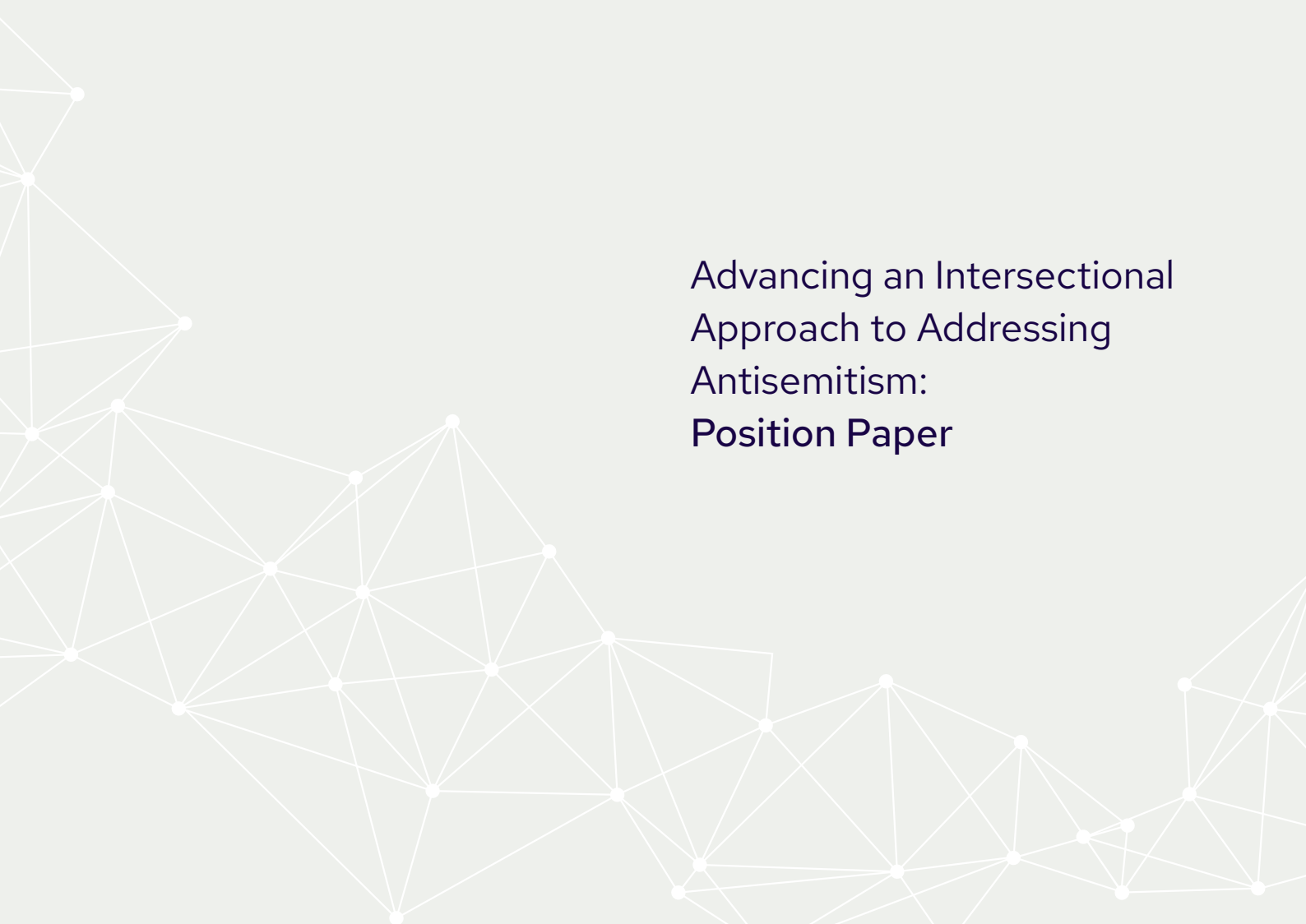


European Network
for Countering
Antisemitism through
Education

E A E
N A E
C T E

Advancing an Intersectional
Approach to Addressing
Antisemitism:
Position Paper



Advancing an Intersectional
Approach to Addressing
Antisemitism:
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A Position Paper for the ENCATE Network



Context and Intention

This position paper is intended as a guide for ENCATE, the European Network for Countering Antisemitism through Education¹, to explore how to foster an intersectional approach to countering antisemitism through education. ENCATE is a European network of civil society organizations with expertise and experience in education against antisemitism and other forms of discrimination active in diverse countries and contexts.

