

# Perceptions of Antisemitism in the European Union

Voices from Members of the  
European Jewish communities

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## Foreword

Following concerns from many quarters over what seemed to be a serious increase in acts of antisemitism in some parts of Europe especially in March and April 2002, the EUMC asked the 15 National Focal Points of its Racism and Xenophobia Network (RAXEN) to direct a special focus on antisemitism in its data collection activities.

One of the outcomes of that initiative is the comprehensive report “Manifestations of Antisemitism in the EU 2002-2003.” The information from the RAXEN network enabled the EUMC to present, for the first time in the EU, data on antisemitism that has been collected systematically, using common guidelines for each Member State. The main report provides an overview of incidents of antisemitism and examples of good practice to combat antisemitism from information available in the years 2002 – 2003, and a thorough analysis of the data, as well as proposals for action to combat antisemitism.

As part of the same initiative the EUMC also commissioned this present report. It consists of material from in-depth interviews with 35 persons from Jewish communities in eight European countries, covering their own perceptions of antisemitism. It is not meant to supply an objective, academic analysis. Instead its aim is to present a snapshot of views of people from Jewish communities in Europe, their experiences, concerns and expectations. In this way, the qualitative material from the interviews adds personal insights to the statistical and descriptive material in the main report. This report is complementary to the main report and should be read in conjunction with it.

We would like to express our gratitude to all those involved in this report: first of all to the 35 interviewees for giving their time to elaborate their views, to the four members of the EUMC Management Board working group who carried out the interviews, and especially to Management Board member Victor Weitzel who brought the interviews together.

We hope that this report will contribute to raising awareness of the development of antisemitism in Europe. The aim is to stimulate a broader public debate about antisemitism in the European Union and its Member States. It is important to listen sensitively to the fears of Jewish communities, but also to identify the social context which gives rise to the hatred of the perpetrators. We need joint initiatives and clear, strong measures to combat antisemitism in all its forms. We need the courage and commitment of political leaders across the EU to turn words into action, and we need new coalitions between politicians, intellectuals, journalists, teachers and many others in order to overcome hate, discrimination and exclusion. Antisemitism can and must be fought jointly to make sure that it never again gains a foothold in Europe. For all of us it must be clear: Jews and

Jewish communities are highly valued and respected members of our European societies, and we must ensure that they are able to feel as such.

Robert Purkiss  
(Chair of the EUMC Management Board)

Beate Winkler  
(Director EUMC)

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# PERCEPTIONS OF ANTISEMITISM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION:

## Voices from members of the European Jewish communities

### Introduction

This report documents the concerns of a selection of relevant persons from Jewish communities in Europe, in the context of an apparent rise in antisemitic incidents in some parts of the EU in recent years. It consists of material taken from in-depth interviews with 35 people carried out in eight Member States covering the respondents' perceptions and experiences on the issue of antisemitism. The report was commissioned alongside the EUMC's main report on antisemitism in the European Union and is intended to be read alongside the main report.

This report does not aim to assess whether opinions expressed by the interviewees are either 'correct' or 'incorrect'; it simply records perceptions which express what many Jewish people are concerned about today. The EUMC does not necessarily agree with all the views of the interviewees. Indeed these are very personal views, and it is likely that many within European Jewish communities would not agree with all of these statements either. The interviews do not claim to be a 'representative' sample of Jewish opinion in Europe. This would not be possible because of the diversity that exists within the European Jewish population. They do, however, present a clear snapshot of the discomfort, the fears, the anger and also the vision of the future that many Jewish people share in today's Europe.

Following concerns about the apparent increase in antisemitic acts in some Member States in April 2002, the EUMC asked the 15 National Focal Points of its Racism and Xenophobia network (RAXEN) to direct a special focus on antisemitism<sup>1</sup>. The EUMC's RAXEN network consists of 15 National Focal Points (NFPs), one in each of the (then) 15 Member States, which are mainly "consortia" between research organisations, specialised bodies and NGOs.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "antisemitism" is used in these reports in preference to "anti-Semitism". This usage helps to avoid the problem of reifying (and thus affirming) the existence of races in general and a "Semitic race" in particular. See Section 2.1.3 "Definitions, Concepts and Theories" in the main report.



In December 2003 the NFPs submitted to the EUMC their reports on antisemitism in 15 Member States of the European Union. These reports present an overview of developments and incidents of antisemitism, the political, academic and media reactions to it, information from public opinion polls and attitude surveys, and examples of good practice to combat antisemitism, from information available in the years 2002 – 2003. As well as this the main report contains an evaluation of the quality and availability of this data on antisemitism in each country, and identifies problem areas and gaps in the currently available data. Finally, the main report makes a number of overall proposals for action against antisemitism, including legal and educational measures, and recommendations for the improvement of the registration of antisemitic incidents.

All of this information is provided in detail in the EUMC’s main report<sup>2</sup>, which presents for the first time in the European Union data on antisemitism that has been collected systematically, using common guidelines for each Member State.

At the same time that the main report was being compiled, the EUMC Management Board commissioned this current report “Perceptions of Antisemitism in Europe: Voices from Members of European Jewish Communities”. This report is seen as parallel and complementary to the main report. Its aim is to present the opinions of people from the Jewish community, to convey their perceptions, feelings, fears, worries and desires for action. It is a way of bringing to public attention examples of the experiences, concerns and expectations of many Jewish people at a time of rising antisemitism in some parts of Europe. In this way the qualitative material adds subjective personal insights to the statistical and descriptive overview in the main report.

## Methodology

A working group composed of four members of the Management Board<sup>3</sup> and the EUMC interviewed 35 leading or relevant figures from European Jewish communities suggested by the members of the EUMC Management Board in eight EU countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom) and 12 cities (Vienna, Brussels, Antwerp, Paris, Berlin, Athens, Thessalonica, Rome, Milan, Barcelona, Madrid and London). One member of the working group then brought the results of the interviews together.

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<sup>2</sup> See “Manifestations of Antisemitism in the EU 2002 – 2003” published by the EUMC in March 2004.

<sup>3</sup> These were Victor Weitzel (chair), Magdalena Sroda, Martine Valdes-Boulouque and Beate Winkler.

These eight countries can be grouped according to differences which have potential implications for the character of antisemitism within them. Germany and Austria are more than other countries still influenced by issues linked to World War 2 and the Shoah. For France, Italy and Belgium, although they are countries on whose territories the Shoah also took place, the central issue of antisemitism appears today to be more linked to conflictual social relations in increasingly demographically complex societies. The same point is also true for the UK, although unlike the three preceding countries, the Shoah did not take place on its territory. Spain and Greece have very small Jewish communities which are currently rebuilding themselves. In the following report, the interviews are set out according to the order of these groups of countries.

The 35 interviewees were divided between countries in the following way:

Germany	8
Belgium	6
France	6
Italy	4
UK	4
Austria	3
Greece	2
Spain	2

The interviews were carried out between the end of October 2003 and mid-December 2003. It was agreed with the interviewees that they would not be quoted by name. Most of the interviews were carried out with more than one of the team of four interviewers present. The questions addressed to the interviewees concerned in general their perceptions of the characteristics and concrete forms of antisemitism in their respective countries, the changes they observed in manifestations of antisemitism, any changes in the circumstances of the Jewish communities since 2001, the relation between antisemitism and anti-Zionism, the security situation concerning the community institutions, the development of public discourse, the general feeling of Jewish people within their society, the state of the relation to the other faiths, to the State, politics and the media, their assessment of the way the Shoah was handled in their society and the vision they had of the future of their community. Interviewees also had the opportunity to elaborate on other matters of concern to them during the course the interviews.

Taken alongside the EUMC's main report, it is hoped that the perceptions described in this report will contribute to the raising of awareness on the development of antisemitism in Europe in recent years. The aim is to stimulate a broader public debate in order to generate pressure for clear and strong measures against antisemitism in all its manifestations.



# THE INTERVIEWS

In the text below, the interviews are grouped under a number of main themes which emerged naturally out of the interview transcripts as important concerns. Within the text, the interviewees are not quoted by name, nor by the institution they represent, but only by their country of location. (The names of those interviewed can be found in Annex 1.) Not every country is mentioned under every theme, as in some cases interviewees from one country did not speak out on a certain issue.

## 1. PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGES IN ATTITUDES

In Germany, all the interviewees stated that public discourse concerning antisemitism has been changing, and that the meaning and full implications of this phenomenon were neither grasped nor tackled adequately. For them, antisemitism is still anchored in German civil society and has become more violent in nature.

