



Evaluation of the Action (D3.3)

BOND

Building tOlerance, uNderstanding and Dialogue across communities



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Executive Summary

The current document presents a comprehensive evaluation, assessing the impact (short- and medium-term) of the BOND Youth Education and Exchange event (T3.3), which took place in Warsaw, Poland, in November 2023. The event aimed to educate youth in Romania, Italy, Hungary and Poland on the history, culture, and heritage of Jewish people in Europe, and strengthen their ability to identify and challenge antisemitic stereotypes, misinformation, conspiracy theories, and prejudices. Through a combination of immersive activities, including field visits, experiential workshops, and cross-cultural dialogue, the program successfully achieved its objectives, leaving a lasting impact on participants and setting a foundation for sustained positive change.

The evaluation demonstrated significant positive shifts in participants' attitudes towards diverse groups, including Roma, Jewish, and Arab communities.

- Roma: Acceptance increased significantly, with average scores rising from 3.2 (pre-event) to 4.6 (post-event), particularly addressing biases prevalent in Romania.
- Jewish: Already high acceptance levels improved further, with scores increasing from 4.0 to 4.2, reflecting sustained positive attitudes.
- Arab: The most substantial improvement was noted here, with scores jumping from 3.5 to 5.0, indicating the program's success in breaking stereotypes and fostering understanding.

The most transformative activities were, according to participants' responses one year later: (1) Field Visits: The POLIN Museum and Warsaw Ghetto tour provided historical context and emotional resonance, linking past atrocities to contemporary issues; (2) Interactive workshops: Sessions on propaganda and discrimination equipped participants with critical thinking tools to analyze and challenge bias; (3) Personal Stories: Testimonies from individuals who experienced discrimination fostered empathy and self-reflection; and (4) Cross-Cultural Dialogue: Interactions among participants from diverse backgrounds facilitated peer learning and broke down stereotypes. A standout moment occurred when, in the last session of the event, the young participants addressed the fact that they learned the importance of knowing how to communicate effectively with diverse groups, in this particular case, with their hearing-impaired peers, emphasizing the importance of inclusive dialogue.

Participants offered the following recommendations to enhance the impact of future activities and events:

1. **Make it inclusive:** Tailor activities to address the specific needs of diverse demographic groups, including participants with disabilities.
2. **Focus on follow-up:** Establish post-event alumni networks to sustain momentum and monitor long-term impact.
3. **Expand the event duration:** Extend the program duration to allow for more in-depth exploration of topics and greater participant interaction.

The BOND Youth Education and Exchange initiative successfully fostered critical changes in participants' attitudes and behaviors, equipping them with tools to challenge discrimination and stereotypes. By combining historical education, personal storytelling, and cross-cultural dialogue, the program has empowered a new generation of changemakers to carry these lessons into their communities and beyond.

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1. Introduction

This evaluation stems from activities conducted within the BOND project, specifically under *T3.3 Youth Education and Exchange*. The document provides a thorough analysis of the short- and medium-term impacts of the youth education and exchange event held in Warsaw, Poland, in November 2023. The primary aim of this task and deliverable (D3.3) was to contribute to one of the project's key goals (objective 3): *to train and mentor youth on the history, culture, and heritage of Jewish people in Europe, while strengthening their ability to identify and challenge antisemitic stereotypes, misinformation, conspiracy theories, and prejudices*. In particular, the event advanced Objective 3.2 by *fostering a transnational alliance of young changemakers across Europe, empowering them to promote a positive counter-narrative and a historically accurate understanding of the Shoah and its lasting consequences in their communities*.

The **BOND Youth Education and Exchange** event, held from November 17–20, 2023, in Warsaw, Poland, brought together 46 participants, including 26 youth and 7 teachers, in addition to the project team and trainers, to deepen their understanding of antisemitism and foster a transnational alliance of changemakers. The program combined interactive sessions, historical explorations, and cross-cultural dialogue to equip participants with the tools to recognize and address antisemitic stereotypes, misinformation, prejudices and propaganda, and discrimination.