The nature of antisemitism is complex, influenced by regional histories, global events, and social dynamics that make a one-size-fits-all approach insufficient. Therefore, our intention is not to advocate for any singular viewpoint or reality but rather to explore antisemitism's multiple dimensions in a nuanced, inclusive manner, as well as how it is understood and addressed within an intersectional framework.

This paper acknowledges that our reflection here is exploratory rather than exhaustive, and we encourage organizational and institutional efforts to deepen this work.

Positionality and Representation

The concept of positionality is essential in intersectional theories. Positionality refers to the social and cultural context that shapes an individual's perspective and understanding, including factors like race, gender, class, and other aspects of identity. It acknowledges that all knowledge is constructed from a specific position within social power dynamics, which affects what we perceive and interpret.²

We recognize that, as a network of educators and social justice advocates, we bring unique identities and perspectives to this discussion. Our positionalities influence how we interpret and address antisemitism, and our analysis is shaped by our backgrounds, ideologies, and experiences. An intersectional approach requires a reflection on our own positionalities, understanding that the conversation could take various forms based on the diversity of those participating.

Understanding Antisemitism as Racism: Contextual Relevance

There is ongoing debate regarding whether antisemitism should be classified strictly as a form of racism or not. In some educational and social justice spaces, framing antisemitism as a type of racism can help situate it within larger systems of inequality while other contexts highlight the unique qualities of antisemitism, which may be inadequately captured by conventional definitions of racism, particularly given the diversity of Jewish identities.

For this paper, we state the necessity of a flexible, intersectional approach which emphasizes the need to adapt our understanding based on context, place, and time as suggested by the UN Women's Toolkit on intersectionality.³

A Human Rights-Based Approach

This paper is taking a human rights-based approach that offers a holistic framework where everyone's rights are equally significant, thus avoiding any hierarchy of discrimination. This approach enables us to humanize and contextualize antisemitism within the broader spectrum of discrimination, supporting a view where no single struggle holds superiority and where no individuals' and communities' experiences are diminished.

Defining Antisemitism and Intersectionality

The term antisemitism was coined by German journalist Wilhelm Marr in a pamphlet published in 1879, entitled *The Victory of Judaism over Germanism*. The concept is based on racist theories.⁴

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) offers a widely accepted legally non-binding definition of antisemitism: "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."⁵

In addition to the IHRA definition, two other definitions have gained traction: The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA) and the Nexus Document. The JDA aims to provide greater clarity on the distinction between antisemitism and criticism of Israel, while the Nexus Document focuses on the

¹ More on the Network's website: <https://encate.eu/about/>.

² Sprague, Joey. "Feminist epistemology, feminist methodology, and the study of gender." *Handbook of the sociology of gender* (2008)

³ UN Women, "Intersectionality resource guide and toolkit" (2022): <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/01/intersectionality-resource-guide-and-toolkit>.

⁴ CEJI, « Overcoming Antisemitism. Manual for Trainers" (2022)

⁵ International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance: <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

relationship between antisemitism and Israel-related speech in the U.S. context. The spirit of this paper is to embrace an open conversation about understanding of antisemitism and its manifestations in relation to and independent from other forms of racism and discrimination.

While the term “intersectionality” was first used by legal scholar Pr. Kimberle Crenshaw⁶ in the context of black feminism, the concept of overlapping identities and their conflicts can be traced to African American women in abolitionist movements who expressed how multiple identity characteristics impacted their lives⁷.