In Austria the interviewees made a similar assessment that over time, the general political climate had changed. Formerly, they declared, there had been a sort of social consensus that condemned antisemitism. Today however, one interviewee had the impression that an utterance or a declaration against antisemitism might be perceived as a partisan political statement against the government. According to another interviewee, the number of articles about Judaism is increasing in Austria, and the limits of what is said in those articles are shifting. The interviewee gave the example that if a Jewish author had considerable success, this was called “Shoah business” by some people today. He added that dealing with the Shoah nowadays created a scandal. Another interviewee recalled that Austria had in his view a long and uninterrupted anti-Semitic tradition that went from Karl Lueger, the mayor of Vienna at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to Adolf Eichman, one of the main perpetrators of the Shoah, from the myth of the state of Austria being the first victim of the Nazis to recent developments in relation to the populist party FPÖ. For the interviewees a characteristic point to be mentioned was the fact that the Shoah had received special attention in public discourse in connection with the Waldheim affair in 1991.

In France, the interviewees described what was happening in their country – the attacks against synagogues, the arson of a school, the beating of Jewish students and activists or the aggression against a rabbi, the daily insults and harassment

in the suburbs, targeting people of every age, including more and more children – as in their view the most unprecedented wave of antisemitic violence since WW II. The French interviewees identified two new types of antisemitism: One type had been adopted by some people of Maghrebi origin whose anti-Zionism and anti-Israelism was perceived to have gradually shifted towards antisemitism. Another type of antisemitism which had not been addressed for a long time was that which had been adopted by parts of the extreme left, whose activities seemed to have developed in parallel and in cooperation with those of some of the Maghrebi. The interviewees suggested that traditional antisemitism still existed, but below the surface. They described the situation in France as a paradox. On the one hand, Christian attitudes had deeply changed since Vatican II and the abandoning of the charge of ‘deicide’. On the other hand, in the interviewees view it was no longer possible for pupils and students of Jewish schools to go out wearing their kippah. This, they reported, resulted in a feeling of isolation among the Jewish community, which often faced difficulties in identifying its supporters.

In Belgium, too, the interviewees perceived that antisemitism was becoming more and more socially acceptable, so that now it was problematic to wear a kippah in public. People who wished to wear traditional Jewish clothing felt uncomfortable, and that it was no longer acceptable to openly express their Jewish identity in society. They felt that a certain type of social antisemitism has even become presentable in public (“salonfähig”). They felt that post-war taboos were being progressively forgotten, whereas at the same time they observed an increasing hostility against Jews proceeding mostly from the far left and young Muslim Arabs. The interviewees also articulated a certain fear that they might be abandoned by politicians who look for new voters in Belgian society, for example from among the Muslim population.

In Italy, the interviewees said that since 2001, there had been no violent incidents. However, they felt that the Jewish community had been frightened and destabilised by the public discourse on Israel and the Jews. The interviewees described how during the siege of the Nativity Church in Bethlehem in the winter of 2001, some media had published articles and striking caricatures which had alluded to deicide by Israelis and Jews. This had been preceded by the reinforcement of security around the Jewish institutions since September 11<sup>th</sup>. Since these events, according to the interviewees, Jews have become much more careful about what they say in public.

According to the interviewees from the UK, the current climate in their country presents a great challenge for the Jewish communities. They mentioned a very negative reporting on Israel in some of the media. They criticised parts of the press for not acknowledging that such attacks on Israel could have a spin-off effect on Jews, and may lead to threats against them. Some interviewees also had the impression that in some media there was a lack of awareness of the danger that they perceived to exist in the form of terrorism from Islamist

extremists. They felt that the political climate in the UK, which previously had been marked by a very high degree of tolerance, was now changing.

In Greece, one interviewee had the impression that Europe, which had been judeophile after WWII has ceased to be so.

## 2. PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGES IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

For the German interviewees, there was a strong relation between the re-emergence of antisemitism and the period when the events at the World Conference against Racism in Durban were closely followed by the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. According to one German interviewee, the tone in the streets became sharper, and the crisis in the Middle East aggravated the situation, particularly after the fighting in Jenin in April 2002. They felt that some media had a way of reporting on the events that had contributed to a rise in antisemitism. Also, they had the impression that demonstrations for the freedom of Palestine sometimes implied strong notions of antisemitism. One interviewee judged that the issue was no longer about Israel, but about the Jews as symbols of a “mystic devil”, and that Israel was only considered as the place where this “mystical devil” was living. The debate between the late Jürgen Möllemann, a former leader of the liberal FDP, who launched several very harsh anti-Israeli leaflet campaigns, and Michel Friedman, a lawyer and at the time talk-show host and Vice President of the Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland, was also seen to have had a negative impact, as were the preparations for the Iraq war, and some parts of the peace demonstrations in March 2003 where the equations Bush = Hitler or Sharon = Hitler, and slogans such as “Freedom for Palestine, away with Israel” were seen. According to the German interviewees, these events had all planted the seeds of discomfort and uncertainty within most of the Jewish communities.

The German interviewees explained that antisemitism was particularly noticeable in informal interactions such as at the workplace. One interviewee spoke about remarks by colleagues which they would never have dared to make before. Another said that it was again possible to lose friends if one spoke about the unequal treatment of Israel and the Palestinians in the media and in public discourse. The interviewees were also concerned because ambiguous or even explicit antisemitic remarks were now more regularly uttered in public. They felt that such remarks were no longer restricted to the political far right, but reflected antisemitism in the core of mainstream society. They added that anti-Americanism, hostility towards the EU, and the desire to put an end to the historical debate about National Socialism were also present in public discourse.

The Austrian interviewees explained that in the Austrian press, antisemitic poems and caricatures were frequently to be found. In particular they stressed the role of the “Kronenzeitung” (which is the mostly widely read paper per capita in any country in the EU).

The French interviewees also saw the rise in antisemitism to follow events in the Durban conference and in the Middle East, and the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. In France, the interviewees were highly critical about the long time it took the authorities to recognise the reappearance of antisemitism. They quoted the case of a former Interior Minister who had stated during the first wave of attacks against Jewish sites that those burning down synagogues were the same people who were burning cars. According to the interviewees, this had been perceived by the Jewish community as an attempt to minimise the significance of antisemitic acts. However, they admitted that since then, the government in place since April 2002 had taken initiatives and specific steps to assure the application of “laïcité” and to fight antisemitism.

In Italy, interviewees reported that antisemitism was still a taboo in public discourse. However, despite the attitude of the government and of the democratic left, who have been making a great deal of effort to tackle the growing tendency to resort to antisemitic clichés, the ground is changing. According to the interviewees, the public discourse has become generally very aggressive. They judged that the verbal aggression directed against the Jews must be understood as part of a wider context. They felt that the attacks of the Lega del Nord directed against immigrants had raised the level of what was tolerated in public, and that now the Jews could easily be included in this kind of discourse as well. Interviewees expressed their fear that, given the fact that some anti-Jewish stereotypes were still active in the Italian society and even held by widely known intellectuals, eventually overt antisemitism could arise quite easily.

A comic strip in a booklet with the title “Speciale Palestina libera” published by “Ganesh in movimento” was mentioned as an example of the shift of paradigms in public discourse. It shows a Jesus-like pacifist speaking about peace to a man dressed like an orthodox Jew. The man denounces the pacifist to Israeli soldiers portrayed with a pig’s face. While the pacifist is uttering words similar to those of Jesus on the day of his crucifixion, the soldiers prepare the cross on which he is nailed, under the eyes of the orthodox Jews who denounced him. Clearly, this comic strip used some of the old Christian anti-Jewish clichés. The interviewees recalled a caricature published by the daily “La Stampa” during the siege of the Nativity church in December 2001, that insinuated that the Israelis were on their way to committing another massacre of the Innocents, considering them implicitly as the heirs of Herod.

The Belgian interviewees also strongly criticised the Belgian press. Although they did not consider it to be antisemitic per se, they judged its reporting to be marked by an excessive Anti-Zionism that may, in their opinion, develop into

antisemitic attitudes. They perceived articles which refer to “Jewish businessmen” or the “kosher mafia” as insidious, and some caricatures published in the Flemish newspaper “De Morgen”, as openly antisemitic. One which was published on the day of the interview (24<sup>th</sup> November 2003) with the title “Palestinian reprisals against Jewish wall” shows a group of Palestinians urinating against a wall that looks like the wall built around the Palestinian territories by the Sharon government. What irritated the interviewees was not the criticism against this policy, but the confusion made between Jews and Israelis, and the fact that there is a well-known Jewish wall that is considered as a holy place that was used before 1967 by Jordanians as a public urinal.

The Spanish interviewees reported that the Jewish Community of Madrid has published a file on “articles that reflect the level of antisemitism in the Spanish press”. This digest displays articles and caricatures published by major Spanish newspapers which enjoy an international reputation. The interviewees stressed that the main aim of the articles and caricatures was to establish a parallel between Sharon and Hitler, Israel and Nazi Germany, even Judaism and Nazi ideology. A striking example was a caricature published in April 2002 in “El Mundo”. In the first frame, one sees Sharon trying to stab Arafat. In the second frame, Uncle Sam and the EU come up and remind Sharon of Auschwitz. The third frame shows Arafat in the gas chamber. Another example is a series of caricatures published in March 2002 by “El Periodico” which draw a parallel between Nazi soldiers threatening Jewish mothers and children in the Warsaw Ghetto and Israeli soldiers threatening Palestinian mothers and children in Ramallah, or between Hitler at the negotiations in Munich and Sharon in talks with European officials. Interviewees explained that examples similar to these were abundant in this digest and illustrate how quickly antisemitic clichés may emerge in a country such as Spain, where antisemitic prejudices were still deeply entrenched in the collective unconscious, the language, iconography and customs.



