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**Guidelines for supporting local Holocaust research and archive networks**

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Abstract (for dissemination)	<p>In the context of stimulating the development of local networks in places where practitioners often work in isolation and have insufficient access to expertise and resources, EHRI plans to support the local challenges of archives and researchers in the field of access to and use of Holocaust documentation by establishing a (Mobile) Experts Lab. The Lab will offer services to various institutions and will rely on a variety of experts from EHRI partner organisations, from various countries and disciplines.</p> <p>This deliverable outlines the work done so far in establishing the first phase of the Lab, i.e. determining the needs and priorities of potential users, assembling a portfolio of services (including modes and methods of delivery), and developing a marketing strategy.</p>
Management Summary	n/a

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## 1 Introduction

The development of international communities of experts has played a central role in EHRI since the start. EHRI made great advances in connecting international experts with regard to Holocaust documentation from a large range of areas: collection management, preservation, conservation, cataloguing, and access.

The focus of WP4 “Localisation and capacity building” lays on deepening and enhancing this emerging international collaboration. WP4 particularly focuses on stimulating the development of local networks in places where practitioners often work in isolation and have insufficient access to expertise and resources. Thus, priority is given to geographical areas and archives where there is less knowledge in the handling of Holocaust documentation, and places where specialists have fewer opportunities to meet their peers in Europe. This can, for example, be the case for archives in Southern and Eastern Europe, smaller archives, as well as for archives that are not devoted to the topic of the Holocaust, or where the staff only has limited knowledge about this specific field.

By fostering an exchange between emerging local networks and international experts, WP4 contributes to local capacity building and increases the understanding of the challenges that Holocaust experts face in different local settings.

Hence, WP4 employs a variety of tools, such as workshops, seminars, a (mobile) experts’ lab, communication networks, online publications and more.

## 2 Support local Holocaust Research and Archive Networks

Task 4.2, “Support local Holocaust research and archive networks and develop an EHRI ambassador network and an EHRI Experts Lab”, plans to leverage EHRI’s experience as a body that brings together experts from various disciplines and various countries to support the local challenges of archives and researchers in the field of access to and use of Holocaust documentation. This support – based on the tools developed by EHRI and on the expertise of EHRI partners – can be tailored to specific local needs and priorities. Preference will be given to geographical areas and archives where up-to date knowledge in the field of Holocaust documentation may be lacking, and to places where experts have fewer opportunities to be exposed to their peers in Europe.

### 2.1 EHRI (Mobile) Experts Lab

In order to provide this support, this task will establish the first phase of the EHRI Experts Lab, which will rely on a variety of experts from EHRI partner organisations, from various countries and disciplines. In the first stage, we will develop a work methodology, a portfolio of services, and a marketing methodology. The Experts Lab will work in coordination with the WP9 Data Integration Lab.

## 2.2 Methodology for Establishing the Experts Lab

### 2.2.1 Mapping Grass-Roots Needs for Expanded EHRI Services delivered by the Experts Lab

In order to better understand the needs and preferences of current and future EHRI users for services that will be provided by the Experts Lab – as well as the mode in which these services will be delivered – a request to participate in a survey was disseminated in May 2021 to institutions, organizations and/or persons, using the contact list of contributors to the EHRI Portal (containing over 1,900 email addresses) as well as supplementary lists provided by work package members. The invitations to participate in the survey were sent in 10 languages. (It should be noted that the survey was also utilized by T4.1 to determine preferences for peer groups of experts.)

We received 185 responses from 22 countries, mostly from Europe, with the highest representation from Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy. Non-European participants were from Argentina, Canada, Israel and the USA.

