
**REPORT AND ASSESSMENT OF
JMG/TOLI SEMINAR FOR TEACHERS
"LEARNING FROM THE PAST, ACTING FOR THE FUTURE:
TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST AND SOCIAL JUSTICE" (ATHENS, 4-7 NOVEMBER 2018)**

Report

The Jewish Museum of Greece (JMG), in cooperation with The Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human Rights (TOLI), held a three-day seminar for thirty Greek educators on “Teaching about the Holocaust and Social Justice” in Athens on 5-7 November 2018. It was the second JMG/TOLI Seminar organized in Athens. On the occasion of the opening reception, held on the evening of Sunday 4 November, the JMG, TOLI and the Ministry of Education signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding to establish their commitment in promoting Holocaust education in Greece. The same evening, the participating educators had the opportunity to meet each other, as well as all the representatives of the organizers. Zanet Battinou, the



JMG director, thanked all those involved in the successful organization of the seminar and wished every success to all. The attendees also heard brief addresses by George Kalantzis, General Secretary of Religious Affairs at the Ministry of Education, who stressed the importance of such initiatives in the adverse times we live in; Samuel (Makis) Matsas, president of the JMG, who praised the training offered by the JMG and underlined the great importance of international cooperation. Last but not least, Mark Berez, CEO of TOLI, thanked the Greek Ministry of Education and the Jewish Museum of Greece for the excellent collaboration. Oana Nestian Sandu, international program coordinator at TOLI, also welcomed the educators and expressed a wish for them to be challenged, excited and inspired.

The first day of the seminar included a detailed presentation of the program and its objectives by Oana Nestian Sandu, who stressed the importance of contextualizing the history of the Holocaust within the history of the Second World War, as well as within particular aspects of Jewish history, life and religion. She highlighted the enormous responsibility of the educators and spoke briefly about Olga Lengyel, from Hungary who survived Auschwitz and devoted her life to informing the world about what had happened during the Holocaust and how it relates to the present day. Lengyel authored *Five Chimneys*, which inspired William Styron in the writing of the novel *Sophie's Choice* and the award-winning film of the same name. Nestian Sandu explained how TOLI was



set up to continue her work. During this first session, educators were also able to present themselves and formulate their interests and expectations. Most of them expressed the need to get practical guidance on how to teach about the Holocaust and acknowledged the scale of the almost unachievable goals. In addition, the first day included two extensive lectures on the history of Greek Jewry from the antiquity to modern times, by Professor Maria



Efthimiou and on the persecution of Greek Jewry by Professor Odette Varon-Vassard. Efthimiou discussed extensively on the Jewish presence in the Greek lands from the classical antiquity to the Ottoman Empire and presented the two different Jewish traditions, Romaniote and Sephardic one. Due to illness, Prof. Varon's paper was read by the JMG Director, Zanet Battinou, while JMG Researcher Alexandra Patrikiou answered the educators' questions. Varon-Vassard gave emphasis on Greece's high death toll and attempted a contextualization of the Greek case. The discussion that followed focused on the issue of the fate of Jewish properties, the case of the Bulgarian zone of Occupation and the history of antisemitism. The first day ended with another workshop, conducted by Oana Nestian

Sandu. The workshop focused on the different identities of each person and how extremely difficult it is to enclose each personality under a certain label. The purpose of this workshop was to comprehend how Nazis reduced so many people to just one aspect of their personalities and no one asked them whether they actually adhered to this particular element. It is of crucial importance for us today to realize the intrinsic diversity of any social

group.



The following day the participants had the privilege of listening to Radu Ioanid, director of the International Archival Program of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), who outlined some of the USHMM's work, including its research programs, library and research scholarships, and encouraged teachers to contact the museum



for further information. Then, using gripping photographic material, such as pictures of propaganda editions for children, he spoke about propaganda and its essential role in the Nazi rise to power. He also pointed out, the importance of seeing the Holocaust as a gradual process of particular topical characteristics. Ioannid's lectures and indeed the entire seminar was welcomed by the U.S. Ambassador, Geoffrey R. Pyatt, who spoke about the fundamental right of religious freedom in the shadow of the murderous attack at the Pittsburgh Synagogue. Battinou added to Pyatt's comments some former student's words who had visited Auschwitz to stress the importance of Holocaust education: "They (the victims) would have had children and these children would have become my classmates and my friends. So, the loss of these Holocaust victims is my personal loss".