### **3. FOUR DIMENSIONS OF ANTISEMITISM IN THE EU**

In their responses the interviewees identified different dimensions of antisemitism. Collectively these can be categorised as four basic dimensions: the Christian anti-Jewish tradition, the antisemitic far right, the anti-Zionist far left that is shifting more towards being antisemitic, and finally the anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli tradition among Muslims living in the EU. The perception of the prevalence of one or another tradition varies from country to country in accordance with the specific historical situation. The ways in which these trends are articulated vary, too. Some appear to consist of physical violence, some of symbolic violence, and some engage more subtle means in expressing their hostility to the Jewish population.

#### **(i) The Christian anti-Jewish tradition**

German interviewees spoke of their impression that most of the individuals who practise antisemitism do so without even being aware of it. One said that antisemitism was also deeply rooted in the way in which Christian beliefs had been and still were taught. Representatives from the German Jewish community concluded that antisemitism was thus kept alive in the collective unconscious, and could be revived.

In Spain too, the interviewees said that antisemitic prejudices were still deeply entrenched in the collective unconscious of Spain, in its language, iconography and customs. However, they added, the relations with Catholics had improved substantially since Vatican II. There were only a few theological discussions between the two religions, but the Catholics considered today the Jews as bearers of “old knowledge”. The interviewees remarked that Jews shared common values on the basis of the Bible and the concept of the primacy of life with Catholics and Christians in general, especially with the formerly persecuted Protestants.

An Austrian interviewee voiced his impression that the interaction between the Conservative government and the Jewish community was a cold one. The interviewee linked this to old Catholic antisemitic roots that nowadays had to tolerate the Jews because there was no other way. However, actually favouring the presence of the Jews was not a step to be taken by this Catholic antisemitic foundation, he said.

In France, the interviewees were unanimous in saying that Christian attitudes had deeply changed since Vatican II and the abandoning of the charge of deicide. Christian antisemitism had become rare in France. They considered that Catholic Church had now adopted a neutral attitude that facilitated interaction

between religions both on spiritual and pedagogical level. Nevertheless, they said that it was still possible to find antisemitic stereotypes present in private Catholic schools (which were also attended by Jewish pupils) expressed by, for instance, images of the “bothersome Jew” or “the rich Jew”. Interviewees added that a lot of conflicts between young people ended in antisemitic remarks.

In Belgium, all interviewed leaders and personalities complained about the confusion often made by Christian circles and organisations between ‘Jews’ and ‘Israelis’. Jews were often considered responsible for the situation of the Palestinians, which they themselves deplored. According to the interviewees, such assessment affected negatively inter-faith relations, and in particular a number of common projects between the Jewish Consistoire and the Catholic Church. Furthermore, stances of Catholic personalities which interviewees described as “extreme pro-Palestinian positions” reportedly led to a growing sense of mistrust against Catholics in the Jewish community.

The Italian interviewees signalled that whereas Jews considered themselves as not very visible – they do not wear kippas or the Magen David (the star of David) outside their private or community sphere – many Christian Italians showed that they are Christians by the symbols they wear. The interviewees presumed that Christians did this not so much for religious reasons, but in order to affirm their identity, essentially Catholic “italianità”. The interviewees considered the relationship with the Catholic authorities as very good. Irrespective of the Middle East conflict, a lot of theological work had been done since Vatican II, the *concile* in the early 1960s when the Catholic Church abandoned the charge of deicide against the Jews.

In Greece, the interviewees were very positive about the relations with the Greek Orthodox Church, which, they said, were developing at a high level. The Archbishop of Athens visited the city’s Jewish community to honour the victims of the Shoah. The Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, Bartholomew, visited the Jewish community in Thessalonica and participated in the fifth meeting between the Orthodox Church and the World Jewish Congress. However, interviewees stated that there was no theological debate between Jews and the Greek Orthodox Church, whose dogma was transmitted through obligatory teaching in schools, including the charge of deicide (in contrast to the Catholic Church after Vatican II). The interviewees noted that the major practical problem faced by the Jewish community, namely the mention of religious affiliation on identity cards, had now been resolved.

## (ii) Far right antisemitism

In Austria, the political far right movement constitutes, according to the interviewees, a virulent problem, particularly since Jörg Haider’s Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) became a member of the coalition of the federal government from February 2000. They explained that during an electoral

campaign of March-April 2001, during FPÖ meetings language had been used regarding the president of the Jewish community which the respondents had seen to be antisemitic. According to the interviewees, attacks against the “spin-doctors”, implicitly considered as Jewish, or the American Jews from the East Coast, implicitly considered as dominating US policy, were themes that recurred in the national press. These were considered clearly antisemitic as well. The interviewees added that under the pressure of the EU countries, of the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Green Party, the conservative Austrian Peoples Party (ÖVP) had distanced itself from this campaign. The FPÖ suffered a heavy defeat in the 2001 elections. But generally, the interviewees estimated that the lifting of the EU sanctions against the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition did not ameliorate the situation for the Jewish community.

Interviewees from France declared that antisemitism in the French far right was represented by Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of the Front National, whose views, according to opinion polls, were supported by a fifth of the population. According to the interviewees, his strategy entails inciting antisemitic feelings among the members of the Muslim community. Thus, they said, Arab Muslims were influenced by a strange alliance made up of Islamic fundamentalists and the far right as well as the far left.

In Belgium, worries were expressed in the interviews concerning certain right wing organisations, whose funding was discussed in a meeting with the Justice Minister, also responsible for religious communities.

The Italian interviewees reported that the far right had made a remarkable revival that raised a lot of questions among the members of the Jewish community. The Alleanza Nazionale (AN) had its origins in fascism, the Repubblica sociale italiana and the neo-fascist MSI. But today, the interviewees elaborated, it condemned antisemitism and Mussolini’s racial laws, and it spoke in favour of local voting rights for immigrants. Interviewees remarked that this political transformation triggered a lot of fierce discussion. They referred to research on the AN which showed that the grass root militants have not yet accepted all the positions taken by Fini and other AN leaders. According to the representatives of the Jewish community, the young members still preferred to relate to fascism as a positive reference, and remain hostile towards immigration. Meanwhile the interviewees agreed that the leaders of the AN conceived their action within the rules of the republican system even though they would prefer a more presidential system. The interviewees judged that the grass roots of the party was far away from a liberal political culture. They declared that whereas the Jewish people mostly believed that Fini used the Jews and Israel to be accepted by Washington and the political partners of Italy in the EU, they had to admit that he had been the first to advocate the administrative right to vote for the immigrants – even though he could have realised his former targets without this measure.

In the UK, the interviewees stated that the right wing British National Party (BNP) represented a danger in that they mostly emerged where tensions exist between Asians and Whites, although they did not specifically target the Jews.

In Spain, the interviewees portrayed a far right that had adopted antisemitic theories since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some antisemitic publishers and bookshops reportedly still survive to this day. A bookshop-owner in Barcelona, for example, was sentenced in 1995 for selling antisemitic books, and the books were confiscated. As reported by the interviewee, however, he appealed the sentence as infringement of the freedom of expression, and the case is still pending in court.

In Greece, the interviewees declared that the influence of the far right, which traditionally took antisemitic stances in Greece, was very small. They mentioned a far right weekly news magazine, *Stohos*, that systematically spreaded anti-Jewish propaganda and also some antisemitic publishers whose publications were not censored as the freedom of expression was constitutionally guaranteed.

### (iii) Antisemitism on the left

According to one interviewee in Germany, pacifist and pro-Palestinian demonstrations there often seemed to display strong notions of antisemitism.

In Austria, one interviewee voiced the impression that parts of the political left tended to consider American politics to be determined by a Jewish lobby. Terms such as “neo-conservative Zionists”, were used, rather than simply “neo-Conservatives”. Anti-Americanism was, in his opinion, linked to attacks against both Jewish people and Protestant conservatives. Even the SPÖ is, according to this interviewee, divided on the question. He was of the opinion that the anti-Zionism of the left gradually became a code for something else, as in the rest of the EU.

In France, the interviewees felt that public opinion and the media did not deal with the leftist antisemitism in a sufficient manner. They were of the opinion that the left had in general refused to denounce antisemitic acts, citing as example a demonstration in the autumn of 2002 in support of peace in the Middle East, when the slogan “Death to the Jews!” was heard. In their opinion, the organisers, MRAP (Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples) had tried to minimise the importance of this event. They were also of the opinion that it wasn’t just by accident that in October 2003 a rabbi was attacked in a suburb south of Paris where the mayor had declared his solidarity with the Palestinians for what they described as “purely opportunistic motives”, in their view, covering up the failure of the police to control certain areas. The interviewees expressed their view that Jews were the ones who had to pay for such kinds of policy. They perceived that in suburbs controlled by socialists or

the right, such things did not happen, but that this was different in communist controlled suburbs.