It is a theory, methodology, paradigm, lens, or framework that recognizes that people’s lives are shaped by their identities, relationships, and social factors. These combine to create intersecting forms of privilege and oppression depending on a person’s context and existing power structures such as patriarchy, ableism, colonialism, imperialism, homophobia, and racism⁹.

Intersectionality is not a matter of adding or subtracting discriminations but it “reframes our understanding of marginalization and “creates spaces for reflexive consideration and critical engagement”¹⁰ by understanding how the intersection of these discriminations creates specific kinds of targeting that require particular approaches.

While intersectionality is often seen as an academic term, its practical application in educational spaces enables flexibility. By viewing intersectionality as a tool for understanding and addressing the complex nature of antisemitism, educators can better respond to the diverse lived experiences within Jewish communities. In this way, intersectionality becomes not just a framework but a practical approach, adapting to the needs and realities of different educational contexts.

6 Crenshaw, Kimberle. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>.

7 Heller, Daniel. “Beyond the Either/Or Logic: An Intersectional-Informed Approach to Hate Crime Policy.” Supervised by Prof. Dr. Sami Zemni. Master’s Thesis, Ghent University, (2022)

8 Carastathis, Anna. “Intersectionality: origins, contestations, horizons. Expanding frontiers: interdisciplinary approaches to studies of women, gender, and sexuality”. *Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press*(2016): https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321992533_Intersectionality_Origins_Contestations_horizons

9 Hankivsky, Olena. “Intersectionality 101”. *Vancouver: The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, Simon Fraser University* (2014) <https://womensstudies.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/66/2021/06/Intersectionality-101.pdf>.

10 UN Women. “Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit.” (2022): <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/01/intersectionality-resource-guide-and-toolkit>.

Diversity of Jewish Life

Mainstreaming an intersectional approach in antisemitism prevention requires an acknowledgment of the diversity within Jewish communities, including cultural, ethnic, and religious differences. In doing so, we highlight Jewish communities as complex and varied, challenging stereotypes and promoting a more nuanced understanding of Jewish identity.

Judaism is an ethnoreligion which means that being Jewish is not solely about religious belief or practice. It encompasses both cultural and ancestral dimensions, making it entirely valid to identify as Jewish while being secular or atheist. Normalizing this perspective fosters a more inclusive understanding of Jewish identity, emphasizing its multifaceted nature and allowing individuals to embrace their heritage in ways that resonate personally, whether through cultural, historical, or spiritual connections.

Moreover, Jewish communities have been present all over the world, thus culturally developing in different ways at the contact of local cultures but also experiencing and being shaped by various local historical events and narratives that influenced the manifestations and experiences of antisemitism.

This section provides a broad overview of the diverse backgrounds of the main four Jewish groups, acknowledging that the list is not exhaustive:

Ashkenazi Jews: Originating from Jewish populations that settled in the Holy Roman Empire during the Middle Ages, particularly in regions now known as Germany and France, Ashkenazi Jews later migrated eastward to areas like Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, and Belarus. They developed unique cultural and religious practices, including the Yiddish language. Today, Ashkenazi Jews constitute approximately 70 % to 80 % of the global Jewish population.¹¹

Sephardic Jews: Hailing from the Iberian Peninsula, mainly Spain and Portugal, Sephardic Jews experienced a period of cultural flourishing during the medieval era. Following their expulsion in 1492, they dispersed to regions such as North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, Italy, the Netherlands, and the Americas.¹²

11 Rabbi Solomin Rachel M.. “Who are Ashkenazi Jews?”, *My Jewish Learning*. <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/who-are-ashkenazi-jews/>

12 Rabbi Solomin Rachel M.. “Who are Sephardic Jews”. *My Jewish Learning*: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/who-are-sephardic-jews/>

Mizrahi Jews: They originate from the Middle East and North Africa, with communities established over 2,500 years ago. After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, many Mizrahi Jews migrated to Israel, where they now represent a significant portion of the population.¹³

Beta Israel: Also known as Ethiopian Jews, the Beta Israel has ancient roots in Ethiopia. Recognized officially as Jews by Israeli authorities in the 1970s, many have since immigrated to Israel.¹⁴

These groups collectively contribute to the rich tapestry of Jewish cultural and religious diversity worldwide.

