



„RECALL: A Study of Central European Places of Memory for Collective Remembrance”

2023-1-HU01-KA220-HED-000154286

Module Title: Transfer of the Knowledge - Central Europe - A Crossroads of Cultures and Knowledge (*Topic 11*)

Target Duration: 39 minutes (video) + 15-20 minutes (e-learning tasks)

Target Audience: University students, researchers, and history enthusiasts

This module explores Central Europe as a historical crossroads of cultural exchange, intellectual transfer, and transnational knowledge circulation. Moving from geographical foundations to modern intellectual debates, it demonstrates how the region—situated between the Baltic, North, and Black Sea watersheds—became a zone of encounter rather than a fixed political entity. Rivers such as the Danube, Elbe, Oder, and Vistula did not merely shape landscapes; they structured migration, trade routes, political formations, and cultural interaction over millennia.

The module first situates Central Europe geographically and historically, presenting it as a space defined by diversity: ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and political. From prehistoric migration corridors and the Amber Route to medieval kingdoms and Habsburg imperial integration, learners examine how Central Europe evolved as a layered and interconnected region. Rather than treating it as a static “middle,” the module emphasizes its dynamic function as a bridge between East and West, a space of convergence shaped by both cooperation and conflict.

The second part investigates how the very concept of “Central Europe” has changed over time. From 19th-century geopolitical visions of Mitteleuropa to the totalitarian distortions of the 20th century, and from Cold War marginalization to the intellectual rediscovery of the region by thinkers such as Kundera, Halecki, Szűcs, and Konrád, students analyze how geography became ideology. Central Europe appears not only as territory but as culture, memory, and historical experience—particularly the experience of “small nations” navigating between larger powers.

The third part focuses on concrete examples of cultural and knowledge transfer. Universities, courts, migration patterns, artistic patronage, and intellectual networks facilitated the circulation of ideas across borders. Renaissance humanism entered Poland through Italy and Hungary; scholars such as Copernicus studied in Bologna and Padua; Italian architects reshaped Kraków and Wawel; Silesian and Polish nobility exchanged legal and cultural practices across frontier regions. Universities in Prague, Kraków, and Pécs became nodes of transnational scholarship from the Middle Ages onward. The module further highlights Central European intellectuals—scientists, writers, and political thinkers—whose work transcended national frameworks and contributed to global culture.

Through these examples, learners understand that knowledge transfer was not one-directional. Central Europe was simultaneously a recipient and a transmitter of cultural models. It absorbed Renaissance humanism, Enlightenment reforms, and modern political



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thought, while also producing world-class scholars, Nobel laureates, writers, and philosophers whose ideas reshaped global science and literature.

Finally, the module reflects on how cultural exchange shaped modern identities. From the legacy of the Habsburg monarchy to the exile experiences of 20th-century intellectuals, students examine how cultural memory preserves the idea of Central Europe as both shared heritage and contested destiny. Rather than presenting Central Europe as a closed historical chapter, the module invites learners to see it as an ongoing process of dialogue, translation, adaptation, and reinterpretation.

Overall, the module treats Central Europe not as a fixed center of Europe, but as a historically constructed and continually redefined crossroads—where geography, power, culture, and knowledge intersect.

Primary Goals of the Module:

- Situate Central Europe within its geographical and historical context as a region shaped by migration, rivers, trade routes, and political formations.
- Explain how cultural and intellectual exchange functioned across medieval, early modern, and modern Central Europe.
- Analyze the evolution of the concept of “Central Europe” from 19th-century geopolitical visions to 20th-century intellectual reinterpretations.
- Examine universities, courts, borderlands, and migration as institutions and mechanisms of knowledge transfer.
- Explore the role of Renaissance humanism, educational reform, and scientific innovation in shaping Central European cultural identity.
- Investigate how cultural models were adopted, adapted, and transformed in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech lands.
- Assess the contribution of Central European intellectuals to global science, literature, and political thought.
- Connect historical patterns of exchange and hybridity to contemporary discussions about European identity and cultural dialogue.

EU Key Competences Addressed in This Module:

- **Cultural awareness and expression** – Understanding Central Europe as a shared yet diverse cultural space shaped by artistic, intellectual, and political interaction.
- **Critical thinking and digital literacy** – Evaluating competing definitions of Central Europe and analyzing how concepts such as Mitteleuropa were shaped by political ideologies. Engaging critically with historical texts, visual materials, maps, and intellectual essays to interpret regional identity formation.
- **Social and civic competence** – Recognizing how cross-border cooperation, minority experiences, and cultural hybridity inform democratic values and pluralistic societies.



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Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Describe the geographical foundations that shaped Central Europe as a crossroads of cultures and knowledge.
 - Explain how migration routes, river systems, and trade networks facilitated cultural and intellectual exchange.
 - Define and compare different historical interpretations of “Central Europe,” including 19th-century Mitteleuropa and late-20th-century intellectual reinterpretations.
 - Analyze the role of universities (Prague, Kraków, Pécs) in creating transnational scholarly networks.
 - Identify key examples of Renaissance and early modern cultural transfer in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech lands.
 - Evaluate how borderland interactions influenced religious, legal, and artistic developments.
 - Interpret the careers of selected Central European intellectuals as examples of transnational cultural mediation.
 - Distinguish between political domination and cultural exchange in the history of Central Europe.
 - Assess how exile, minority status, and imperial legacies shaped modern Central European intellectual thought.
 - Reflect on how the history of knowledge transfer contributes to contemporary understandings of European identity and cooperation.
 - Apply the concept of “crossroads” analytically to both historical and modern Central European developments.
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