



EHRI-2 Publishable Summary (2019)

Summary of the context and overall objectives of the project

EHRI's mission is to develop a sustainable European Holocaust infrastructure that facilitates new trans-national and digitally enhanced research.

Building on the achievement of the EHRI-1 project, EHRI-2 has been focusing on 'hidden' archives that are not part of larger infrastructures. It has established links with institutions in those parts of Europe that have traditionally been under-represented in international research, especially in Eastern and Southeastern Europe. EHRI has also advanced the digital transformation of Holocaust research by developing new digital methods, and by providing the next generation of researchers and archivists with the skills they need to succeed in the digital age.

In the context of the widely dispersed Holocaust archives, EHRI's integrating agenda addresses an urgent scholarly need. At the same time, EHRI has enormous societal relevance. It is no exaggeration to say that we have reached a turning point in Holocaust remembrance. Before long there will be no survivors left who can testify about their experiences. Their contribution cannot be replaced. But a research infrastructure such as EHRI has a crucial role in making high quality documentation available to researchers and to the public at large. This is a necessary basis for responsible Holocaust remembrance.

Work performed from the beginning of the project to the end of the period covered by the report and main results achieved so far

Networking Activities

Our networking activities have connected fragmented institutions and researchers. The organisation of workshops and conferences have been key means to achieve this. We have held 7 methodological workshops in order to create trans-national and trans-disciplinary communities of experts that can catalyse methodological innovations. 6 regional one-day conferences have enabled isolated researchers, archivists and heritage professionals to connect at the local level, and facilitated their association to EHRI. Two major concluding conferences have finally enabled us to discuss EHRI's achievements at an international level.

The findings of the methodological workshops have been fed into EHRI's training programme which has enabled a new generation of professionals to learn about new methodologies and connect to international networks. In total we organised 10 seminars, attended by 148 individuals. An innovative tutored online course was developed and delivered to 80 participants, while our online programme for self-learning was further enhanced.

Extensive dissemination activities have reached all our stakeholders and increased our audience. EHRI has distributed 17 Newsletters; significantly increased usage of its website; established a committed following on social media; presented its results at 67 external events; and published 21 papers in peer-reviewed outlets.

Finally, we have made significant progress towards the long-term sustainability of EHRI. Most notably EHRI was included on the ESFRI Roadmap 2018 and thus earmarked for implementation as permanent European RI.

Access activities

EHRI has offered trans-national access to Holocaust sources available at 15 institutions. The programme was very successful, and 460 weeks of access were granted to 143 individuals. Feedback suggests that it has succeeded in facilitating trans-national Holocaust research by providing researchers with flexible access to the resources they need.

EHRI offered free virtual access to its Online Portal that unites information about scattered Holocaust archives. We have far exceeded our expectations in terms of the quantity of virtual access provided. By October 2018 we had 1,733 registered users, and we attracted an average of 11,600 sessions per month in the 3rd reporting period. It is particularly heartening that we could significantly increase access from users located in Eastern and Southern Europe.

Joint research activities

We have succeeded in developing new tools, standards and methodologies for the enhancement of data into the EHRI Portal. In particular, we have (i) developed an innovative approach for the virtual inter-linking of physically dispersed collections; (ii) enhanced the EHRI thesaurus; (iii) developed a data integration method that is based on international standards; and (iv) successfully developed a sustainable data integration pipeline.

This work has enabled us to increase the Portal's coverage, and we have added 17 country reports, more than 300 descriptions of archival institutions and more than 150,000 descriptions of archival units. The Portal thus offers an unprecedented overview of scattered Holocaust sources, and is rapidly becoming an indispensable tool for studying the Holocaust from trans-national perspectives.

We have substantially improved the user experience of the Portal. Two usability tests were undertaken, and recommendations for improvements were

implemented. A web-survey with Holocaust archivists led to an enhanced understanding of how their needs can be accommodated in the EHRI infrastructure.

In addition to improving the EHRI Portal, a set of further digital services were developed. The EHRI Document Blog (<https://blog.ehri-project.eu>) has established itself as a space to share ideas about Holocaust-related archival documents, and their (digital) presentation. In total 50 blog posts were published. We have further developed a digital editions platform, and created three online editions.

EHRI has accelerated the digital transformation of Holocaust archives and research. We developed three APIs to the Portal enabling machine-access. We undertook four mini-projects, showcasing how archives can harness digital technologies to enhance their activities. Technical development work was supplemented through the creation of guidelines for archives in areas such as long-term access, preservation and data management.

To enable new digital approaches to Holocaust research, we developed research use cases that can benefit from the application of digital methods. Furthermore, two new online spaces were developed: an online course providing an accessible introduction to the “R” programming language for Holocaust researchers and the EHRI Tool Guides providing researchers with in-depth tutorials on how to use digital tools.

Progress beyond the state of the art, expected results until the end of the project and potential impacts

During the project EHRI has significantly expanded its network and community, integrated local infrastructures, knowledge and expertise, and enhanced its digital platforms. In particular, EHRI has succeeded in engaging ‘hidden’ archives, offering research and training opportunities to junior scholars as well as researchers in Southern and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, EHRI has set new impulses in the digital transformation of Holocaust archives and research, and coupled with its public outreach activities, has made real progress towards enabling digital approaches to the Holocaust that have wide public resonance.

While the advancement of Holocaust historiography is the project’s main impact, it is by no means the only one. By facilitating the integration of small and “hidden” archives into a pan-European network, and by offering opportunities to researchers and archivists in marginal regions, EHRI has contributed to the evening out of capacity gaps between European regions. Furthermore, by amplifying the societal importance of Holocaust research, EHRI will have a lasting impact by ensuring that the lessons of the darkest chapters of Europe’s history will never be forgotten, and that its legacy will continue to guide the future development of peaceful and inclusive European societies.