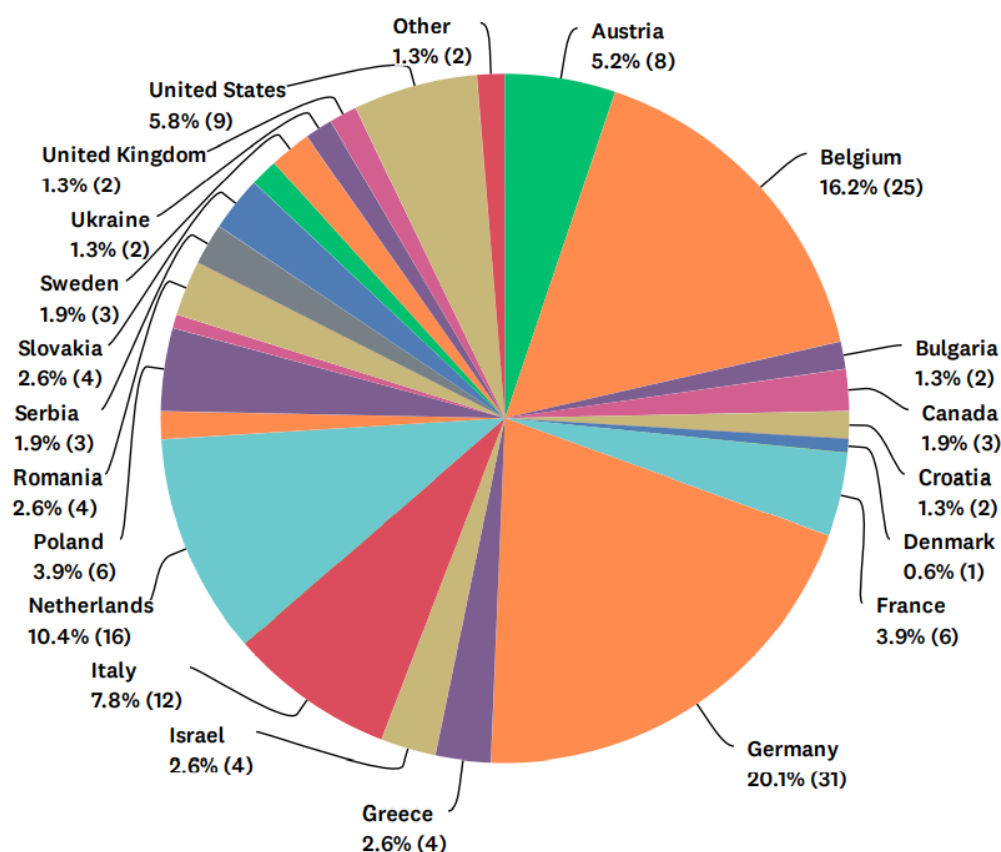


Figure 1. Countries represented in the survey

In regard to institutional affiliation, over two-thirds of the respondents were from conventional archives. Other respondents were from libraries, museums, research institutes and memorial sites. About 4.5% identified as micro-archives.