In Belgium, worries were expressed over the behaviour of certain left wing organisations towards the Jewish community, and the AGALEV (Flemish ecologists) was also criticised, because in their support of the Palestinian cause, they were judged to systematically confuse ‘Jews’ and ‘Israelis’.

In Italy, the interviewees stated that the PDS (Democratic Party of the Left) was aware of incidents in the pro-Palestinian demonstrations it supported in April 2002. During these demonstrations linked to the Djenin issue, there were Arabs at the head of the cortège with streamers calling for revenge against the Jews, and behind people disguised as suicide bombers. The left, who had organised that demonstration, did not condemn the action. During the peace demonstrations a year later, reportedly less Palestinian banners were seen and no offensive antisemitism was displayed. Walter Veltroni, the mayor of Rome, former Prime Minister Massimo D’Alema, former foreign minister Pietro Fassino, leaders of the left, were positively referring to the Israeli peace movement and the moderate parties.

In the UK, the interviewees estimated that intellectual antisemitism was difficult to measure. In their view, it emerged mostly from parts of the political left holding an anti-American, anti-Imperialist, anti-Zionist attitude. For example, interviewees saw some anti-globalisation rhetoric as related to the concept of Jewish world rule, resulting from a Jewish conspiracy. Interviewees remarked that if one added to that constellation the effects of Islamic fundamentalism on British Muslim communities, the perceived bias of the media, and a perceived student militancy on the Middle East conflict, it was clear in their eyes that this mixture might prepare the grounds for an increase in antisemitism.

Greek interviewees mentioned that in autumn 2003 they had been shaken by declarations of Mikis Theodorakis on Israel and the Jews, which triggered both positive and negative reactions in the media. KIS, the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, issued a strong statement, and the composer, who also wrote a famous symphony dedicated to the suffering of the Greek Jews in Mauthausen, replied with a statement affirming his intention not to attack Jews, but Sharon and the “American Jews”.

In Spain, according to the interviewees the relations between the Jewish community and the political parties are difficult. Interviewees had the impression that left wing politicians were openly displeased by the Jewish approach to the Middle East conflict. In Barcelona, during the regional electoral campaign, only the governing party PPE sent its leader for an exchange of views with the Jewish community. The interviewees also concluded that the parliamentary left and Jewish communities do not communicate with each other.

#### (iv) Muslim antisemitism

All interviews expressed the conviction that Islamic fundamentalism generated antisemitic feelings among Muslims in Europe. The German interviewees declared that fundamentalism was also increasing in Germany.

In Austria, the situation was described differently by the interviewees. Islam was a constitutionally recognised religion in Austria. The Muslim community comprised 365,000 people, 360,000 of whom came originally from Turkey or Bosnia. Turkey was an ally of Israel, whereas Bosnia has not taken a position in the Middle East conflict. Interviewees were of the opinion that although some of the 5000 Muslim Arabs living in Austria did try to generate conflicts, basically there did not exist a problem between Jews and Muslims in Austria. However, the interviewees mentioned links that had been established between the political far right, Islamist movements, the political far left and Palestinian groups. In some far right meetings, Austria and Austrian people had been presented as hosts and the Jews as non-autochthones.

Interviewees from France judged that their homeland, being the country with the most violent antisemitic attacks (interviewees cited the highest number of incidents, the harassment in schools, the attacks on rabbis, the arson of synagogues and schools), was also the country where the discussion about antisemitism coming from fundamentalist Arab Muslim groups was the most intensive within the EU.

The influence of antisemitism expressed by some Maghrebi is, according to the interviewees, most apparent in education. They argued that there were subjects that teachers could no longer discuss in classes in which a “totalitarian atmosphere” had been developing. Interviewees stated that in these classes, especially in the suburbs of some big cities such as Paris and Lyon, it had become impossible to speak about WWII and the Shoah, while discussions about holocaust denial had taken place more frequently.

One French Jewish leader said that Jewish communities were naïve enough to believe after WWII that antisemitism had died after the Shoah. According to him, Jews had worked with René Cassin, the promoter and author of the European Convention of Human Rights, and others to advance the universality of human rights and now they became targets and were even accused of becoming Islamophobic. On the other hand, when they tried to seek shelter from the attacks in their communities, they were criticised for concentrating only on their community, practising a kind of “communautarisme”, the interviewee added.

French interviewees did not attribute those violent attacks against Jewish targets where Muslim Arabs perpetrators had been identified to a “direct import” of the Middle East conflict into France. According to them, the intelligence information, as far as accessible, showed that the perpetrators did not act

according to a coordinated plan, but that they were influenced by speeches in mosques during Friday prayers and subsequently committed an antisemitic offence.

In Belgium, all interviewees were of the opinion that most antisemitic violent acts were perpetrated mostly by youngsters from the Arab-Muslim community. In cities such as Antwerp, Maghrebi and orthodox Jews lived side by side. In this context, the interviewees stressed the unacceptable dimension of these acts of aggression, but also tried to explain them in terms of the high unemployment rate, lack of integration, indecent housing conditions, the influence of Arab mass media and some preachers in mosques who reinforced negative stereotypes and the confusion between 'Israelis' and 'Jews'. While condemning aggression against 'Jews' and requesting from the State to be better informed about developments in Islamic organisations, the interviewees also stressed the necessity for the development of a dialogue with the Arab-Muslim community that should enhance mutual respect and create a spirit of tolerance. The people interviewed considered it unacceptable to "import" the Middle East crisis to Belgian society, whose members should all work for peace. Nevertheless, they said that they had refrained from protesting because of the deep feeling of humiliation provoked by the crisis in Iraq among the Arab-Muslim community in Belgium. In their words, "the Jewish community would not want to add oil to the fire", and at any rate they felt that there was no reason to be aggressive towards the Arab-Muslim community.

According to the Italian interviewees, one Muslim organisation, the UCOIL, close to the Muslim Brotherhood and claiming 800,000 members, had taken hostile positions against the Jewish community on several occasions and insisted particularly on the equation Jew = Israeli. There was fear expressed by the interviewees that if there was official representation of the Italian Muslims this could be a radical one. On the other hand, it was stated that the relations with the Muslims that have "privatised" their religion were in a good state. The principle to grant the voting rights to immigrants, allowing more democratic participation of Muslim people, nevertheless constituted a positive option in the interviewees' opinion. According to an Italian interviewee antisemitism seemed to form a part of the identity of young Muslims. They were, he felt, not yet integrated into society. In his opinion many recently arrived Muslims had not yet assimilated the ideas of Italian democracy, and adopted a hostile attitude towards the State, which they expressed through antisemitism.

Developments within the British Muslim community occupied the attention of the interviewees in the UK. According to the interviewees, discussions between Jewish organisations and the Muslim Council of Britain have not yet been resumed after a break – the talks had been stopped by Muslims in the light of the Intifada and the war in Iraq. But the interviewees underlined that contacts had been established with Muslim leaders on a personal and confidential level after this break. Local initiatives between synagogues and mosques and the inter-faith organisations also kept on functioning. Nevertheless, the relations

were fractured. The interviewees had the impression that Islamist fundamentalist influence had become stronger and political issues were becoming more important within the Muslim communities. The interviewees perceived the climate as very anti-Jewish in theological and philosophical terms.

Some of the interviewees from the UK were of the opinion that, in a situation like this, the government was very anxious not to upset the Muslim community. These interviewees believed that the government considered its development as politically awkward and highly politicised – which was not bad per se in the interviewees' opinion – but also as very sensitive to extremist options.

One of the interviewees, who has had life-long experience in inter-community relations, thought that developments in the Islamic world directly influenced the situation in the UK. His impression was that antisemitism increased in a context where radical Islam was on the rise. He saw a clash between Western modernity and Islamic fundamentalism as affecting the relationship between communities in the UK. In his view, the allegiance of many British Muslims to the global community of Islam rather than the British state impeded the development of good community relations in Britain. He regretted what he saw as a reluctance by many Muslims to raise their voices against religious extremism, as it was this extremism which undermined peaceful relations with other faith communities in the UK and elsewhere.

In Spain, the interviewees were of the opinion that a part of the Muslim population had been affected by Islamic fundamentalists targeting the Jews, and that Spanish Jews feared that any possible attack would come from Islamic fundamentalists. They judged that the antisemitism of the fundamentalists had not been “imported” and that Muslims in Spain had to be considered as a part of European society. Within the framework of the Dirección de las Libertades Religiosas, Jews had had no problems with the Muslims. Both Muslims and Jews should, according to the interviewees, be natural allies. But, according to the interviewees, neither the Christians nor Jews in Spain knew how to structure their relations with the Muslim communities. In any case, they said, the content of the speeches by the Muslim leaders and imams in mosques should be checked as far as conformity with the constitution was concerned.