After the brief break, the educators listened to a section of Sam Nehama's video interview from the JMG Oral History Archive, where he described everyday life in Birkenau, where he was deported with his mother and younger brother, none of whom survived. Afterwards, Alexandros Simha followed, a hidden child from Kavala, who survived in hiding, away from his family in central Athens (Pagrati). The educators were deeply moved by his experience. Eyal Raviv, who runs an Israeli non-profit organization for social justice and human rights spoke about his grandmother who survived in Poland, while her sister and mother were killed in Sobibor and her father had been executed. He talked about his experience as a third generation, who grew up closely with his survivor grandparents. The last

workshop of the day, conducted by O. Nestian-Sandu, focused on different kinds of behaviours in the face of the Holocaust and stressed the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions. She drew a pyramid of alliance and invited educators to think about actions promoting social justice and

categorize them according to their frequency (everyday, often, occasionally). The day ended with an extensive tour of the JMG by Orietta Treveza, JMG museum educator and Alexandra Patrikiou, JMG Researcher focusing on the Holocaust.

The third and last day of the seminar began with a workshop on the use of testimony in teaching about the Holocaust, provided by A. Patrikiou. The educators received four folders. Each folder contained material (maps, photographs, interview excerpts) for a different Holocaust experience (Birkenau extermination camp, hidden in Athens and Thessaloniki and one female resistance fighter). The educators had the opportunity to explore different aspects of the Holocaust experience and prepared a variety of different lesson plans according to their field of expertise. This was followed by a workshop by O. Nestian Sandu on the subject of teaching about human rights. In the practical part of the workshop, teachers worked in groups on specific rights, for example, the right to education, and talked about what the case under Nazi occupation was and what violations of that right took place at that time,



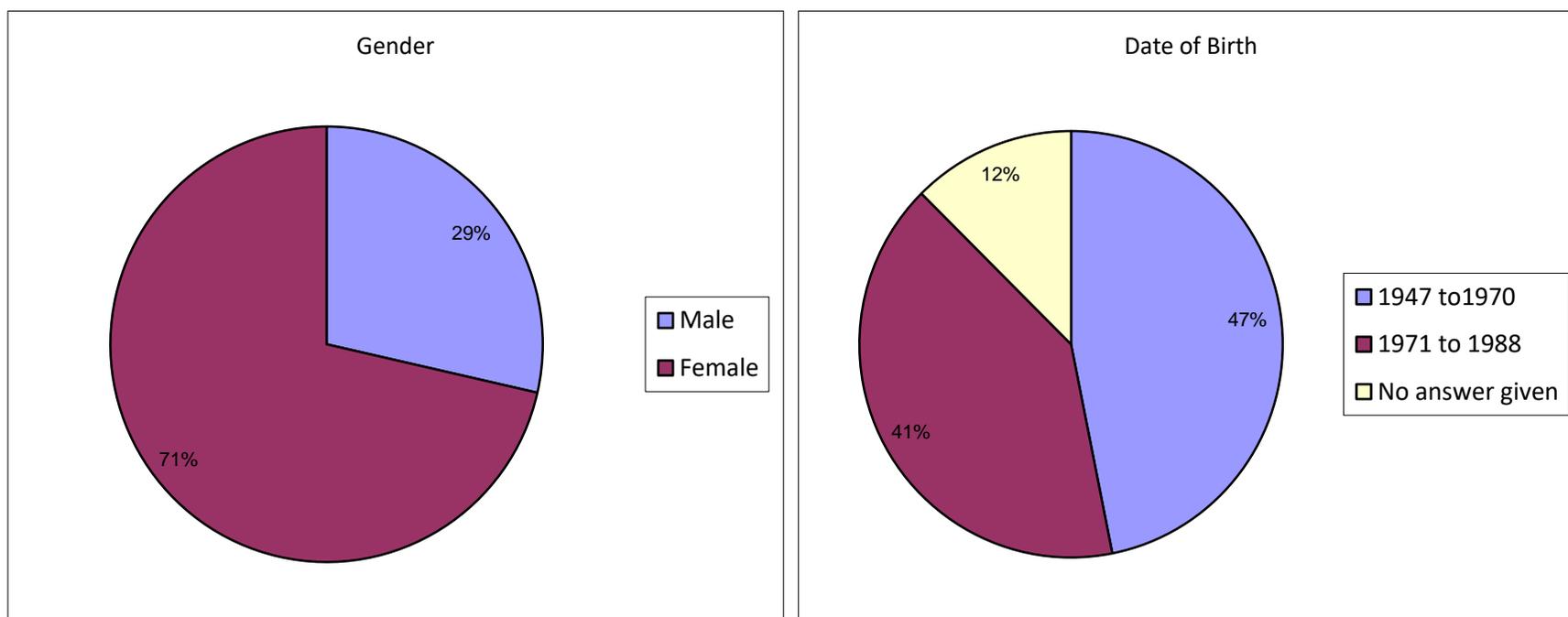
before moving on to a discussion of what the case is today. The three-day seminar wrapped up with the drawing up of an action plan. The educators worked together with partners of their choice and presented their ideas for future educational activities. Following the evaluation, seminar participants, after completing the relevant questionnaires, shared their thoughts and feelings. As a conclusion, they were asked to brainstorm on a specific course of action in the classroom. The experience, constructively shared by all participants, was completed with a farewell dinner at the Old Athens (Palia Athina) restaurant in Athens' Plaka district.