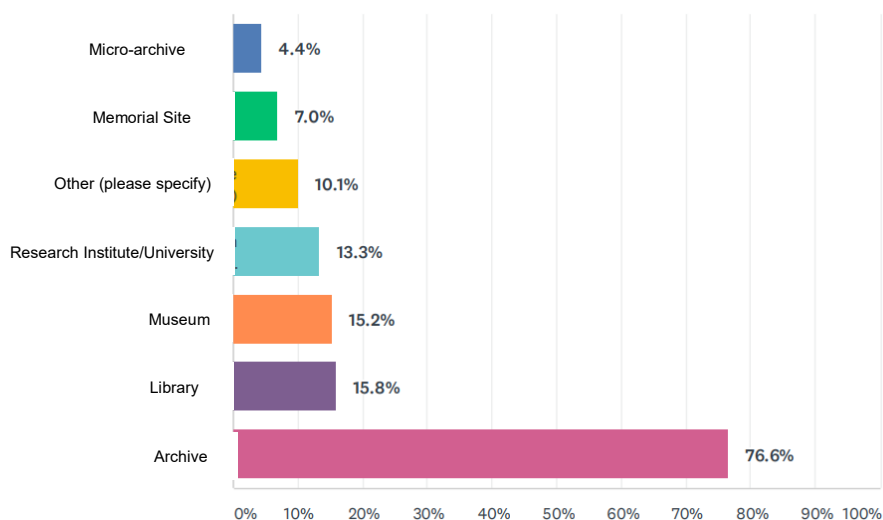
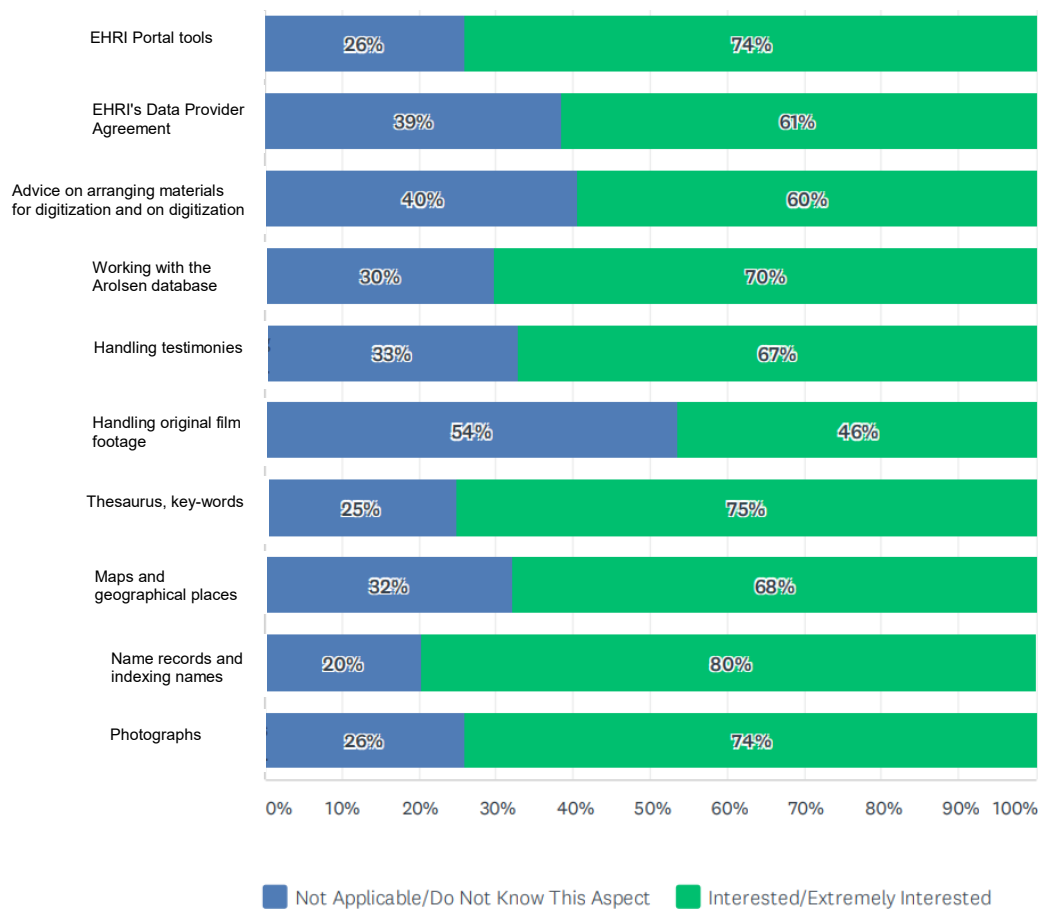


