tenacious and eager to find out what happened to her father, our interlocutor found out, more than fifty years after the events, in 1996, that her father was declared missing during the 1940s. Maria Leluțiu speaks about the invasion of the Russians, about the villager women hiding out of their way, about villagers who wasted their wine in order to avoid violent behaviour caused by the alcoholic excesses of Russian invaders.

<https://youtu.be/5J75vZitpvl>

## ION PETRESCU

A dignified and imposing figure, General Ion Petrescu reveals his experience as an adopted army child in the operations of the Romanian Army for the liberation of Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1944-1945. At only 16 years old, mobilized by the example of his military combatant brother, the teenager also took part in reconnaissance, providing Romanian troops with essential information about the enemy. This information led to the breaking of the defense lines organized by the German-Horthyst troops around Budapest. The young man was injured in the operations in which he took part, and the events of the war marked his destiny.

<https://youtu.be/omicV17kKfE>

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# ITALY

## VALERIO FRABETTI

.The story of a young soldier in the Italian Army occupying Ex Yugoslavia that, after the 8th of September, chose to be a partisan and to fight with the Brigade Justness and Freedom of the Mountains, near to Gaggio Montano.

<https://youtu.be/ZApnoiRnmoQ>

## MAURIA BERGONZINI

The story of the collegian Luciano Bergonzini and of the first partisans units in Monterenzio. Between them there was Edera De Giovanni, first partisan woman shoot by the fascist at the Wall of the Certosa on the 1st April 1944.

<https://youtu.be/d6kvsPDc6fU>

## MARIA ROSA PANCALDI

Leone, young soldier, after the 8th of September was imprisoned by the Germans and decided to refuse the call to adhere to the Italian Social Republic of Mussolini. He was locked up in the internment camps in the European territories occupied by the Germans with other 650.000 Italian Military Interneds.

<https://youtu.be/H24HZUEAssc>

## MARIA CRISTINA MARCHESINI

Arvedo, young labourer in a cart factory and miner, said NO to the Italian Social Republic of Mussolini and was interned in several camps in Germany and Poland until the Liberation came.

<https://youtu.be/tgO6jivBsIl>

## BEPPE BELINELLI

The story of a young soldier that, enrolled into the war against the Soviet Union, lived the tragedy of the retreat between death and bitter cold.

<https://youtu.be/GljretJSBXw>

## DONATA PRACCHI

"At Monte Sole" is a story about people who experienced the horros of the massacre of Marzabotto, involved in the tragedy as simple civils. "An ordinary woman / One between many" is dedicated to the story of Gabriella Zocca, engaged since a very young age alongside the partisans.

<https://youtu.be/GY7-Xnx9pIo>

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# SLOVENIA

## BORIS GABRIČ

In the beginning of the interview Mr. Gabrič talks about his childhood, where he was born and that, due to his father's work, the family moved to Bosnia and Herzegovina. His father was against Nazis so he and his colleagues blew up the mine they were working in so family moved back home and his father was arrested by Ustasha and sentenced to death because of the treason against homeland. Few days after his mother was also arrested so he had to take care of his sisters, that were less than two years old. His mother, who was pregnant at the time, was released from prison on 15th of January 1942. Few months later German soldier warned her about the plans for her arrest. That is the reason the family fled again and joined the partisans. He then started to work as a courier in the hospital and later as a courier in a unit conducting blasting operations. Gabrič continues to describe how he joined the staff in the hospital on island Pag. He started to write letters for the wounded soldiers and send them to their loved ones. At that time he was only nine years old. On 1st of May the hospital was relocated to Osijek where he stayed for a while and then he moved back to Slovenia with his family. He concluded his interview by telling how he finished his studies and got the job as a school administrator when he was not even 18 years old. Later on, in 1969, he discovered what happened to his father who died in northern Norway building the so-called bloody road, which was constructed only by Yugoslav partisans. At the end of the interview, he stated that youth should fight for peace because only peace can solve problems.

