



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

2023-1-HU01-KA220-HED-000154286

Module Title: The Emancipation of Minorities - Minorities and the Making of Central Europe (*Topic 6*)

Target Duration: 40 minutes (video) + 15-20 minutes (e-learning tasks)

Target Audience: University students, researchers, and history enthusiasts

This module explores how modern nations and ethnic minorities developed together in Central Europe from the late 18th century to today. It presents key theories of nationhood from Anderson, Smith, Hobsbawm, and Gellner, explains the difference between “nation” and “ethnic minority,” and places these ideas within the diverse Habsburg world. Learners look at how established literary languages, print culture, and political movements influenced national programs and, after 1918, new states with large minority populations.

Next, we examine a timeline of Central European events. This includes the rise of nationalism, Austria-Hungary’s dualist compromise and Magyarization, interwar minority regimes, and the impacts of WWII, like the Holocaust, expulsions, and population transfers. We also consider socialist-era assimilation and selective cultural rights, along with post-1989 legal systems shaped by the EU and international standards. Case studies highlight the Czech Lands, including Czech-German rivalry, Roma experiences, and the Květušín school; Hungary, focusing on Danube Swabians and postwar expulsions; and Polish lands, covering diaspora Jewish politics and the rise of political Zionism, including Chovevei Zion.

Finally, the module examines how memory, commemoration, museums, and local efforts, such as the Elek and the Museum of Romani Culture in Brno, reshape our understanding of the past today. It views emancipation not just as a way for minorities to act but also as a responsibility for the majority to confront exclusion, address injustice, and promote inclusive citizenship.

Primary Goals of the Module:

- **Clarify** “nation,” “ethnicity,” and “minority” as modern, political-cultural constructions.
- **Trace** Central Europe’s transition from multiethnic empire to nation-states and the consequences for minorities.
- **Examine** policies shaping minority lives: Magyarization, expulsions/transfers, assimilation, selective cultural rights, and post-1989 protections.
- **Compare** theoretical lenses on nationhood (Anderson, Smith, Hobsbawm, Gellner) and apply them to regional cases.
- **Highlight** minority agency (Roma, Danube Swabians, Jews/Zionist movements) and the ethics of commemoration and redress.





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EU Key Competences Addressed in This Module:

- **Cultural awareness and expression** – Multilingualism, museums, memorials, and minority heritage as civic resources.
- **Critical thinking and digital literacy** – Evaluating memoirs, manifestos, legal instruments, statistics, and public narratives.
- **Social and civic competence** – Rights, inclusion, and responsibilities of majority societies toward minorities.

Learning Outcomes:

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

- Define and distinguish nation, ethnic group, and minority in modern historical contexts, and explain why nations are political projects.
- Summarize and contrast the main theories of nationhood (Anderson’s imagined community; Smith’s ethno-symbolism; Hobsbawm/Gellner’s modernism) and apply them to Central European cases.
- Explain how codified literary languages and print culture underpinned 19th-century national programs in the Habsburg realm.
- Map a timeline from late-imperial pluralism to 1918 state-building, interwar minority regimes, WWII ruptures (Holocaust, expulsions), socialist assimilation, and post-1989 reforms.
- Describe the legal-political status of minorities in interwar Poland and Czechoslovakia and assess why enforcement often failed despite treaties.
- Analyze the Czech Lands case: Czech–German rivalry; post-1945 expulsions; Roma experiences including the Květušín school; and shifting policies from integration to repression.
- Evaluate the Hungarian Danube Swabian expulsions (1946–48) as part of a broader regional pattern, considering causes, methods, demographic effects, and present-day memory work (e.g., Elek).
- Explain diaspora Jewish political options (religious orthodoxy/reform, Bundist socialism/communism, political Zionism) and interpret why Chovevei Zion emerged in partitioned Polish lands.
- Compare assimilationist policies (e.g., Magyarization) with selective minority rights regimes, and judge their social and cultural impacts.
- Identify the roles of diaries, memoirs, and political manifestos as primary sources and critically appraise their biases and aims.
- Assess how expulsions, population exchanges, and postwar “cleansing” reshaped ethnic maps while producing long-term trauma and contested memories.
- Discuss the persistence of multicultural traditions despite homogenization and illustrate how museums and local initiatives (e.g., Museum of Romani Culture) rebuild dialogue.





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- Connect EU and international norms after 1989 to national legal frameworks and evaluate continuing challenges (especially Roma marginalization).
- Formulate an ethical stance on emancipation as shared responsibility: minority agency + majority accountability for exclusion and redress.

The liberation of minorities in Central Europe happened through ongoing discussions between national plans and actual diversity. This journey spanned from the growth of nationhood and the push for assimilation to the traumatic events of the Holocaust, forced migrations, and policies during the socialist era. It continued through legal changes after 1989 and renewed efforts to remember the past. Minority lives reflected and challenged the region's changes.

By examining the experiences of Czech, Polish, and Hungarian minorities—such as Roma stories, Danube Swabian memories, and Jewish political ideas—this module illustrates that inclusion relies on both the actions of minorities and the duties of the majority. Learning these histories helps students see ongoing inequalities, appreciate cultural diversity, and think of real ways to create a fairer, shared citizenship.