#### 4. THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT: FROM ANTI-ZIONISM TO ANTISEMITISM

In this section of the report the interviewees' opinions on the implications of the Middle East conflict are set out. It seems clear that the Middle East conflict has a negative impact on the lives of the Jewish communities. Even if criticisms of the Israeli government cannot be deemed as antisemitic per se, they were in many cases considered as antisemitic by interviewees. At the same time, many interviewees were critical of the confusion of Jewish and Israeli by many non-Jews.

One of the Italian interviewees tried to identify the point that made the difference between criticisms addressed at a government and antisemitism. New antisemitism, he said, nourished itself from the Israeli-Palestinian tragedy. The background was an irreducible hostility against the Jews as far as they had a State, even as far as they were a nation. This interviewee stated that it was not necessarily hostility against Jews as individuals, even if at the end it touched also the individuals. It was rather hostility against the Jews as a political community, whose symbol was an existing State. Accordingly, all the negative symbols linked to the Jews and Judaism were transferred to reports about this country.

The interviews suggested that one of the consequences of such an attitude, be it consciously or unconsciously, was the systematic confusion between Israelis and Jews. According to all the Austrian interviewees, confusing Jews and Israelis has the result that Austrian Jews are not considered as citizens who have a personal opinion, but as people who belong to a community. This view the Austrian interviewees considered true not only for people with a low level of education, but even for people from the most educated strata of the society. This kind of polarisation generated some kind of taboo on the complexity of the problems with which Jews and gentiles had to deal. And finally, interviewees remarked, there existed anti-Americanism that made the Jews responsible for the war in Iraq.

According to one of the Austrian interviewees, the aforementioned attitude has a second consequence. He said that after Jenin and the war in Iraq, people felt that they were allowed again to berate Jews. The interviewee explained that in this situation the Jews felt obliged to defend everything that happened in Israel. He added that it was at the same time a vicious circle and a phenomenon of "counter-polarisation". Every criticism of Israel had been and was denounced as anti-Semitic. The interviewee stressed that the capacity to distinguish had been lost in the fire of action and that every Jew was being made responsible for what was happening in Israel.

In Belgium, too, the interviewees complained about the confusion often made between ‘Jews’ and ‘Israelis’ because the Belgian Jews were often considered responsible for the situation of the Palestinians, which they themselves deplored. The same experience was shared by interviewees in France, Germany, Spain and Greece.

In Greece, the interviewees spoke very openly about the foreign policy of their country and also the public opinion which was very much in favour of the Palestinian cause. The Eurobarometer survey on Iraq showed that Greeks more than any other Europeans consider that Israel was the main threat to world peace. The KIS presumed that those interviewed for the Eurobarometer had simply given the interviewers the answers they expected from them. However, according to the interviewees, anti-Zionism affects the situation of Greek Jews. The rise of tensions in the Middle East was regularly perceived by the interviewees as leading the Greeks to seek a strong affirmation of their Christian identity while the far left systematically confused Jews and Israelis. The interviewees stated that mainstream political parties, however, retained the distinction. Interviewees had no recollection of any antisemitic speech in the Parliament.

The interviewees declared that they did not consider Greece’s support for a Palestinian State as problematic. The problem for them was equating Hitler with Sharon, Israel with Nazi Germany, Israel and Judaism and the implicit assumptions that thus were made. They therefore felt that politicians, the press, the media and academics should become more objective.

In the UK, the interviewees deplored the fact that that some parts of the anti-war movement concerning Iraq were marked by antisemitic incidents. In their opinion, some of the demonstrations were mainly organised by “pacifists and Islamists”. In some cases, the Magen David was likened to the swastika, and the slogans and leaflets against the war in Iraq were accompanied by slogans against Israel. The interviewees added that the Muslim Brothers and djihadist organisation were seen among the demonstrators.

The paradoxical use of the Shoah and the symbols related to it were said to be unbearable for Jewish people. In Spain, which had not been touched by the Shoah directly, the Shoah is only becoming better known nowadays, according to the Spanish interviewees. However, they stated that the initial impact was negative for the Jews resulting in frequent equations between Zionist Israel and Nazi Germany, Sharon and Hitler, the Magen David and the Swastika in the context of the Middle East conflict, mainly in the discourse of the left, the press and the TV through caricatures, editorials and reports. According to the interviewees, parts of the Spanish press time and again confuse Israelis and Jews. Interviewees stressed that since the beginning of the Second Intifada, the Jewish community felt uncomfortable. They concluded that in a country where the Palestinian cause was very popular and where Jews had been absent from public life for a long time and had become victims of religious prejudice, this

confusion was now deeply rooted. The interviewees explained that in general, globalisation allowed everyone to speak about all the countries and governments of the world and to criticise them. According to the people interviewed, however, Israel was criticised inappropriately by the Spanish press, which sometimes deployed clichés and a specific iconography. In the interviewees' opinion this shows that traditional antisemitism still affects the images and language used at present. Journalists or the left may target Israel in their struggle against imperialism and colonialism, the interviewees said, but referring to "Jewish tanks", was a very different matter.

Negative reporting by the press and its spin-off on Jews were also the subject of statements of the German and Austrian interviewees. In France, all those interviewed thought that parts of the press ought to show more responsibility in its reporting. They judged that the flow of images, and items of misguided or even intentional misinformation on the Middle East did not contribute to creating an objective overall picture of the issue. The confusion between Jews and Israelis was still perceived as a common feature, despite the efforts by Jewish organisations to inform French journalists about the difference. On the other hand, interviewees noted that some Israeli journalists tended to see France as an antisemitic country, which was not the case in their opinion. For the interviewees, other matters of concern remained both the Internet and Arab media, present in many Muslim Arab households, which were seen as a source of misinformation and an important factor contributing to the development of anti-Jewish sentiments. This statement was shared by the interviewees in the UK, Belgium, Spain and Italy.

Interviewees also drew attention to their observation that in some countries anti-Israelism had led to reprisals in the form of the withdrawal of academic cooperation, as had been the case in France and the UK. In Spain, the interviewees stated that some publishers had ceased to translate important Israeli authors as they used to do the past. On the other side, notice was given about highly qualified professionals with a long experience on Israel who were no longer being hired. All these phenomena were seen as severely disturbing.

None of the interviewees denied the right to question attitudes in favour of the Palestinians. But the question of the limits was raised. In France, the frequent use of violence by pro-Palestinian sympathisers was heavily criticised. In the UK, one of the interviewees, who is deeply involved in the dialogue between Jews and Muslims, could understand that these two communities may take opposite viewpoints on issues of the Middle East conflict. However, one might hate the present Israeli government, he said, but one could not question the existence of the State of Israel. This would be a step too far. In fact, for this interviewee, Muslims and Jews are natural allies, but the spilling-over of the conflict has created divisions. According to him, what is happening between Israel and the Palestinians, with Al-Qaida, in the Gudjarat or in Iraq, war and terrorism, and very European fears inspired by Islam – all contribute to a growing Islamophobia, to a greater isolation of the Muslims, to more

extremism. The interviewee voiced the opinion that in such a situation, the Jews were a soft target to blame.

Another dimension of the Middle East conflict is the relation between a commitment in favour of Palestine and the feeling of guilt of citizens of countries formerly involved in the Shoah. German interviewees had the impression that showing solidarity with the Palestinians created for some people and groups an opportunity to avoid the debate on the Shoah and Germany's guilt. According to the interviewees, parts of the population repeatedly stated that Sharon was at the origin of the second Intifada and that Jews as such were mainly responsible for the crisis in the Middle East. The interviewees explained that very often Jews were thus automatically considered as representing Israel and told that they were responsible for what was happening there.

In Austria, too, one of the interviewees said that the Middle East conflict gave a lot of people and organisations the opportunity to deal with the Shoah in a different way (“eine neue Aufrechnung mit der Shoah”), which may allow them to discharge themselves from the guilt they might feel. Drawing a parallel between Jews and Nazis had become a common behaviour among certain parts of the right and left wings of the political spectrum, so that one could speak about a rhetoric of exculpation (“Entlastungsrhetorik”), the interviewee stated.

The intensity and violence of the debate varies from country to country. In Austria, where its level was estimated to be low compared to what happened in other EU-countries, it was also considered a question of interest to the Jews as to whether the violent rhetoric around the Middle East issue was a safety valve which reduced the likelihood of physical aggression against the Jews, or whether it incited them.

In France, the debate was assessed as being explosive. All interviewees stressed the growing importance of antisemitism in the debate concerning the Middle East conflict, especially in the politics of the far left. According to the interviewees, critics of Israel's politics are gradually shifting to an antisemitic discourse in parts of the Green party and among globalisation opponents as far as they raise the question of the legitimacy of the State of Israel. This new antisemitism, the interviewees concluded, demonstrated in a covert way sympathy for the dead and condemnation of the living Jews. This new antisemitism equated anti-racism with sympathy for the Palestinians, while treating the Middle East conflict as the only conflict on the globe.