Highlights included a guided educational walk through the Warsaw Ghetto, exploring the impact of antisemitism through personal testimonies, and a tour of the POLIN Museum's core exhibition on Polish-Jewish history. Workshops focused on understanding discrimination and developing strategies to combat racism and xenophobia. The event emphasized fostering empathy, critical thinking, and actionable solutions, ensuring participants could carry these lessons into their communities.

The BOND Youth Education and Exchange event received highly positive feedback from participants, who praised its engaging and impactful approach to understanding antisemitism and discrimination. Activities like the Warsaw Ghetto educational walk and POLIN Museum tour were particularly transformative, fostering empathy and historical awareness. Workshops on propaganda and discrimination were lauded for their practical relevance, while cross-cultural dialogue sessions helped participants challenge biases and build connections. Suggestions for extending activity durations and enhancing peer exchanges further highlighted the event's success in empowering youth to address societal challenges.

This report provides an analysis of the baseline and post-event survey results for the BOND project's youth education and exchange activities, focusing on youth participants from Hungary, Italy, and Romania. The findings highlight participants' attitudes toward antisemitism, discrimination, and hatred before and after the program, along with recommendations for future initiatives.

2. Methodology

2.1. Pre- and Post-Event Surveys

Data for this evaluation was collected through structured surveys distributed to youth in three participating countries: Hungary, Italy, and Romania. Surveys were implemented in the respective languages of each country to ensure accessibility and inclusivity. Both pre-event and post-event surveys were designed with a combination of closed-ended questions (e.g., Likert scales) and open-ended questions to measure participants' understanding, attitudes, and behaviors.

A strong emphasis was placed on behavioral changes, as these are considered reliable indicators of long-term impact. The pre-event survey focused on capturing baseline data regarding participants' initial attitudes toward antisemitism, discrimination, and minority groups. For the post-event survey, additional open-ended questions were included to allow participants to share insights on perceived changes, impactful moments, challenges, and recommendations for future activities.

The data collection process involved careful consolidation, cleaning, and normalization to facilitate cross-country analysis. This included translating open-ended responses into English for consistency and ensuring the comparability of responses across countries. This methodology allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of both quantitative and qualitative aspects, capturing the nuanced impact of the program on participants' attitudes and behaviors.

2.2. Limitations

While the BOND project demonstrated substantial positive outcomes, several limitations in the methodology of the evaluation should be noted. First, the post-event evaluation faced challenges with response rates, particularly from some country groups, impacting the comprehensiveness of the analysis. In Romania, for instance, less than half (5/12) of the participants completed the post-event survey one year later. Many of these participants had graduated from high school and were no longer accessible to the teachers or the project team, which limited follow-up opportunities. Consequently, the qualitative data collected from open-ended survey responses has proven to be more valuable for extracting nuanced insights and understanding the broader implications of the program.

The surveys themselves included some complex and abstract concepts, which may have led to misunderstandings or inaccuracies in self-reporting, particularly during the pre-event survey, when many participants had little knowledge or understanding of the issues addressed. Participants with varying levels of education and cognitive abilities may have found certain questions challenging to interpret, potentially influencing the consistency of responses. As the evaluation relied on self-reported data, the possibility of social desirability bias also needs to be acknowledged. Participants might have responded in ways they believed were expected or socially acceptable, rather than fully reflecting their genuine attitudes or behaviors.

The continuity of the evaluation process was another limitation. Initially designed by Zachor (previous consortium partner until spring 2024), the evaluation framework underwent some changes when Polylogos assumed responsibility midway through the project. This transition impacted the holistic design of the evaluation. Notably, post-event responses from Polish and Hungarian youth participants were unavailable due to the withdrawal of their respective organizations, leaving the remaining consortium without access to these participants.

These limitations highlight areas for improvement in future iterations of the program. Enhancing survey design to ensure clarity, improving participant engagement strategies, and maintaining consistent evaluation processes will strengthen the robustness and comprehensiveness of future evaluations.

3. Baseline Findings

The baseline findings from the pre-event survey reveal a complex picture of participants' attitudes toward diversity, discrimination, and antisemitism. While most participants expressed generally inclusive attitudes, significant variations emerged across countries and demographic groups.

3.1. Overall Attitudes

The majority of respondents reported inclusive attitudes toward people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds. For instance, many participants indicated that they would feel comfortable interacting with or sitting next to individuals from diverse groups. However, subtle biases and uncertainties were also evident, reflecting the diverse socio-cultural contexts of the participating countries.