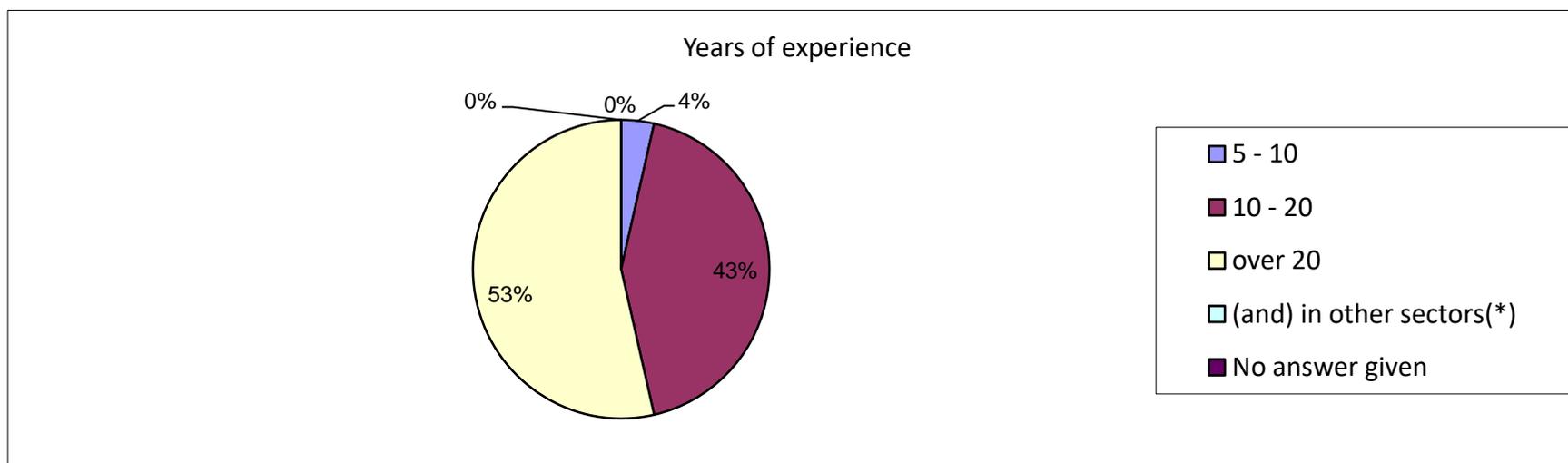
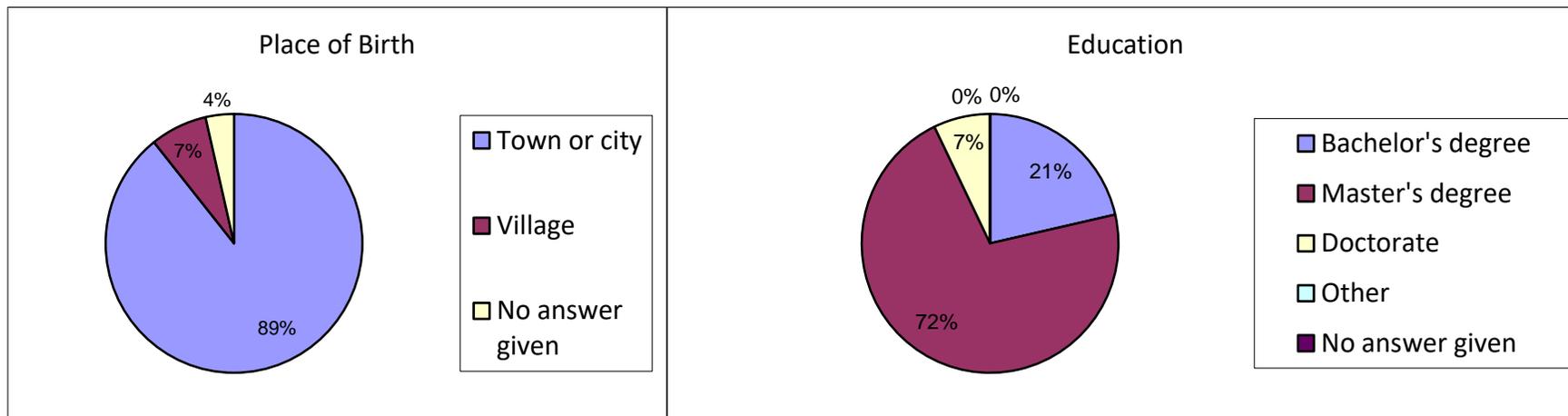
According to the overall assessment, the educators found Radu Ioannid's lectures very enlightening, as well as Maria Efthimiou's talk. As always, the workshops are the strong point of each seminar, since they provide the necessary tools for the classroom. They praised the organization and hospitality as well as the high academic standards. Some asked for even more practical information on specific courses (such as lesson plans) and