Another point raised by the interviewees in France and Belgium was the reported partiality of teachers in public schools who abused their position to present their view of the Middle East conflict directly to their students. In France, the interviewees mentioned as an example the following incident in a *lycée* in Paris: a young girl had been expelled from the classroom for wearing a medal which looked like an identification medal of the Israeli army, because the teacher had argued that he would not accept a student displaying the symbol of

an army of occupation. After the lesson, the girl had been beaten by classmates and transferred to another high school. The teacher, known for his pro-Palestinian commitment, had not been investigated by the competent authorities and the teachers' unions had protected him. In Belgium, one experienced Jewish educator who was interviewed also commented on the phenomenon of extreme left wing anti-Zionism directly brought forward by teachers and professors, who could significantly influence their students.

In some cases, according to the interviewees, authorities did not handle relevant conflicts with the appropriate distance. A significant incident that took place in 2002 in Belgium was reported by the Belgian interviewees. The federal Ministry for Cooperation, held by the Ecologist party, had planned the publication of a booklet on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Due to its partisan and revisionist content, the publication had been stopped at federal level, but some months later, it was published by the Flemish Ministry of Education and Cooperation led by an AGALEV cabinet member. Jewish people strongly resented the way some officials had tried to associate them with the Middle East conflict and to liken the actions of the Israeli army to a kind of ritual murder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 5. THE SHOAH

The way in which authorities and civil society in the different Member States handle the Shoah and the problems and consequences related to it constitutes a very important yardstick for the members of the Jewish communities to assess the state of their relations to their social and political environment, as well as the relation of this environment to the living and the dead Jews.

The thesis of the German interviewees was that antisemitism cannot be equated with other types of racism. They underlined that Auschwitz and the Nazi crimes were a rupture in the process of civilization, something unprecedented in human history, a view that was shared by most of the interviewees in the other countries. Neither the Germans nor the Jews would overcome this rupture rapidly, they added. They considered the same being true for other countries where authorities or collaborators took part in the deporting and killing of the Jewish people.

In Germany, one interviewee mentioned an opinion poll in which it became clear that over 60 per cent of the people think that the past should not be spoken about any more. This phenomenon, he stated, was an increasing characteristic of daily life. The shock of Auschwitz seemed to be vanishing. Interviewees stated that the mention of the genocide of the Jews in a conversation in these days sometimes did not provoke more than a shrugging of shoulders, generally

accompanied by sentences as “Why should we feel concerned? We cannot take the responsibility of the deeds of our parents!”

Concerning the Shoah, the German interviewees declared that there was some concern about memorials and about the dealing with the past. They described the trend to put the Shoah and the Stalinist terror regime onto the same level, negating the uniqueness of the Shoah, as having an impact on collective attitudes, and influencing the debate on compensations. The Jewish people had the impression that, from the official side, not enough was undertaken in the way of a creative discussion on Jewish people, so as to encourage a constructive coexistence. Interviewees stated that some politicians had included the representatives of industry in the discussions on compensations for forced labour, but not the representatives of the Jewish population.

According to the interviewees in Austria, the Jews there judge that they were deprived of the means to lead a Jewish life in 1938 and they have not obtained them back. Therefore the debate about restitution, especially to the community as such, constitutes a core issue between the Austrian Jewish community and the Austrian government. However, the interviewees pointed out that whereas in Germany this issue was addressed openly, in Austria hardly anyone spoke out on it. The dispute had therefore escalated into an open conflict. The interviewees in Vienna identified different types of problems: the compensation for individual victims, equality on the level of social rights between Austrians and Austrian Jews, the attribution of Jewish goods that had been taken into public ownership after the war, insufficient compensation to the communities. Almost no decision, they underlined, had been taken by the State, particularly concerning the goods of the communities. During the EU sanctions against Austria, there had been some progress, the interviewees reported. They had the impression that the government worked on the question not for the sake of the Jews, but in order to remain on good terms with its political partners. The interviewees had the impression that the restitutions were executed not because it was the right thing to do, but merely because the government was obliged to do so. They pointed out that Chancellor Schüssel had stated that Austria had been the first victim of Nazism. Reportedly, the debate on restitutions went so far as to trigger a debate on the question as to whether Jewish culture was a part of Austrian culture.

Therefore, the interviewees said, despair had grown to an immense extent. They had the impression that only a few teachers were teaching the real facts of WW II in the schools, and noted that the Museum of Mauthausen existed, but was suffering from a lack of resources. The Research Institute on the Shoah had stopped its activities for the same reasons, the interviewees reported. Having counted on new funds, the community had to dismiss some new employees. A historical study on the expropriations had been performed, but the findings of the researchers had not been published. The interviewees added that the media did not cover this issue enough, and they felt that the historical truth was concealed.

In France, as has already been stated, according to the interviewees, teaching the Shoah meets growing difficulties in the colleges of some urban areas because of the opposition of many students of Arab Muslim origin, and the passivity of the teachers.

In Italy, the way the Shoah is handled was assessed as rather ambiguous by the interviewees. The State and the political class, they explained, be it from the left or the right, recognised that there was a problem of antisemitism. Interviewees confirmed that the facts about the Shoah were taught in the schools, and 27<sup>th</sup> January was commemorated. The textbooks spoke about the Shoah. Numerous initiatives were taken by teachers beyond the normal curricula. Seminars were organised, Anne Frank's diary and Primo Levi's "If This is a Man", a major autobiographical document on the life in the concentration camps, were studied. Eye witnesses, survivors from the concentration camps, spoke to the pupils and students and they were listened to. But after their testimony, according to the interviewees, problems sometimes came up. The Italian interviewees related that questions were asked such as "Why are the Jews nowadays behaving like the Nazis had done in the past?". For the interviewees, the simplifications of the press were visibly conditioning young people. Interviewees told that some survivors now had reservations about going back to the schools, because this type of question hurt them. If they went, they were now chaperoned with specially qualified people to answer these kind of questions.

In Greece, according to the interviewees, important progress had been made on 27<sup>th</sup> January, which had become an official Shoah Memorial Day. The Shoah has reportedly become an important element in public discourse. However, according to the interviewees, very little importance had been attributed so far to education and awareness rising about the Shoah that had led to the murder of 83 per cent of Greek Jews. School history textbooks dedicated only four or five lines to it. The KIS would like to see more activity in the future to allow young people to understand what happened during WWII and also suggested that the occasion of the 27<sup>th</sup> January should be used for that purpose. Interviewees added that the chairman of the Community of Thessalonica undertook a positive action for improving the status of the Jewish communities in Greece. He had organised a search in Albania that had led to the discovery of the remains of colonel Mordechai Frizis, a Greek Jewish officer who had been killed during the Italian-Greek war of 1940-1941. His remains had been repatriated, and buried with full military honours in the presence of the President of the Hellenic Republic, while a memorial had been erected to honour the 500 fallen Greek Jewish soldiers out of the 12,000 who had fought.

According to the interviewees, there are nevertheless always issues to be resolved with public authorities. In Thessalonica, for example, the interviewees stated that the university was built on what was part of the old Jewish cemetery, on a large section of land given by the city of Thessalonica to the Jewish community. The community now claimed ownership of the site and was seeking an out of court settlement respecting its rights and providing it with new

means to finance its activities, synagogues, schools, and social welfare organisations.

The UK is not a country directly involved in the Shoah. However, the teaching on the Shoah is widespread in the UK, according to the interviewees. They reported that on the Holocaust Memorial Day, on 27<sup>th</sup> January, the day of the liberation of Auschwitz, special classes were held at all the different levels of the educational system. Teachers may go to visit Auschwitz with their classes. Three institutions, the Holocaust Memorial, the National Holocaust Museum and a private Christian museum in Nottingham reportedly contributed a lot to a better knowledge of the Shoah. For one interviewee, deeply involved in inter-communitarian relations, it was necessary to deal with the history of the Shoah particularly in countries where ethnic diversity was increasing. When digging up their past, whites, Jews and Muslims, as well as other religious communities, would discover parallels between their stories.

Spain had not been involved in the most direct way in the Shoah, even if some members of the Jewish community are to be considered as survivors. But, according to the interviewees, the phenomenon (also existing in other member States) by which respect is testified to the dead and yet not accorded to the living also exists in Spain, even if in a different manner. Since 1992, the interviewees stated, there had been efforts to reconstruct the Sefarad, the old Jewish Spain that had been eradicated in 1492 and was considered in Jewish historiography as a catastrophe, as some kind of Shoah. According to the interviewees, people nowadays visit Jewish museums and towns, rediscover their Judería or Al-Jama and renew their ancient Jewish quarters. Interviewees stated that this kind of a “touristic judeomania” raised ambiguous feelings among today’s Jews. Some, however, were also reported to see this development as an opportunity to rediscover their history and would prefer to be involved, if only to verify what is said about ancient Jews. In the interviewees’ opinion, they want to establish a link between the Jewish world that has disappeared and modern Jews, because they feel that there should be at least “as much sympathy for the living as for the dead”. Interviewees stated that this was not evident in daily life, as the example of a shopkeeper in the Call of Barcelona (the medieval Jewish quarter) showed, who had been asked not to use panels in Hebrew on his shop.