3.2. Country-Specific Insights

Hungary: Participants from Hungary demonstrated high levels of tolerance for cultural diversity, with over 80% of respondents indicating no issues interacting with individuals of Jewish or Roma backgrounds. Despite these results, responses to open-ended questions revealed latent biases and hesitations toward certain minority groups. This suggests that while overt discrimination may be less common, underlying prejudices persist, requiring further educational efforts.

Italy: Italian participants showed strong rejection of discriminatory behaviors, with over 90% indicating that antisemitism is unacceptable. However, a minority expressed discomfort with certain religious practices in public spaces, highlighting a potential area for educational focus. Overall, Italy demonstrated the highest baseline understanding of discrimination, suggesting a relatively advanced level of awareness among participants.

Romania: Responses from Romanian participants displayed a mixed pattern. Approximately 70% expressed inclusive attitudes, but a notable minority reported prejudices against Roma communities. Compared to other countries, Romania exhibited higher levels of uncertainty, with more "neutral" responses. This variability could be attributed to the diverse composition of the group, which included many students from the School for Hearing Impaired Youth (*Liceul Tehnologic Special Pentru Deficienti de Auzi*) in Cluj-Napoca. These participants may have faced additional challenges with reading, writing, and comprehending survey questions, potentially influencing their responses and overall engagement.

3.3. Comparative Trends

Across all three countries, antisemitism was overwhelmingly rejected, reflecting a shared consensus against such forms of discrimination. However, subtle biases against specific ethnic groups, particularly the Roma community, were more prevalent. These findings highlight the need for targeted educational interventions to address these biases.

Baseline attitudes toward different groups varied somewhat across countries:

- **Italy:** Demonstrated the highest levels of acceptance across all groups, showcasing strong baseline awareness of diversity and discrimination issues.
- **Hungary:** Showed moderate acceptance, with notable tolerance levels but some variability between groups.
- **Romania:** Displayed the lowest scores, particularly for Roma, indicating more prevalent biases and/or uncertainties.

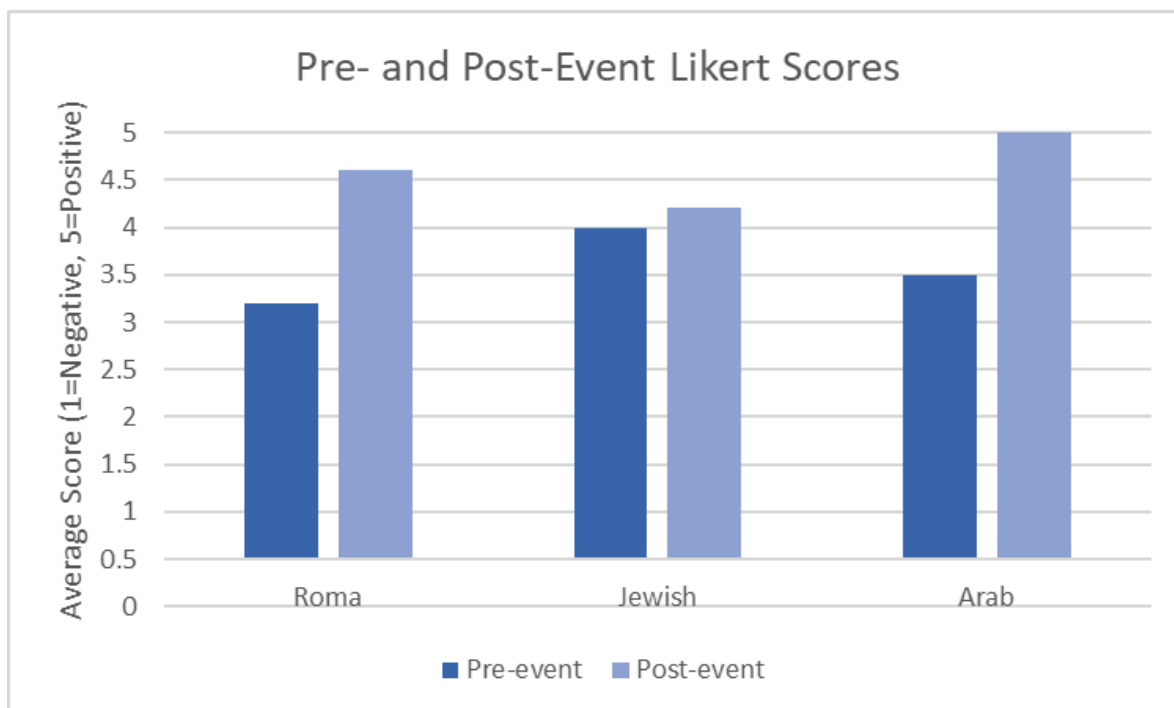
The baseline findings underscore the importance of tailoring interventions to the specific socio-cultural contexts of each country. While overall attitudes were largely inclusive, the variability in responses highlights the need for nuanced approaches to address subtle biases and gaps in understanding. These insights provided a critical foundation for designing impactful activities during the subsequent stages of the BOND project.