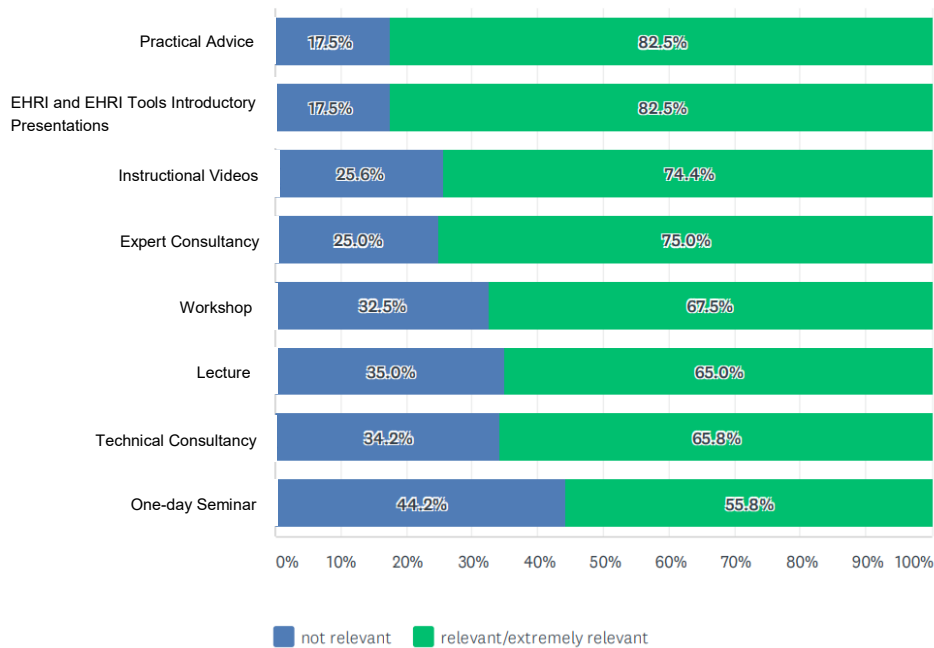
Figure 2. Institutional affiliation (note: some respondents selected more than one category)

The survey questions relevant to this task were as follows:

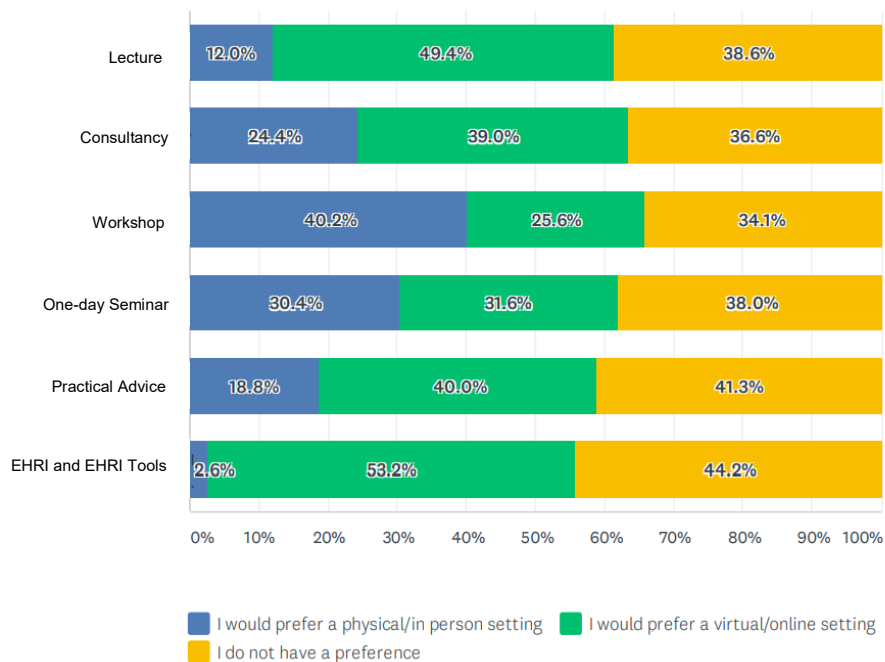
1. For which of the following aspects would you/ your institution be interested in receiving services from EHRI? (feel free to check and rate multiple options)



