

# CLOSING THE GAPS: A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE ON MEMORY, PREVENTION AND SOCIAL COHESION IN EUROPE

SARAJEVO, BiH

24-25 MARCH 2026

## Context

Across Europe, identity-based violence, hate speech, and historical revisionism are resurging, fueled by racism, dehumanization, and denialism. Despite decades of investment in memorials, commemorations, and education, public memory policies and practices often fail to translate memory into prevention and foster the cohesion, resilience, and peace they were designed to uphold.

This persistence of violence and division reveals critical gaps in current memory policies and practices. Too often memory work is compartmentalized, disconnected from pressing contemporary challenges related to human rights, democratic resilience, and social cohesion. While the imperative of "Never Again" has shaped decades of memory efforts, these initiatives have often fallen short of transforming emotional engagement with past suffering into sustained civic action to prevent future harm.

Moreover, memory practices can inadvertently reinforce existing divisions by centering dominant narratives and focusing narrowly on the suffering of a single group. This often sidelines marginalized histories and perspectives, and ignores the broader, systemic patterns of discrimination and dehumanization that underpin violence. As a result, rather than fostering resilience and cohesion, memory work can risk deepening divisions and leaving societies unprepared to recognize and respond to emerging threats.

Three decades after the Srebrenica genocide, and in a context of renewed mass violence, democratic erosion, and social fragmentation, this conversation would not be more urgent

The [International Coalition of Sites of Conscience](#) (ICSC) in partnership with the [War Childhood Museum](#) (WCM) and the [International Catalan Institute for Peace](#) (ICIP), is hosting "Closing the Gaps: A Multi-Stakeholders Roundtable on Memory, Prevention and Social Cohesion in Europe," that will be held in Sarajevo on 24-25 March 2026.

## Purpose of the Roundtable

This two-day roundtable will bring together civil society actors, grassroots organizations, scholars, and policymakers, working on memory, peacebuilding and violence prevention, and policy-makers to critically assess existing memory policies and co-create recommendations that make memory an instrument of prevention and democratic resilience.

## Objectives

- Identify key gaps and limitations in current memory policies and practices.
- Co-create actionable strategies and policy recommendations to link memory practices with peacebuilding and violence prevention.
- Foster exchange and collaboration between civil society and grassroots actors working on memory, peacebuilding, and violence prevention, and policy-makers

## Key Questions

- How can memory policies better include marginalized histories while avoiding fragmentation or polarization?
- How can an intersectional approach to memory foster cross-community dialogue and cohesion and address major contemporary challenges?
- How can memory policies move beyond symbolic or ritualized memory work to inspire meaningful action that addresses the root causes and risk factors of violence?
- How to integrate memory into anti-discrimination and violence prevention policies and practices?

## Format and Participation

- Location/Date: Sarajevo, 24-25 March, 2026
- Hosts: The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC), the War Childhood Museum (WCM), and the International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP).
- Participants: Civil society actors, grassroots organizations, scholars, and policymakers working on memory, peacebuilding and violence prevention, and policy-makers

## Expected Outcomes

- A report capturing the roundtable discussions and presenting concrete recommendations from the small-group sessions, forming the basis for a Policy Roadmap.
- Enhanced cooperation between civil society actors, grassroots organizations, scholars, and policymakers working on memory, peacebuilding, and violence prevention, and policy-makers in the development and implementation of memory policies and practices.

# AGENDA

Monday, March 23

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Arrival

Tuesday, March 24

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*Location: Europe House, Sarajevo, Maršala Tita 62*

8:30 – 9:00 Registration and Welcome Coffee

9:00 – 9:30 Opening Session

- Welcome remarks
  - Ambassador Luigi Soreca, Head of the EU Delegation and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina
  - Amina Krvavac, Director for Bosnia and Herzegovina, War Childhood Museum Foundation
  - Kristian Herbolzheimer, Executive Director, International Catalan Institute for Peace
- Objectives and overview of the day
  - Silvia Fernández, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

9:30 – 10:00 Keynotes Framing

The keynotes will explore the role of memory as a form of reparative justice and as a tool for cohesion, resilience and prevention. They will invite participants to critically examine the limitations of current memory policies and practices, critically reflecting on where they have fallen short. The presentations will prompt participants to consider why memory work risks fueling competing narratives and polarization, and why emotional connections to past suffering have not consistently translated into meaningful action to prevent discrimination and violence. The keynotes aim to inspire participants to rethink their work, envision new strategies, and foster new connections.

### Keynote Speakers:

- **Hasan Hasanović**, Survivor of the Srebrenica genocide, Author, Head of Oral History Program, Srebrenica Memorial Center (BiH)
- **Mô Bleeker**, United Nations Secretary General Special Advisor on the Responsibility to Protect (Switzerland)

**Facilitator: Ajnura Akbaš**, Research Coordinator, War Childhood Museum Foundation (BiH)

10:00 – 10:50

### Roundtable Discussion I – Mapping Gaps and Limitations

This session will provide a focused examination of the current shortcomings in memory policies and practices. Key gaps to be discussed include the risk of reinforcing dominant narratives, sidelining marginalized histories, and contributing to competing narratives and social polarization; the reliance on identity-based approaches that lead to fragmentation and compartmentalized histories; and the weak connections between memory work and contemporary efforts to address discrimination and prevent violence. The session aims to create a shared understanding of where memory policies and practices fall short, setting the stage for subsequent sessions that will explore new ideas and approaches.