even more details on local histories. They applauded the exchange of different perspectives among the participants and the opportunity to meet a survivor in person. Many of them asked for more workshops or at least more time spent on workshops. There were a few who suggested specific themes for future workshops and/or lectures: nazi and fascist propaganda and antisemitism. One mentioned that he/she was not familiar with the emotional and psychological factors and he/she was not sure how those could be dealt with in the classroom. Overall, the Seminar has been deemed a success and worth repeating it at a future date.

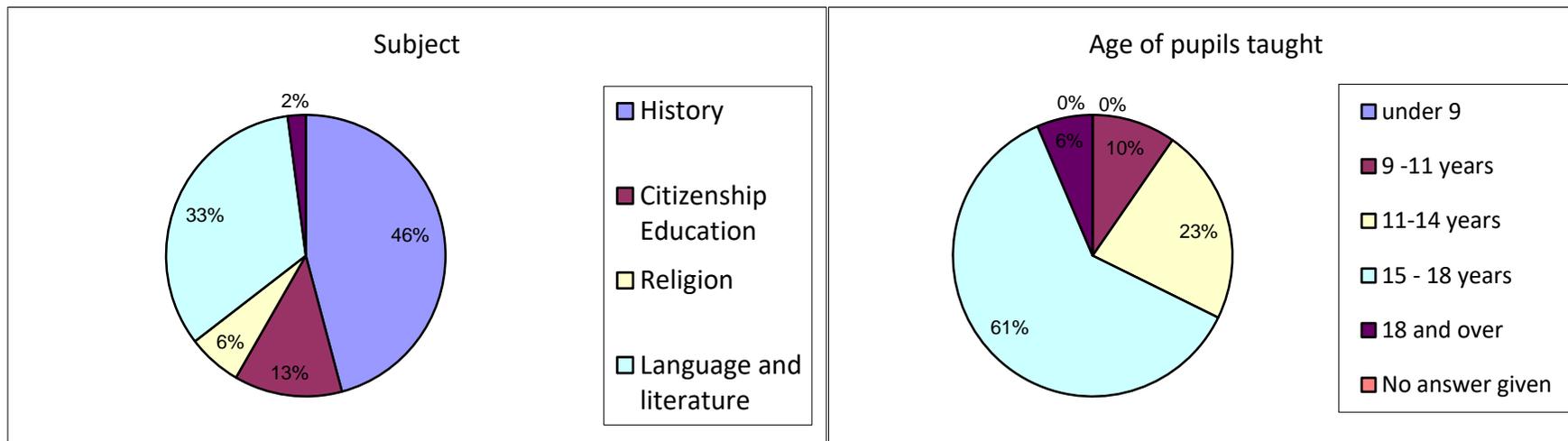


Assessment