4. Post-Event Findings

The findings from the post-event surveys highlight a significant positive shift in participants' attitudes toward various groups, reflecting the profound impact of the program. This chapter explores the quantitative and qualitative outcomes, along with demographic insights and the activities that drove these changes.

4.1. Post-Event Attitude Scores

Based on Likert-scale data, providing average scores (1 = Negative, 5 = Positive) before the event and one year later, the program resulted in measurable improvements in attitudes toward different groups, as depicted in the graph below:



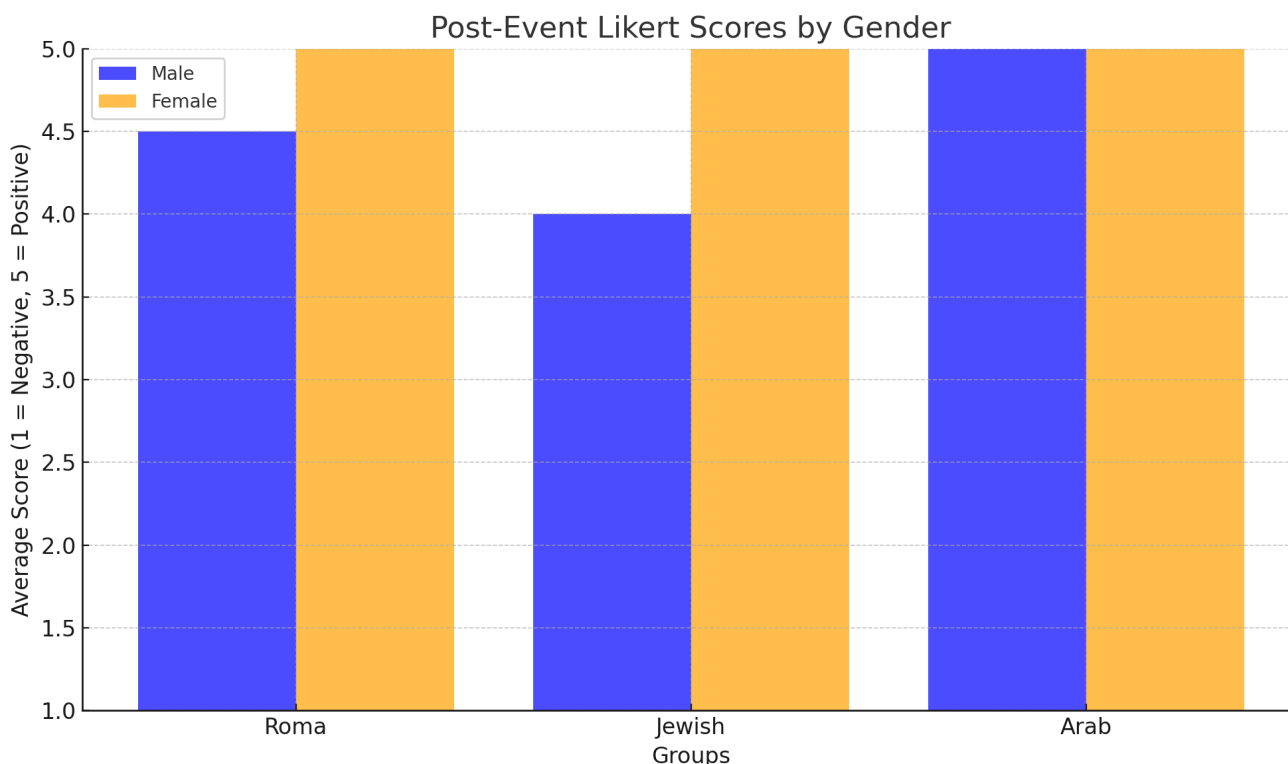
1. **Roma:** Pre-event scores across countries showed variability, with Romania reporting the lowest levels of acceptance. The average score increased from 3.2 (pre-event) to 4.6 (post-event), reflecting greater inclusivity and reduced biases. Participants demonstrated a noticeable decrease in discomfort and prejudice toward the Roma community.
2. **Jewish:** Acceptance levels were high at baseline, particularly in Italy, and were maintained or slightly improved post-event. The average score rose from 4.0 (pre-event) to 4.2 (post-event), indicating sustained positive attitudes.
3. **Arab:** Responses showed the most substantial improvement. Pre-event attitudes were mixed, with some uncertainty reflected in a baseline score of 3.5. Post-event scores achieved a perfect average of 5.0, demonstrating the program's success in addressing stereotypes and fostering understanding.