All these different groups, including diaspora backgrounds and cultures we haven't been able to mention here, have developed different religious and cultural practices. To this ethnic and cultural diversity, we should add and take into account the experience of Jewish youth, Jewish women, LGBTQIA+, Jews of color, Jews with disabilities, ...

Antisemitism and Intersectionality

Applying an intersectional lens to antisemitism means recognizing Jewish identities within broader systems of disadvantage. Educators can use this approach to address issues such as "white-passing" privilege, which may afford certain Jewish individuals a temporary reprieve from discrimination but still leaves them vulnerable to antisemitism. Similarly, "Ashkenormativity," the centering of Ashkenazi experiences within Jewish identity, can marginalize other Jewish voices. Intersectionality also calls for introspection within Jewish communities, encouraging recognition of biases that may exist among Jewish individuals themselves.

Jews and the Question of Whiteness^{15 16}

To fully embrace an intersectional approach to the Jewish experience requires acknowledging and recognizing the ways in which Jewish communities have been racialized in diverse and shifting ways. Jewish people come from a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, including but not limited to White, Black, multiethnic, and people of color. As is the case with other forms of intersections, this can create a specific experience of discrimination, with the combination of those two factors being more than their sum. Additionally, it can also foster a bigger sense of exclusion for people experiencing racism in Jewish communities as well as antisemitism amongst people of color, thus seriously undermining any sense of belonging.

Furthermore, the question of Whiteness together with Jewishness brings as such some conceptual difficulties when it comes to integrating antisemitism in the intersectional framework, or more specifically, when it interacts with the framework of racism and its associated power dynamics.

Antisemitism is characterized by historically rooted stereotypes that have been recycled and adapted throughout time. Furthermore, the end of the 19th century saw the development of an antisemitism that racialized Jews. One important stereotypical narrative about Jews is their all-encompassing power and control, be it over the media, the finances or the world. This stereotype can be tracked back to the beginning of Christianity and its anti-Judaism manifestations. Nowadays, Jews can be seen as ultra-privileged and in situations of power.¹⁷

¹³ Rabbi Solomin Rachel M., "Who are Mizrahi Jews". *My Jewish Learning*: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/who-are-mizrahi-jews/>

¹⁴ Winchester Atira, "The History of Ethiopian Jewry". *My Jewish Learning*: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-history-of-ethiopian-jewry/>

¹⁵ Stögner Karin, « Intersectionality and Antisemitism – A New Approach". *Fathom Journal* (2020): <https://fathomjournal.org/intersectionality-and-antisemitism-a-new-approach>

¹⁶ Schraub David. "White Jews: An Intersectional Approach". *AJS Review: The Journal of the Association of Pennsylvania Press*, Volume 43, Number 2 (2019)

¹⁷ CEJI, « Overcoming Antisemitism. Manual for Trainers" (2022)

Within the framework of racism, Whiteness is associated with privileges, while people of color are perceived as inferior and are frequently denied the same access to rights and opportunities afforded by Whiteness. Whiteness, entrenched as a transparent societal norm, becomes so ingrained and taken for granted that it leads to the othering, exoticizing, and marginalization of non-White perspectives and experiences.

When associating Jewishness with Whiteness, we witness a phenomenon of reinforcement. The privileges rightly associated with Whiteness come to reinforce the stereotype of the all-powerful and privileged Jew. That logic can unfortunately be used to justify the exclusion of antisemitism within intersectional theories and spaces.