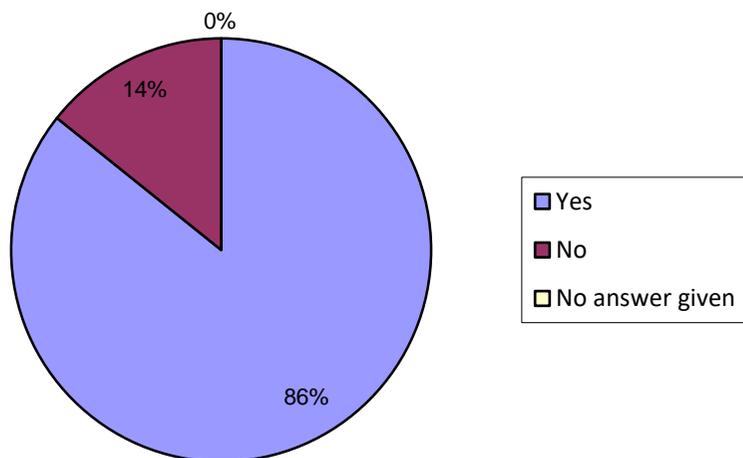




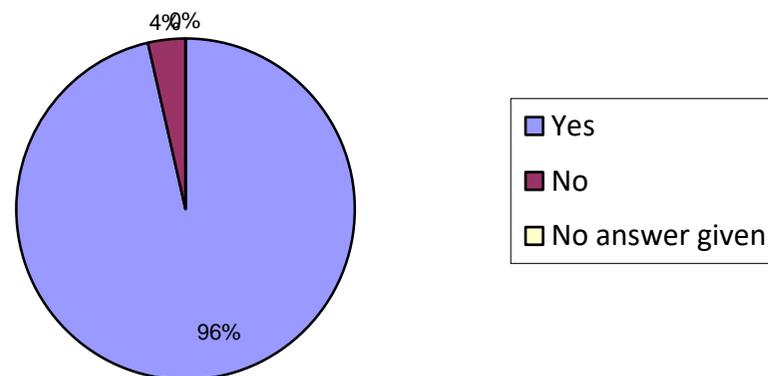
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-Byzantine Music



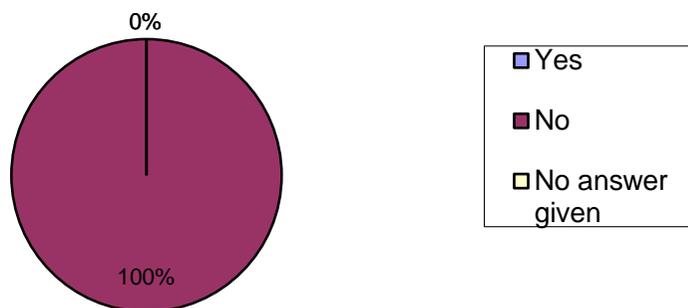
Have you taught about the Holocaust in the past?



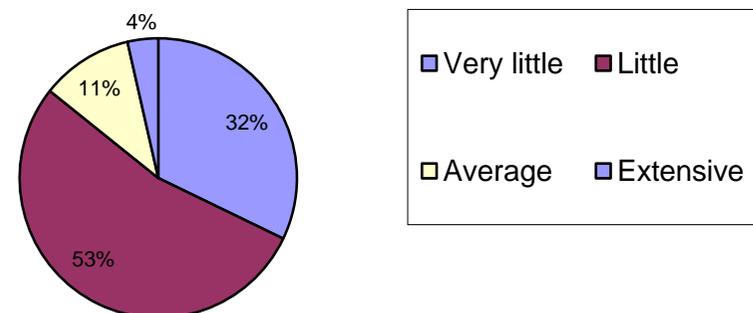
Will you teach about the Holocaust in the near future?



Do you believe that teaching about Holocaust is satisfactory in Greek educational system?



How much knowledge do pupils have about the Holocaust, in your opinion?



Please rate to a scale from 1 to 5 your satisfaction regarding the following aspects of the seminar (1: not satisfied at all, 5: very much satisfied):