<https://youtu.be/IR9SOtRANKM>

## FRANCI ŠALI

In the interview, Franc Šali explains that he was born prematurely in 1941 and why it happened. In addition, he continues by saying that he is retired now and lives in the same village where he was born. He speaks about his life, his interests and involvement in local community. Then he returns to his childhood and explains that it was wonderful even though that there was war going all around him. He lost his father and his mom was taken to the internment so he spent some time only with grandparents. He tells the story about how it happened that he did not join her in the camp as it was supposed to happen. He concludes the interview with words to the young generation stating that they should search deep in their souls and find themselves. He says also, how important it is to live positive life, act in the way to save the Earth, and embrace diversity.

<https://youtu.be/BzcNAoD3uNM>

## IVANKA MESTNIK

In the beginning of the interview, Ivanka Mestnik speaks about the place she was born and about the River Krka that has accompanied her all her life. Then she explains how it was, when the war broke out and why her family decided to join partisans. Her story continues with explaining how her father was killed and half of her family ended in concentration camp on the island Rab and she became an orphan at the age of eight years. She explains also why and when she started to write the books and which are the topics of them. In the interview, she also explains a lot about the book "Up there" that she wrote, where the grandfather was the one who survived the war and he tells the story to the grandchildren. However, his son accuses him that he is a coward because he does not want to hunt. The final sentence in her interview is dedicated to the people stating that one should never give up.

<https://youtu.be/Ur4AbelneDc>



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## JANEZ ŠTERBENC

In the beginning of the interview Janez Štrbenc presents himself by telling that he was born in 1939 in the Netherlands, where he spent part of his childhood. After the war, his family moved back to Yugoslavia. He then goes on to explain about the Second World War; what effect it had on him and his family; how was life during the war; and how they were hiding in underground bunkers. He explained how German and English grenades hit his house and how they lost everything. He then explained how they found a place to live but when Americans came to the town, they had to host them. He remembers that those were the happy days, because he received gifts such as chocolate from them and learned English. His message to the youth is at the end of the interview. He said that if young have a chance to prevent or supress the war, they should do it.

<https://youtu.be/uIKfptIVon4>

## STANKO KUŠLJAN

Stanko Kušljan celebrated 100 years in 2019 and while he was reminiscing his past, he also stated that for his longevity he could thank the medications and doctors. In the interview, he talked about his father that died while he was still a child so his mom remarried and the children spread across the globe. When the war started, he was a soldier in Boka Kotorska in Montenegro. Kušljan described his war days, how he was part of Cankar Brigade and wounded at Bosiljevo. He described the attack on Germans and Ustasha in detail: how it started early in the morning because partisans wanted to surprise them but they were already expecting the attack so they started to shoot also. They all got mixed and in the end he ran out of the ammo and got shot by a Ustasha soldier. His message to the young is also stated in the interview: He said that young should make sure that there would never be a war again because wars are the biggest evil. Wars should not be combat with weapon but with pen. In the end of the interview, there are few words about his participation in the creation of the book about the rescue of 10 paratroopers from Maggie's Drawers airplane that he helped rescuing during the war.

<https://youtu.be/H53L6uyOdIE>

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# POLAND

## ROMAN JANIK

He was born on September 9th, 1930, in Nowogródek. He remembers 1st of September when war has started, he went to school for the first day. School lasted for only 3 weeks more. After the USSR attack in Poland, the Red Army entered Nowogrodek on September 18th, 1939. At the age of 10 he and his family were deported by the Soviet Union. They have a few minutes to pack their luggage and they did not the direction of travel. They were sent to Arkhangelsk. The trip lasted for 2 weeks. He came back after 6 year but without his father who joined army. He met his father again, after 16 years.

<https://youtu.be/lxeWZxcN18o>

## EDWARD BIEŃ

Edward Bień was born on October 4th, 1938. When he was a kid he witnessed not only the atrocities of the Nazi and Soviet regimes, but also the terrible war crimes committed by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army on Polish and Ukrainian people. After the Second World War, he got deported from his hometown to the "Regained Territories" and since 1955 he has lived near Wrocław.