These changes illustrate a significant shift in inclusivity and acceptance across all groups, underlining the effectiveness of the program's approach.

4.2. Demographic Impacts

Although the sample size was too small to indicate general trends, differences in attitudes by gender and age provide valuable insights:

Gender: Female participants reported slightly higher average Likert scores across all groups, indicating marginally greater acceptance compared to male participants. This suggests that women may be more receptive to interventions fostering empathy and inclusivity.



Age: Younger participants (ages 18-19) reported consistently high scores (close to 5.0 across all groups), while older participants (ages 20-22) showed more variability, with slightly lower scores in some categories.

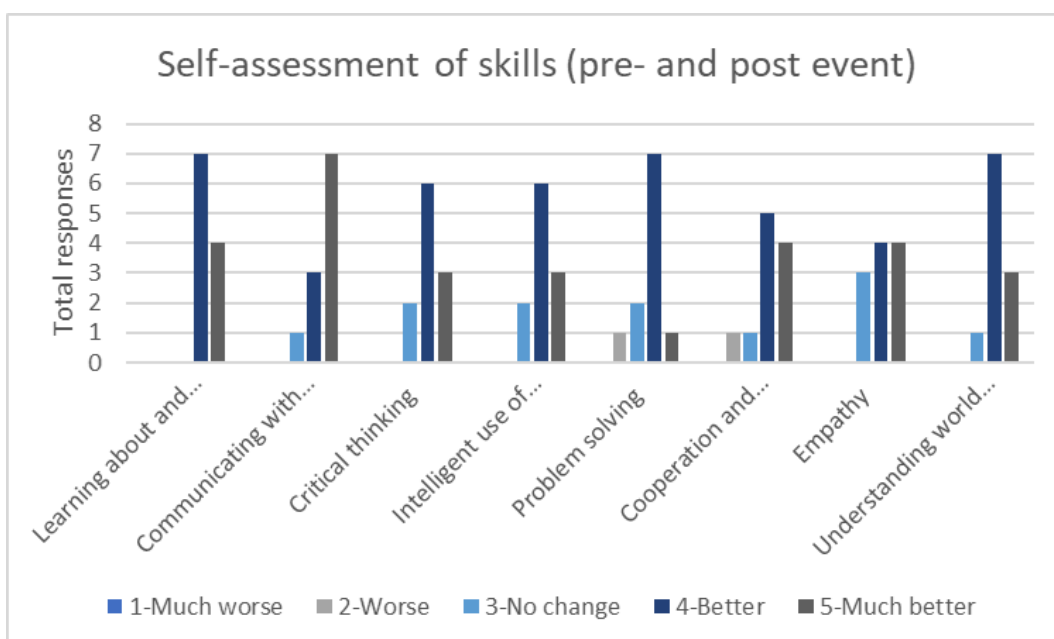
These patterns suggest that younger participants may be more receptive to change, likely due to their formative stage of development and openness to new perspectives. Older participants (ages 20-21 at post-survey stage), who showed more variability and slightly lower scores, may have faced additional challenges, as these were from the School for the Hearing Impaired Youth (*Liceul Tehnologic Special pentru Deficienti de Auzi*), potentially influencing their ability to fully engage with the survey. Future programs could explore targeted approaches to address the specific needs of older age groups, ensuring inclusivity and tailored support to maximize their learning and engagement.