The Integration of Antisemitism in the Intersectional Framework

One question raised by the integration of antisemitism in the intersectional framework from a theoretical perspective is related to the axis on which we place Jewishness. Indeed, the latter cannot be considered as a religion only as many Jews relate to their Jewishness through culture rather than religion or both. And as we saw above, the axis of race is counterproductive when it comes to Jews and antisemitism. Moreover, it does not encompass the experiences and realities of Jews today.¹⁸

For this position paper and to situate the ENCATE network on the matter, we wish to endorse “the existence or importance of antisemitism as a distinctive axis of marginalization” in the intersectional framework as proposed by David Schraub in his essay “White Jews: an intersectional approach”¹⁹. This axis enables us to analyze and consider the specificities of the Jewish experience as such and in intersections with other identity factors such as race. Thus, avoiding the pitfall of Whiteness erasing Jewishness and the reinforcement of harmful tropes.

¹⁸ Prof. DellaPergola Sergio, Dr. Staetsky Daniel, “The Jewish identities of European Jews What, why and how”. *The Institute for Jewish Policy Research* (2021): <https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/jewish-identities-european-jews-what-why-and-how>

¹⁹ Schraub David. “White Jews: An Intersectional Approach”. *AJS Review: The Journal of the Association of Pennsylvania Press*, Volume 43, Number 2 (2019)

Israel/Palestine

While we acknowledge the importance of mentioning the Israel/Palestine question in a paper discussing antisemitism and intersectionality, we also believe this discussion is beyond the scope of this document and would deserve a paper on its own.

In today’s world, many antisemitic incidents are linked to events in the Middle East, as reflected in hate crime and hate speech statistics, with a clear increase of such acts since the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th, 2023, and the subsequent war in Gaza. For our purpose of mainstreaming an intersectional approach to combating antisemitism through education, we believe there are two points that must be highlighted.

First, our human rights-based approach serves us as a guidance to state that nobody should be discriminated against based on their identity, regardless of their political affiliations.

Second, we recognize that attacks targeting Jewish individuals or institutions simply because they are Jewish, in response to events in the Middle East, are clearly antisemitic.

Additionally, the Israeli government, like any other, must be criticized and held accountable when it violates human rights or breaks international law. While distinguishing between legitimate criticism of Israeli government policies and criticism rooted in antisemitic tropes is not always simple or straightforward, it remains an essential task.

While the IHRA definition²⁰ has been widely adopted for practical work in education, justice, police and data collection, it has also faced criticism, particularly regarding the Israel-Palestine issue. This criticism led to the emergence of the Jerusalem Declaration and the Nexus Document,²¹ which were introduced to address these concerns. Those three definitions propose different frameworks to help differentiate anti-Zionism from antisemitism while acknowledging the sensitivities involved. In addressing these important debates, it is essential to stress that we welcome and encourage a lively, well-argued exchange of views on these matters.

The many respected researchers and academics who have contributed to this discussion provide valuable perspectives that cannot be ignored or dismissed. Just as we advocate for fostering diverse identities, we must also insist on embracing

²⁰ International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance: <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

²¹ The Nexus document: <https://nexusproject.us/nexus-resources/the-nexus-document/>

a diversity of opinion, particularly when concerns are raised by renowned experts, many of whom are Jewish themselves. Limiting the conversation and excluding dissenting Jewish voices risks hindering a full and accurate understanding of antisemitism and its complexities.^{22 23}

Addressing Tensions Between Struggles

As a network dedicated to combating all forms of hatred, we recognize that various forms of discrimination—such as antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, racism, and others—are not isolated; they are interconnected and reinforced by similar oppressive structures. This interconnectedness stems from shared root causes, such as exclusionary, extremist, and supremacist ideologies, economic inequities, and policies that marginalize different groups in different ways. Recognizing these shared mechanisms of oppression can help unite different groups under a common cause, where a shared identity can be developed and help us all transcend socially constructed divisions.