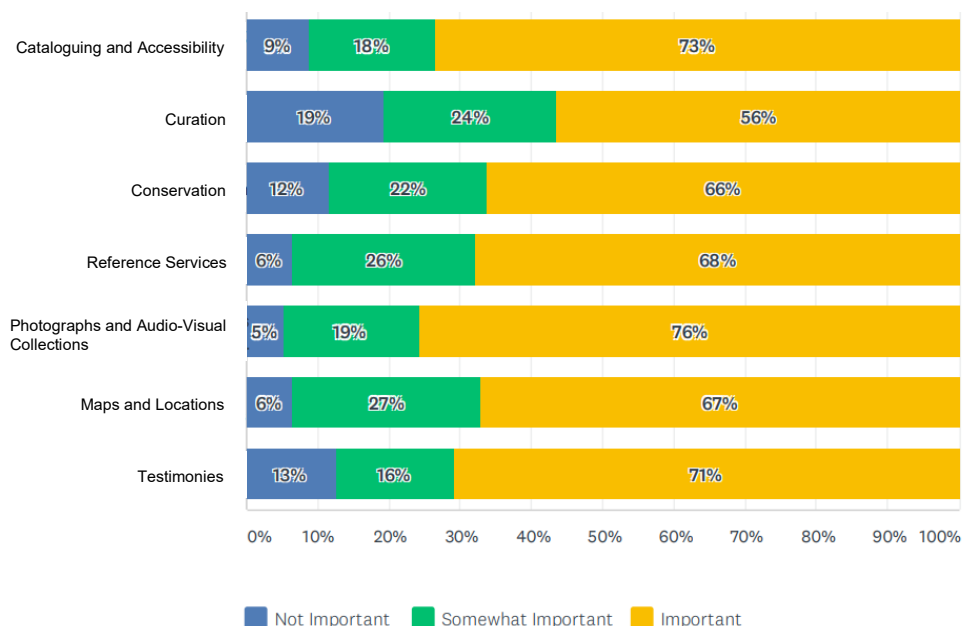
2. What is the nature of the service that you/your institution would like to receive?  
Please rate how relevant for you are the different services.



3. If you had an option between a physical/in person vs. an online/virtual setting, what would be your preference for the following services?



4. How would you evaluate the importance of an ongoing/long term connection with Experts/Peers in the following fields?



We can conclude from the survey that:

- About 70% of respondents believed that it is important for them to have an ongoing/long term connection with experts and/or peers in a number of professional fields
- 40-50% of respondents showed a preference for an online/virtual setting for lectures and practical advice consultancy
- 30-40% prefer a physical/in person setting for day seminars and workshops

Although the current Covid-19 situation worldwide confines us to the virtual world, it is important to take these preferences into consideration when organizing our activities in the coming years.

### 2.2.2 Portfolio of Services to be Provided by the Experts Lab

Following analysis of the survey results, a list of 10 services was compiled, along with the preferred method for conveying the service:

	Expert Lab Services
1	Name records and indexing names (methodological consultancy, practical advice, lecture)
2	Thesaurus, key-words (methodological consultancy, practical advice, lecture)
3	EHRI Portal tools (introductory presentation)
4	Handling of Photographs (methodological consultancy, practical advice, lecture)
5	Working with the Arolsen database (consultancy, practical advice)
6	Maps and geographical places (methodological consultancy, practical advice, lecture)
7	Handling Testimonies (consultancy, lecture)
8	EHRI's Data Provider Agreement (introductory presentation)
9	Digitization and advice on arranging materials for digitization (consultancy, practical advice)
10	Handling original Film footage (consultancy, lecture)



Additionally, we have begun to compile a list of EHRI partner institutions and individuals at each institution who will be able to provide each service.

The following are brief descriptions of the services to be offered:

1. **EHRI Portal tools:** Data integration in the EHRI portal can occur in two different ways: manually and (semi-)automatically. While for the manual fashion a user-friendly interface is provided, for the (semi-)automatic approach technical knowledge is required preventing non-technical users to explore its advantages (namely, broader ingestion capability and sustainability of the connection). With this barrier in mind, in WP9, a data integration lab was created to surpass technological difficulties and help institutions in their data integration endeavours. Therefore, in cooperation with WP4, the data integration lab will give seminars and workshops that can introduce the benefits for institutions of using the existing (semi-)automatic data integration tools in the EHRI portal, while also giving technical training and support for IT fellows working in the mentioned institutions.
2. **Handling photographs:** Pre-war, wartime and immediate post-war Holocaust-related photographs are important historical resources for both research and visual commemoration. Consultancy will be offered regarding research methodology for determining persons, dates, places, events, etc., best practices for cataloguing, and recommendations for providing accessibility and aiding researchers, educators, the media and the public.
3. **Name records and indexing names:** Name records are the digital expression of biographical data of specific persons as registered on and extracted from specific sources. Names indexing is the process of deciphering and extracting the data items from the specific source and entering them into the different fields of the name record. The challenges of correctly deciphering, recognizing and interpreting the data, as well as the choice and assignment of the data items to the suitable fields of information of the name record will be discussed and elaborated upon.
4. **Thesaurus, key-words:** In order to expand the search capabilities and indexing of the collections hosted in the EHRI portal various thesauri were developed in EHRI 1 and 2. These thesauri offer a controlled vocabulary of terms that can be used to identify entities in an unambiguous way while also offering support for multilinguality. In this sense, the expert group for this topic will deliver training in the use of these vocabularies, consultancy about the underlying technologies (RDF, SKOS, etc.) and further development and experimentation for the different use cases that targeted institutions could demand.
5. **Working with the Arolsen database:** Several support services are at disposal for researchers and other interested persons who want to learn how to best use the Arolsen Archives' database. These support services are available as video introductions, online tutorials, face-to-face consulting sessions, workshops, and needs assessment to evaluate if a remote access to the comprehensive online-archive or research support through the reference service or tracing team would be most suitable.
6. **Digitization and advice on arranging materials for digitization;** Consultancy will be provided in the selection and analysis of collection digitization, including the prioritization of items for digitization, selection of the digitization method appropriate for each item, proper storage, as well as best practices for archival description of digitized collections.
7. **EHRI's Data Provider Agreement:** Institutions whose collections descriptions are integrated in the EHRI-portal are asked to sign a content provider agreement with EHRI. An introductory presentation will be offered in which the usefulness and importance of this content provider agreement will be explained. The different articles of the agreement will be presented and discussed and participants will have the opportunity to ask more specific questions.

- 8. Handling testimonies:** Managing testimony collections involves integrating testimonies into the archival database, attaching metadata and descriptions, database management and quality control, as well as providing access to testimonies via user interface. The interface features and design determine its effectivity as a means of tracing relevant testimonies. Services will be provided for those wishing to know more about techniques of digitization and storage, new methods in cataloging, issues of privacy and publication rights, technological issues in making testimonies accessible online and interconnectivity with other databases.
- 9. Maps and geographical places:** Places names or “toponyms” can refer to political/administrative entities (country, district, town, village, street) or to geographical features (mountains, rivers, forests). In the context of the Shoah, they can also refer to specific geographically based entities/sites (Dachau Camp, Ponary Forest). All these can be addressed from a historical perspective (different names in different time periods) or from a linguistic one (different names in different languages; official names as opposed to colloquial). Proper recognition and handling of toponyms will be discussed together with bibliographic considerations, including the use of maps and atlases.
- 10. Handling original film footage:** Holocaust-related archival film footage documents pre-war Jewish life and the fate of the Jews during the Second World War and, to some extent, in its aftermath. These materials – propaganda films, amateur films, documentary films, promotional films etc. – captured events at the time of their occurrence. Consultancy will be provided on how to conduct comprehensive research to determine dates, places and events and, in some instances, identifying situations and people, in order to ensure accurate cataloguing and descriptions.

The portfolio will include the list of the services offered, brief descriptions of the services, the method of delivery (presentation, consultancy, lecture, written guidelines, etc.), and the names of the experts who will provide the service.

### 2.2.3 Marketing Strategy

In cooperation with WP2, an announcement will be posted on the EHRI website that will include a description of the Experts Lab and its services, the portfolio of services, various modes of delivery, and contact details. EHRI partners will be asked to post announcement on their sites, with links to the EHRI website announcement.

Additionally, an informative notice will be disseminated via relevant EHRI contact lists. Recipients will be requested to disseminate the information among colleagues and peers in the various regions and countries.

Requests for specific services will be received by a designated member of T4.2, who will register the requests, confer with the relevant experts regarding the actual dates and modalities of delivering the services, and arrange for the services with a select number of clients.

## 2.3 Conclusion

The conceptual phase of the establishing of the Experts Lab is near completion. Once we have populated the list of the experts and completed the definition and outline of all the proposed services, we will begin marketing the Experts Lab, with the intention of providing services and support to several institutions each year, with preference, as mentioned, to geographical areas and archives where there is a lack of knowledge and experience in various aspects of Holocaust documentation.