The handling of memories, the teaching of the historical events, the relation with the living, concrete issues as restitution or compensation were seen as the main indicators of the handling of the Shoah. In none of these fields could the interviewees claim that ambiguity has been resolved.



## 6. VIOLENT AND SYMBOLIC ATTACKS

As demonstrated in the main EUMC report, reliable data collection on aggressive incidents is a very complex issue, and there is a great deal of variety in the registration of anti-Semitic crimes. Some respondents had particular views on the use and validity of statistics on antisemitism. For example, an Austrian Jewish community leader asked himself what such statistics were good for, being convinced that antisemitism could not be definitively eliminated. Rather than insisting on data collection, in his opinion, one should insist on containing antisemitism, on removing barriers, and on reducing its nuisance. In France, interviewees were of the opinion that numerous antisemitic acts of aggression were not recorded because victims were frightened to be confronted with the perpetrators. On the other hand, they said that the police were overwhelmed by the number of incidents. They estimated that in more than three quarters of the cases, no complaint was formally lodged and, even if it was, in many cases, perpetrators were quickly released. In this context, they stressed that existing and commonly used figures were neither reliable nor complete and official data collection systems must be reorganised in order to become more effective.

The interviewees described a range of violent incidents suffered by members of Jewish communities. This is not a systematic overview of data on antisemitic incidents in their respective countries, as is attempted in the main report, but it does indicate the kinds of attacks that they are personally aware of. What is particularly striking is the large number of aggressive and violent practices mentioned by the interviewees, which members of the Jewish communities reportedly suffer at work, in the streets, in the schools and universities, in public discourse, in their homes and in relation with their community institutions.

In Germany and Spain, the interviewees spoke about harsher remarks at work, linked to the conflict in the Middle East, and which assigned Jewish people as individuals who were automatically party to the conflict.

In Austria, the interviewees deplored the fact that the immigration from the East, which had strengthened their communities for a decade, had stopped. Paradoxically, they said, the number of the registered members of the community had increased whereas the number of the Jews in Austria was decreasing. Jews who had been living outside the community were coming back with old wounds that had been reopened, they stated, and they felt excluded from certain social sectors.

In France and in Belgium, the interviewees spoke about the impossibility of wearing a kippah in public without being harassed in the streets. Harassment against Jewish pupils and students in schools and universities was especially mentioned in France. The large numbers of schools, and even areas, from which Jewish pupils had to withdraw indicates, the interviewees said, that these issues

must be seriously addressed. The interviewees were quite explicit about persecution of Jewish people in schools and harassment on the streets. They stressed that policy makers in the EU needed to realise how difficult it had become to be a Jewish student in a normal high school in France and in which way the non-reaction of teachers' unions contributed to the deterioration of the situation. To illustrate this point they referred to statistics showing that whereas in the beginning of the 80's Jewish schools had approximately a total of 1,500 students, in 2003, their number had risen to more than 30,000 and they had to refuse applications due to lack of available places.

In the UK, the interviewees stated that although there was no harassment in the Universities, physical clashes triggered by Islamists in relation to the Middle East conflict had been registered. As in France, these attacks had reportedly developed parallel to attempts to boycott products from Israel, which meant especially boycotting kosher food whose major part was imported from Israel.

In France, although statistics showed that antisemitism was decreasing, it did get more and more insidious in daily life, the interviewees said. Some acts even affected the private sphere, (e.g. insulting letters, defacing the entrances to private homes) which may be less serious as far as violence was concerned, but are resented as very distressing from a symbolic point of view. There were few formal complaints against such 'minor' manifestations of antisemitism, (also defined as "due to malice" by one of the interviewees), as an inquiry would not be conclusive. Thus, figures for this increasingly common phenomenon were missing. The interviewees noted that some monitoring agencies, on the other hand, were reluctant to publish such evidence of increasing 'minor' incidents, as this could further enflame the situation.

In Germany, the interviewees stressed that anonymous letters or letters sent to the press showed a clearly increasing violent tone. The individuals adopting antisemitic attitudes were, following the figures they had at their disposal, mostly in their 30's and 40's and had university degrees. According to people interviewed, in that time, verbal attacks were mostly directed against organisations, whereas now they were targeting individuals. In Spain, reportedly some threatening letters had been sent to Jewish leaders.

In France, following official reports given by the interviewees, the scale of attacks reaches from verbal threats and insults against Jewish people in the streets to attacks with stones, gunfire or looting against synagogues, rabbinical schools, shops, medical practices, cars, houses and tombs. French interviewees mentioned incidents which had taken place during the days of the interviews. A Jewish college in Gagny had been burnt down and a rabbi had been attacked in Ris-Orangis, a suburb of Paris. The perpetrators who were arrested reportedly were in their majority young people from difficult urban areas – described by the literature as the lost territories of the Republic – whose parents are of Maghreb origin.

Desecrations of tombs in Jewish cemeteries have been recorded in Germany, France and Greece according to the interviewees.

## 7. RELATION TO THE STATE

The relation of the Jewish communities to their respective States constitutes an important aspect of the fight against antisemitism, because it is not only related to the security that the State must provide to all its citizens and communities, but because it also indicates the state of the relation between the Jewish communities and the societies they live in. The interviews showed that 60 years after WWII, this relation has remained still quite complex and ambiguous.

In Germany, the interviewees mentioned that in reality some Jews had the feeling of being emotionally deprived of citizenship ("emotional ausgebürgert") on different levels and in different fields. According to the interviewees, the situation is also influenced by the fact that a lot of new members of the Jewish communities feel still alien within their own communities because of their recent immigration from Russia and the former USSR. Nevertheless, interviewees judged that relatively speaking, Germany had done a lot and thus could be mostly satisfied with what they have done.

One can also speak about a paradox of security, as another ambiguity relates to the security issue around Jewish institutions. Because of the general situation, German interviewees explained, they were obliged to ask for the protection of the synagogues and kindergartens by the police. By a strange paradox, this necessity sometimes was turned against the Jewish population which was criticised as isolating itself too much from the Gentiles. Overall, interviewees were of the opinion that the police did not react in a sufficiently responsible way. Explicitly or implicitly, according to the interviewees, Jews are sometimes told that they were also responsible for what happens to them, that they should not feel surprised that some people adopted antisemitic behaviour because Jews had become too self-conscious.

In Austria, too, the relation to the State was reported to be difficult and complex. The interviewees identified a clear difference between what happened in Germany, where politicians had to resign if they had made antisemitic declarations, and Austria, where there was no such sanction. The Austrian State defended the physical security of the Jews, the interviewees said, but they did not fully trust the State when it came to the exercise of their civic and democratic rights. There was a lifting of the taboo on antisemitism: the FPÖ constantly raised the level of what was tolerable; the ÖVP did not comment on such developments; the State TV ORF presented information about such issues only after prime time. They felt that politicians reportedly eluded serious discussions, especially on antisemitism.

One of the interviewees explained that most of the Austrian Jews were Ashkenazes who still suffered from the trauma of the Shoah. He stated that there was therefore a ceaseless confrontation with the Austrian history and its negation, and that one could not speak about normalisation in this area. In such a context, he considered it difficult for a Jewish Austrian citizen to identify him- or herself with the state of Austria after 1938-1945. Another interviewee said that there had been some contact with the social elite until 1999, when the 150th anniversary of the community had been celebrated and personalities of the public life had attended. The interviewee was of the opinion that such an event was no longer thinkable after 2000, as it presumably would be interpreted as an anti-governmental initiative.

In Italy, the interviewees said that the Jewish community did not feel isolated from the rest of the Italian society, but they felt uneasy and somehow separated. That was the case despite the fact that the government had not adopted an anti-Israeli position and that its members did not make any kind of antisemitic comments, the interviewees said. In particular the young Jews did not feel easy. This discomfort reportedly went back to the events of Genoa in July 2001, when members of the police had shouted antisemitic slogans in the face of the demonstrators making references to the Duce or Pinochet.

However, the interviewees declared that the Jewish community trusted the Italian State that clearly wanted the presence of the Jews and had committed itself to defend them, within the limits of its capacities. As the interviewees noted at the same time, it was not capable of defending anyone in a coherent way, be it the Jews or anyone else. Having said this, they stated that the cooperation with the police forces on security matters around the Jewish institutions was considered excellent.

Interviewees described the situation in France as ambiguous, but they accepted that the government was clearly fighting antisemitism, for instance through its support of a special article in the penal code or by taking practical measures on the highest level in the State. On the other side, according to the interviewees, France pursues a Middle East policy that did not necessarily contribute positively to the softening of the national debate on this issue. The interviewees underlined that at the same time, other financial and political interests created obstacles to the resolution of the domestic dimension of the conflict, as politicians focus more intensively on the growing Muslim electorate. Generally speaking, the interviewees described the relation between Jews and the state in France as good, stating that France was not an antisemitic country.