Discussions about antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred, for instance, often reveal both commonalities and points of tension. These issues are sometimes put in opposition to each other, influenced by conflicts and political and public discourse. These two forms of hatred, along with other forms of hatred, ultimately reflect a larger systemic problem: the perpetuation of bias and discrimination through entrenched stereotypes, exclusionary practices, and institutionalized inequities. By understanding that both are part of a larger discriminatory framework, we can foster conversations that reveal these connections, helping each group see the value in supporting one another's struggles.

Promoting solidarity through the convergence of struggle also has a practical advantage: it strengthens the overall fight against discrimination by creating allies across different communities. A united approach is often more effective in challenging the deep-rooted systems that uphold these forms of discrimination. Encouraging empathy and mutual support allows each group to see the impact of other forms of bias as part of their own struggle, fostering a commitment to address systemic oppression.

Conclusion

Adopting an intersectional approach to antisemitism within educational frameworks allows for a deeper, more inclusive understanding of Jewish identities and experiences. It creates more opportunities for people with other identities to self-link with Jewish experiences and identify overlapping characteristics with their own experiences of exclusion and inclusion. This paper advocates for a nuanced approach that acknowledges the diversity within Jewish communities and the distinct nature of antisemitism as an axis of marginalization. By situating antisemitism within broader systems of oppression, educators can foster environments that promote solidarity across different struggles, addressing tensions and building empathy among marginalized communities. As ENCATE and its network move forward, integrating these perspectives will be essential for creating educational tools that empower individuals to combat antisemitism in a manner that respects and reflects the complex, intersecting identities of all affected.

Finally, antisemitism is not only an issue for the Jewish people; it requires the awareness and responsibility of society as a whole.

²² Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism:
<https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/>

²³ CEJI, "Overcoming Antisemitism. Manual for Trainers" (2022)

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KIGA

POLITISCHE BILDUNG FÜR
DIE MIGRATIONSGESELLSCHAFT

KREUZBERG INITIATIVE AGAINST ANTISEMITISM – KIGA E. V. addresses antisemitism and intolerance by developing innovative educational concepts. Since 2003, KIGA has promoted multi-perspectivity, tolerance of ambiguity, and empathy through educational activities in schools and extra-curricular contexts. KIGA deals with complex, sensitive, and politically controversial issues by connecting various forms of social exclusion to be relevant to young people and other audiences.

KIGA's work became more widely known in Germany and internationally. KIGA's team includes experts with a wide range of social and professional backgrounds. KIGA e. V. educates multipliers, organizes high-level conferences, produces exhibitions and media materials, and advises politicians, schools, local authorities, and international organizations.

In 2019, KIGA founded ENCATE and has been the coordinator of this Network since then.

kiga-berlin.org



CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe is an international non-profit organisation established in 1991 based in Brussels. It stands with individuals and organisations of all religions, cultures and backgrounds to promote a diverse and inclusive Europe. CEJI works to combat prejudice and discrimination and to promote social cohesion through training, education, dialogue and advocacy.

A leading provider of diversity education and training in Europe, CEJI works through ever-growing networks to offer a constructive response to prejudice and discrimination.

A Jewish voice at a European level, CEJI facilitates Jewish participation in European affairs, gaining recognition for Jewish experiences and concerns and empowering Jewish organisations to become more internationally and interculturally active.

Contributing innovative ideas to policy-making processes dealing with anti-discrimination and social inclusion, CEJI actively advocates for policies promoting a diverse and inclusive Europe.

Committed to enhancing intercultural and interfaith understanding, CEJI is at the forefront of a new Jewish Muslim dialogue and co-operation initiative.

ceji.org



EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR COUNTERING ANTISEMITISM THROUGH EDUCATION (ENCATE) aims to address contemporary antisemitism through education. The members are European nonprofits educating society about/against contemporary and historical aspects of antisemitism.

ENCATE is a vital partner for governments, civic actors, and international organizations because it conveys hands-on experience and everyday needs in the educational work countering antisemitism.

ENCATE acknowledges the relevant past and current work of Jewish organizations and communities as well as international institutions, networks, and NGOs as a frame of reference. Its work strives to be complementary and to add value to the field.

encate.eu

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