4.3. Development of key skills

The post-event evaluation survey, conducted one year after the event, asked participants to assess the impact of the BOND project on a range of key skills. These skills included:

- Learning about and understanding discrimination
- Communicating with people different from me
- Critical thinking
- Intelligent use of information
- Problem solving
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Empathy
- Understanding world events

The responses, as depicted in the graph below, indicate that the majority of participants reported improvements in all the assessed skills. Specifically, most participants assessed these skills as "better" or "much better" as a result of their participation in the BOND project. A minority reported "no change" for some skills, while one respondent indicated that their problem-solving and cooperation skills had worsened.



While self-assessment is inherently subjective and may vary due to differing interpretations of concepts or personal evaluation standards, it provides valuable insights into how participants perceive their skill development. The responses highlight a strong association between participation in the BOND activities and perceived improvement in key competencies. This suggests that the program succeeded in equipping participants with critical tools to navigate and address discrimination, engage effectively with diverse perspectives, and collaborate in complex environments.

Participants' perceived growth in empathy and understanding of world events further underscores the program's impact. These skills are particularly vital for fostering intercultural dialogue and addressing systemic issues like antisemitism and discrimination. However, future evaluations could benefit from incorporating objective measures of skill development, such as observational assessments or structured tasks, to complement self-reported data and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the program's impact. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the BOND project was instrumental in promoting not only awareness but also the practical skills necessary for participants to engage as informed and empathetic EU citizens.

4.4. Activities Driving Change

The post-event survey identified several activities that participants found most impactful in fostering change and shaping their understanding of antisemitism and discrimination:

- **Field Visits:** The POLIN Museum visit and the Warsaw Ghetto tour were consistently highlighted as transformative experiences. These activities provided participants with critical historical context and evoked emotional engagement, enabling a deeper connection to the issues discussed.
- **Experiential Learning Workshops:** Sessions on propaganda and discrimination equipped participants with tools to critically analyze bias and its societal implications. Through active participation, they developed a more nuanced understanding of how these issues manifest in everyday life.
- **Personal Story Sharing:** Testimonies from individuals who had experienced discrimination, both past and present, inspired participants to reflect on their own experiences and attitudes. This human-centered approach fostered empathy and a commitment to challenging prejudices.
- **Cross-Cultural Dialogue:** Interaction among participants from diverse backgrounds facilitated peer learning and the breaking of stereotypes. A particularly powerful moment occurred during the final session on the last day of the event, when participants overcame their shyness and began learning from one another how to cross boundaries and communicate effectively with young people with hearing impairments. This breakthrough highlighted the importance of thoughtful inclusion and demonstrated how collaborative efforts can foster deeper understanding and connection. The inclusion of young people with disabilities shed light on how present-day systems and attitudes can perpetuate discrimination against minority groups. Many young people without disabilities noted that they had never before considered or been aware of the many ways individuals with disabilities face discrimination, often due to ignorance or a lack of awareness from the majority population. Participants frequently highlighted the importance of engaging with peers from different countries and cultures, recognizing these interactions as a powerful catalyst for personal growth and deeper understanding of diversity.

Participants shared profound reflections on their experiences:

"The best experience was to compare myself with so many other kids and notice how shyness and diversity were hindering us but still managing to talk and joke together. In addition, studying and reflecting on antisemitism has raised in me a new awareness and a desire to spread what I had learned to make others reflect on such important topics" (Female, 18).

"Conviviality with other guys from different cultures, listening to opinions and thoughts coming from other parts of the world, so I was able to broaden my thinking and my way of seeing things" (Male, 18).

"People can be racist (often exaggerated), and we, regardless of disability or ethnicity, have the right to a normal life" (Female, 21).

"The most important thing I learned was that many things and atrocities that happened during the war are not taught in schools" (Male, 18).

