



Romanian
Chairmanship
2016

Message of the Romanian Chair Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu at the Opening of the Educational Programme "2 Days Ambassador"¹

Bucharest, 5 April 2016

Thank you for your invitation to speak in the opening of this educational programme launched by the Lauder-Reut Educational Complex and I would like to extend my congratulations for the continuous effort in bringing together, every year, diplomats and students to find explore the intricate world of diplomacy.

I would particularly like to thank the Chamber of Deputies for their generosity in hosting such a unique event developed in the field of public policies in our country.

As Chairman-in-Office of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, I welcome the launch on this occasion of the book on the biography of dr. Felix Zandman, a Holocaust survivor, whose dramatic, but edifying existence inspired young people from across the globe.

I would like to thank Mrs. Ruta Zandman for being here with us today and sharing the tenacity and the vision of the scientist, which he left as testimony of the victory of life over darkness, hatred and intolerance.

Holocaust education is one of the main topics of our IHRA Chairmanship and we enjoy the full support of Romania's President, of the Parliament and of the Romanian Government to promote this objective nationally, regionally and internationally. This is a clearly stated message on the occasion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day and it will also be an important topic of the debates of the IHRA Plenary that will take place in May at Bucharest.

The European history shows us that one of the most horrendous illnesses that troubled our continent had been **anti-Semitism**. Remembering the tragedies of the Holocaust, we ask ourselves what could be more hideous than finding anti-Semitic views mixed among extremist or intolerance messages in the public space, in the media and social media.

I find it highly important that the launch of this book as well as of this youth education programme takes place at the Parliament. Politicians, in particular MP's, have a huge responsibility towards being the first to taking a stand, to keeping on the public agenda the value of responsibility, to showing young generations that tolerance towards hatred is not accepted and that nothing can justify such a perverted tolerance.

But the most appropriate answer to such challenges, the essential answer to the democratic cohesion and health of our society is education, a deeper, a more honest and a more responsible education.

Education is the most effective tool to protect nations against ignorance, intolerance and indifference.

Education is the common platform that our society can use so that each pupil's, each student's and each member's personal ideal/interest can meet.

¹ The program '2 Days Ambassador' is an annual program developed by Lauder-Reut Educational Complex Romania in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania. The purpose of this program is to teach the youngsters about the role of diplomacy. At the opening ceremony, which was attended by the IHRA Chair, a book by dr. Felix Zandman was launched, *This is never the end* (Niciodata nu esti pe ultimul drum).

Let us not hesitate in using education in schools, at home or via the mass media, so that every citizen becomes more responsible and more aware of the threats posed by bigotry, hatred and anti-Semitism.

Above all, the greatest danger in advancing on the democratic path is indifference. This is why I would kindly ask you all to exercise our duty in encouraging the young people in never being indifferent. I am convinced that by denouncing every form of extremism, intolerance, xenophobia and anti-Semitism is a greater responsibility than an isolated act of courage and such conduct concerns our whole society.

The book we launch today teaches us not only about the tragic consequences of indifference and hatred, but it also sends a more meaningful message, namely that individual decisions that made the difference between life and death during the Holocaust can also make the difference between life and death nowadays. Nothing can justify the lack of responsibility in making decisions and personal choices, particularly when they are detrimental to the dignity and life of those around us.

Anyone who is exposed to an episode of the Holocaust tragedies finds out that nothing can be more dangerous than children's suffering, the moments of horror in front of death. This reminds of what Norman Manea used to write, who, at the age of 9, when his family got deported to Transnistria, would see himself as an old man. So are the dramatic stories of Mr. Liviu Beriş, who is now the Chairman of the Association of the Holocaust Survivors Romanian Jews. Such dramatic biographies must not remain simple acts of historic research or academic considerations. They need to be brought into the light of public knowledge, first via public television, and also via other media or social media channels, as part of a responsible policy, able to protect us against the temptations of ignorance and denial.

Felix Zandman's life is a message to dare to make greater things without fear. It is a call to overcome our doubts and despair and, above all, not to be overwhelmed by the threat of hatred.

Let us not fall before this old demon, anti-Semitism and intolerance. Even though they will probably still last, it is our duty not to let it poison the mind and soul of the young and of the life of our society.