## CZESŁAW FILIPOWSKI

Czesław was born on August 2nd, 1932, in Wolica, Lviv (Ukraine) province. His father died defending Warsaw in 1939, while his mother was murdered by Ukrainian nationalists on the night of April 2nd, 1944. Orphaned, he spent his youth under the care of his extended family, as well as in orphanages and boarding schools.

## ADAM BURZYŃSKI

He was born in 1939 in JasnyBor, Volhynia. He survived the German and Soviet occupation and also witnessed the murders committed by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army on the citizens of the Second Polish Republic (now Belarus). After the Second World War, he was deported to the "Regained Territories". He tells a story about German neighbors, who were not an enemy but actually they become friends.

## ZDZISŁAW PIWKO

Zdzisław Piwko witnessed the murders committed by Ukrainian Insurgent Army and like many others together with family he was deported to regained territories of Poland. He tells a story about Lviv where he spend his childhood, a very important city for many Polish people.

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## JAN SŁABY

At present the oldest football coach in the world (he works with goalkeepers in football team in Wrocław). Jan was born on January 26th, 1928, in Lviv. He joined the National Army in 1942 at the age of 14 years old. He was 17 years old when he ended up in prison and labour camp. Jan shared his story how he survived prison what was the first thing he did after he came back to Lviv after 42 years.

## STANISŁAWA SZARYCZ

She was born on November 1st, 1930 in the Plantaw, the region that currently belongs to Belarus. At the age of 9, on February 10th 1940, together with her family was deported first to Arkhangelsk, then to Posiołka on Siberia. She was travelling to Siberia for one month, having almost nothing with her. Many people died during this terrifying trip. On Siberia to survive they all had to work physically. Her family managed to leave out from Siberia but what she experienced there was impossible to forget.

<https://youtu.be/wRnuumlpNHk>

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# CROATIA

## STJEPAN KOZIĆ

Stjepan joined the partisans against his will, but he proved himself as a valued member of the Antifascist Movement in Croatia. He talks about the recruiting process at the beginning. He mentions several interesting events. He has escaped back home, but he never got accused of it. He talks about his friend from Daruvar who has also tried to escape, but he saved him.

<https://youtu.be/4TdfCsDFWug>

## IVO RUDEC

Ivo was a member of civil protection units at the start of the war. Later, he voluntarily joined the Home Guard (a less professional branch of Ustasha troops). He was stationed in Sijekovac, modern-day Bosnia. Through his confession, he mentioned all big factions whom he saw: the Ustasha & the Nazis, Montenegrin Chetniks (Royal Army of Yugoslavia, mostly radical Serbs and Montenegrins, Axis collaborators) and Yugoslav Partisans (guerrilla army organized and led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Allies collaborators). He also mentioned Cherkezis - the less popular faction of Russian and Ukranian radicals infamously popular for burning down entire villages.

<https://youtu.be/ap7VJHniUNs>

## STANA ČOP

Stana was a prisoner of war. Due to her Germanic surname and family history, she and her family were held in Krndija Concentration Camp managed by Yugoslav Partisans. Through her time in the camp, she got seriously ill, lost her mother and managed to get out several times.

<https://youtu.be/LwOIHpEWHuM>

## BRANKA MUSTAĆ

Branka was an ordinary citizen of Slavonski Brod that got struck by the war. She was just a kid when it started. Her sister has joined the Partisans, and one of the Homeland Guard soldiers fell in love with her. She talks a lot about one chest which she was forbidden to open by her mother.

[https://youtu.be/nE\\_9IUGTsau](https://youtu.be/nE_9IUGTsau)

## BOŽO MALJKOVIĆ

Božo witnessed his father being threatened after the start of the war. His father died from shock, and that's the time when Božo decided to join the Partisans. As a kid, he was participating in many battles on the Slavonian and Srijem fronts. Through his confession, he also talks about his friend who ended up in Jasenovac Concentration Camp. At the end of the war, he got recruited as a member of People's Militia (Yugoslav-type of police). Although he found his father's killers, he has never told anyone who they were.

<https://youtu.be/C6dTF3teJIU>



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