### Speakers:

- **Zilka Spahić-Šiljak**, Academic Director of Feminism and Religion (FER) School, Transcultural Psychosocial Educational Foundation (TPO) and University of Sarajevo (BiH)
- **Emmanuel Achiri**, Policy Advisor at ENAR - European Network Against Racism (Regional-Europe)
- **Dr. Marije Hristova**, Ramón y Cajal Researcher, Department of Anthropology, Institute of Language, Literature and Anthropology (ILLA), Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) (Spain)
- **Shada Islam**, Managing Director, New Horizons Project Geopolitical Strategy Advice and Analysis (Belgium)

**Moderator: Refik Hodžić**, Strategic Communications and Transitional Justice Specialist (BiH)

10:50 – 11:40

### Small Group Discussion I

In small groups, participants will be encouraged to reflect on how their own work or frameworks may unintentionally reproduce the gaps identified during Roundtable I. They will share experiences and examine shortcomings in policies, practices and frameworks, fostering a shared awareness that can guide more inclusive and effective approaches in subsequent sessions.

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11:40 - 12:30	Plenary
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch & Informal Networking
14:00 – 14:50	Roundtable Discussion II – Building Inclusive and Cross-community Memory Policies and Practices

This session will explore how memory policies and practices can become more inclusive, ensuring that marginalized histories are recognized and integrated without contributing to fragmentation or polarization. Participants will examine strategies for designing memory initiatives that go beyond single-identity narratives, acknowledging the multiple, overlapping experiences of oppression, marginalization, and victimhood. The discussion will focus on how an intersectional approach to memory can encourage dialogue, mutual understanding, and collaboration among diverse groups.

**Speakers:**

- **William Blair**, Director of Collections, National Museums Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland)
- **Nikola Kandić**, Head of Local Branch Office-Sarajevo, Regional Youth Cooperation Office - RYCO (BiH)
- **Nayat Karakose**, Director of Programs, Hrant Dink Foundation (Turkey)
- **Sanela Bešić**, Director, Kali Sara – Roma Information Center (BiH)

**Moderator: María Fanlo**, Peace Advisor at the Civil Peace Service (CPS), The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) - Ethiopia (Spain)

14:50 – 15:40	Small Group Discussion II
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Participants will reflect on strategies for making memory policies and practices more inclusive and intersectional. In small groups, they will discuss ways to recognize marginalized histories, and address overlapping experiences of oppression. Groups will identify practical approaches and key insights to share in plenary, informing collaborative solutions and next steps.

15:40 - 16:30	Plenary
17:00 - 18:00	Visit of the War Childhood Museum
19:00 - 20:30	Group Dinner

## Wednesday, March 25

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Location: Europe House Sarajevo, Maršala Tita 62

9:30 - 9:45 Welcome

9:45 - 10:00 Keynote Speaker

- **Alma Mustafić**, Survivor of the Srebrenica genocide, Lecturer and Researcher, Access to Justice, Utrecht University of Applied Sciences (the Netherlands)

**Facilitator: Justine Di Mayo**, Senior Program Manager, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC)

10:00 – 10:50 Roundtable Discussion III – Memory as a Tool for Prevention:  
Linking Memory to Action

This session will explore how historical memory can move beyond awareness and education to become a practical tool for prevention. While memory work fosters understanding and empathy, ritualized or symbolic approaches often fail to inspire meaningful action to address ongoing discrimination and prevent violence. Participants will discuss strategies for translating memory into civic engagement and embedding it in concrete anti-discrimination and prevention mechanisms. Participants will also explore how memory initiatives can be strategically linked to policies and actions that prevent discrimination and polarization.

**Speakers:**

- **Branka Vierda**, Independent Researcher and Educator (Croatia)
- **Yoav Shemer-Kunz**, Political Scientist, Affiliated Faculty - Syracuse University and Co-founder of European Jews for Palestine (France)
- **Edina Bećirević**, Professor of Security Studies at the University of Sarajevo (BiH)
- **Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall**, Deputy Executive Director, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (USA)

**Moderator: Amra Hadžimuhamedović**, Director, Centre for Cultural Heritage of the International Forum Bosnia (BiH)

10:50 – 11:40 Small Group Discussion III

Participants will reflect on strategies for translating historical memory into practical prevention efforts. In small groups, they will discuss ways to connect memory initiatives to anti-discrimination and prevention actions and identify key insights to share in plenary for collaborative solutions.

11:40 - 12:30

Plenary

12:30 – 14:00

Lunch & Informal Networking

14:00 - 15:30

Working Groups - Toward Practical Strategies and Policy Roadmap

- **Working Group 1: Transforming Memory Policies and Practices for Inclusion and Intersectionality**

Participants will work together to identify concrete policy actions that could make memory initiatives more inclusive and intersectional. The group will work to propose actionable models or pilot ideas to embed participatory and cross-community approaches into memory initiatives to promote dialogue, collaboration, and collective responsibility.

**Moderator:** Kristian Herbolzheimer, Executive Director, International Catalan Institute for Peace - ICIP (Spain)

- **Working Group 2: Designing Practical Tools to Link Memory with Prevention**

Participants will work to identify concrete ways memory initiatives can feed into early-warning systems, anti-discrimination policies, and civic engagement strategies. The group will propose actionable mechanisms that connect memory to prevention and will consider ways to measure the impact of memory initiatives on public attitudes, civic behavior, and intercommunity dialogue.

**Moderator:** Teresa Vazquez, Senior Director of Operations, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC)

- **Working Group 3: Establishing Collaborative Spaces for Rethinking Memory**

Participants will focus on identifying concrete steps to establish collaborative spaces where civil society actors working on memory, peacebuilding and violence prevention and policy-makers can jointly design and pilot new approaches to memory.

**Moderator:** Lejla Gačanica, Human Rights Officer for Transitional Justice, UN OHCHR (BiH)

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- 15:30 - 16:30            Plenary and Next Steps
- 16:30 – 17:00            Closing Session
- Closing remarks
- 17:00 - 19:00            Visit of Memory Sites in Sarajevo (Optional)