"When different people came to tell us stories, we didn't agree with some of them, but we still saw new perspectives" (Male, 18).

These reflections underscore the program's success in fostering empathy, critical thinking, and a commitment to action among participants, ensuring the lessons learned resonate long after the event.

5. Recommendations

The post-event evaluation surveys included questions aiming to capture useful feedback and recommendations from participants. These recommendations, if followed, will ensure the continued success and impact of the BOND project, even after its completion, and improve the effectiveness and impact of future initiatives. Firstly, the integration of historical visits and interactive workshops remains a cornerstone of the program, as these activities effectively connect historical lessons to contemporary issues. Participants consistently highlighted their transformative potential, underscoring the need for their continuation and further enhancement. Additionally, incorporating personal storytelling is highly recommended, as it humanizes complex issues and fosters empathy, allowing participants to relate deeply to the narratives presented.

Structured peer dialogue, in particular among youth from different countries and backgrounds, also emerged as a critical component, encouraging participants to share and reflect on diverse perspectives. Expanding opportunities for such discussions will likely deepen the learning experience and strengthen connections among participants. Extending the program's duration was highlighted by a great majority of participants to be another key improvement in future programs, as illustrated by the example feedback below:

“Maybe an improvement would be to extend the stay, maybe make it last 2 weeks. Because it was an experience that I liked so much that I didn't want to go home anymore and that I will always carry in my heart” (Female, 18).

Extending the duration of the event in future youth education and exchange programs seems particularly relevant for fostering a nuanced understanding of such complex issues like antisemitism and discrimination, and achieving lasting change in attitudes and behaviours. The participants' feedback also highlighted the need for continued and scaled up initiatives educational initiatives addressing these topics:

“Extend the project to more countries and children!” (Male, 18).

To sustain the program's momentum, developing follow-up initiatives is essential. Establishing alumni networks and continuing to encourage local action projects, such as the *BOND Youth Multipliers' Micro-Projects (D3.4)* will help reinforce the lessons learned and ensure their application in participants' communities. Broadening the program's inclusivity by addressing intersectional issues such as gender, disability, and socio-economic disparities will also enhance its reach and impact. Finally, implementing long-term impact assessments will provide valuable insights into the program's effectiveness over time and guide future iterations. These strategies will collectively ensure that the BOND project continues to foster meaningful and lasting change, far beyond its duration.

6. Conclusion

The **BOND Youth Education and Exchange event** (T3.3) has proven to be a meaningful and transformative initiative, leaving a lasting impact on its participants. Through a combination of immersive field visits, engaging workshops, personal storytelling, and cross-cultural dialogue, the program succeeded in fostering empathy, critical thinking, and a heightened awareness of antisemitism and discrimination among young people from diverse backgrounds. Participants' reflections vividly illustrate the program's ability to inspire personal growth and commitment to social change.

One of the key successes of the program was its ability to connect historical narratives with present-day issues, making the lessons of the Shoah relevant and urgent. Activities such as the POLIN Museum visit and the Warsaw Ghetto tour offered not only historical context but also emotional engagement, creating a profound understanding of the consequences of prejudice and hatred. These experiences were further enriched by workshops that equipped participants with practical tools to identify and address bias, as well as by personal testimonies that brought abstract concepts to life.

Cross-cultural interactions were particularly impactful, with participants consistently highlighting the importance of engaging with peers from different countries and backgrounds. The inclusion of young people with disabilities added another layer of depth to the discussions, emphasizing the intersectionality of discrimination and the need for inclusive approaches to social justice. These dialogues not only broke down stereotypes but also fostered a shared commitment to fostering a more inclusive society.

Despite the program's many achievements, it also faced limitations, such as variability in participants' prior knowledge and challenges related to survey design and continuity. These limitations, however, provide valuable insights for refining future iterations of the program, ensuring that it becomes even more effective and inclusive.

The BOND project has laid a strong foundation for a transnational alliance of young changemakers, empowering participants to act as multipliers of positive counter-narratives and historically accurate understandings of the Shoah and its consequences. As participants carry these lessons into their communities, the program's ripple effects are likely to extend far beyond the immediate event, fostering long-term change and a deeper commitment to combating antisemitism and all forms of discrimination.