In Belgium, the interviewees did not consider the State or the majority of their fellow citizens to be anti-Semitic. Nevertheless, they believed that the Middle East conflict and pressure by the media created a situation in which both non-Jews and Jews were pushed to “take sides”, while most Jews wanted to distinguish clearly between themselves and Israelis and in this way try to keep criticism of the Israeli government and antisemitism separate. No interviewee considered the Belgian State at either federal or regional level as anti-Semitic.

However, action taken against antisemitism was assessed as not effective, although antisemitic acts were always officially condemned. The interviewees voiced their opinion that a specific and clear vision, long-term strategy and commitment on combating antisemitism were missing, and should be developed.

They also considered Belgian political parties as not antisemitic, although they presumed that socialists may be “biased” due to their commitments and political links to the Palestinians. Liberals, as sometimes also Christian-Democrats, they saw as open ‘judeophiles’. However, according to the interviewees, a political atmosphere of “non-intervention” seems to prevail as the number of Muslim voters’ increases.

Some Belgian interviewees’ stated that the police were “not very eager to accept complaints at the start of the wave of aggressions, considering some as petty incidents”, but, since last year, had gradually become more proactive even recommending to individuals to lodge formal complaints.

In the UK, the Jewish community has reportedly in general a trusting relation to the British State. It was judged that the overall interest required good relations between all the religious communities of the country. According to the interviewees, the government has taken initiatives to involve all the religious groups in the discussion. Still the interviewees judged that, of course, any government could always do more. But they underlined that there were reasons to be reasonably satisfied. Prosecution bodies had the remit to prosecute racist, religious and hatred crimes. The openness of the British institutions was considered exemplary in this context.

In Greece, the institutional and personal contacts between the Greek government and the KIS were reported as being excellent. Jewish institutions like the KIS, the synagogues and the Jewish schools in Athens, Larissa and Thessalonica were safe, the interviewees underlined. Jewish pupils and students who attend public schools and universities faced no problems.

In Spain, very specific problems were mentioned by the interviewees. Relations with the State were depicted as problematic. In Barcelona, the interviewees said, the security of Jewish buildings was not sufficient, due to technical reasons as the authorities explained. The interviewees in Barcelona felt that the competent officials had not listened to them when they had asked for limited support in security after the attacks in Istanbul and other threats they had received. In consequence, they felt abandoned by a state that, in their perception, could not empathise enough with the Jewish people, especially since Spain had not experienced a Shoah.

Despite the cooperation law of 1992 granting Islam, Judaism and the Protestants equal rights towards the Spanish State, as had been already granted to the Catholic Church, statutory problems remained, as the interviewees stated. The

Catholic Church continued to receive funds from the State, but other religions did not. The interviewees remarked that the only State funding received by Jewish communities was for its schools from the regional governments, on a strictly voluntary basis. This situation was explained by the interviewees in terms of the reluctance by the state to fund the Muslim community. The interviewees explained that communities may be funded as long as members expressed their will that part of their taxes should be paid to their community. However, in order to do so, individuals must be recorded as members of a community, which was something that Jews refused to do for obvious historical reasons. According to the interviewees, for the moment, discussions on this issue are in stalemate because of a lack of empathy by the State.

A very important debate concerning the issue of teaching religion in Spanish schools was reportedly linked to the proposal of the State to make this compulsory for the entry to University. Even if the Spanish Constitution did not any longer recognise the concept of State religion, only Catholic catechism was taught in schools. For non-Catholic students, who are exempted from the catechism since 1953, the Ministry of Education was said to be considering establishing the subject of religions. Jews in Spain, the interviewees stated, were sceptical, because the teachers' qualifications remained unclear and because of the content of the subject, as the Ministry of Education had not consulted the religious minorities by then. According to the interviewees, the Jewish community does not have the capacity to teach Judaism as extensively as Catholics can teach Christian religion. Therefore the interviewees presented themselves as being opposed to the idea of the teaching of religion because in their opinion it could in practice only be accomplished by Catholics. Thus they could not accept that a subject may be taught with no guarantee of religious neutrality or quality, unless its content was presented to the Comisión de la Libertades and verified by the religious minorities.

Some interviewees in Belgium, France, Italy and UK perceived a lack of awareness of the dangers of terrorism by Islamist extremists and of extremist plots in Muslim communities by the political world and by the media. They also felt that the anxiety of the politicians not to raise some debates was due to the discovery of a Muslim electorate in Europe, which they did not want to upset. Interviewees from Belgium, France and Italy perceived it as a threat that the Jewish communities would not be listened to in the long term. The interviewees in the UK, however, agreed that in their country, the relations between religious and other groups were ruled by laws against discrimination, which made all public calls to discrimination or racial or religious hatred against another group, including the apology for terrorism, illegal. The formerly existing high level of tolerance had been fading, they stressed. Thus, nowadays not only the possession of Nazi material was prosecuted, but also extremist Muslim material that incited to hatred. This also applied to leaflets which called for killing the Jews and newspapers with antisemitic articles.

## 8. INTERVIEWEE'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE FUTURE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES

The way the interviewees perceive the future of their community varied from country to country, and there were also differences in the assessment of the situation from country to country.

Greece and Spain are two small communities which are still under reconstruction. The Greek Jewish communities that had almost been exterminated during WWII and were still in a process of rebuilding were simply longing, as their leaders said, for a regular Jewish life. They had the wish that the Shoah was taught to the young generations of Greeks and that the Middle East conflict was treated with more objectivity by the media, politicians and scholars. The Jews of Spain, the interviewees stated, shared one main ambition: to recreate the conditions for a normal Jewish life in Spain and to assure that the young generations were taught Judaism in their schools in Barcelona and Madrid in order to perpetuate the community. No one expressed any doubts about a future for their community

The Belgian interviewees explained that their co-religionists were primarily preoccupied with security and integration. Being Belgian Jews of the Diaspora, they considered integration into Belgian society and complying with its laws essential, as also should be for the Arab- Muslim community, with which they would like to share their experience, if that were possible. The interviews also stressed that not all Belgian Jews shared a common understanding of the situation in the country. Some Jewish people were reported to be very anxious and comparing the present situation with the 1930's. Others reportedly attribute current antisemitism to the Middle East conflict, suggesting that the situation will improve along with peace between Israel, the Palestinians and its Arab neighbours.

In France, although the interviewees insisted on the fact that their country was not to be considered as anti-Semitic, they also noted that numerous Jews thought that they did not have a future in France, as the positive signals the State had sent came too late for some.

The interviewees in the UK made it very clear that Jews did have a future in their country. But as in France or Belgium, that opinion was not shared by everyone. However, they noted, the Jews who emigrated to Israel did not do so because of the general climate towards the Jews in the UK, but for ideological reasons. The Jewish communities reportedly invested in new infrastructure. The interviewees reported that 60 per cent of the Jewish children attended the schools of their community because of higher standards of teaching, and to keep Jewish traditional knowledge. Finally, the community had built up an efficient intelligence system that contributed to the security of its people and its property.

One interviewee however offered a less optimistic perspective. He pointed to the varying degrees of social and economic success that characterise Britain's different ethnic minority communities. Some minorities, such as Indians, had started to surpass white Britons in their performance in the education system and labour market. But other minorities, particularly Muslims, were lagging behind. He considered Jews a being mainly established middle class with no particular socio-economic problems. In the context of such diverging socio-economic success, tensions were bound to arise between the different groups. Political leadership did little to address this issue and instead gave the impression of being solely focussed on the least well off, the Muslim communities. In the interviewees' opinion, much attention and support was being given to Muslim communities, leaving other communities neglected. Combined with a public and media discourse that he saw as being extremely unfavourable to Jewish people, and that Jews seemed unable to counter, this created an explosive basis for tensions between groups. In his view, Jewish people felt under siege, almost akin to the situation in 1938 and 1939. Therefore he considered it essential that Western democracies started to become more offensive in asserting human rights principles and the rule of law against extremism, particularly religious extremism. He stressed that public and media discourse needed to support human rights principles much more actively, rather than succumbing to a relativist perspective.

Asked if they saw themselves as a part of "German society", the interviewees in Germany said "yes", "no" and "Jein" ("no-yes"). They reported that some of the younger members of the communities were asking themselves more strongly than their elders if they should stay or not.

In Austria, too, the prevailing tone was more pessimistic. The interviewees explained that Austrian Jews were asking themselves if they were Jews in Austria or Austrian Jews. In that regard it was stated that the Jewish community in Austria had lived through very difficult situations. One interviewee elaborated that after 1945, people had not wanted anything but to live and had not dealt with questions which could have troubled their everyday peacefulness. After 1960, there had even been attempts of self-liquidation or self-dissolution of the community. Since 1970, the renaissance of the Jewish community had begun with the creation of schools, museums and synagogues. The interviewee said that the Jews granted a kind of credit of trust to the Austrians, by demonstrating that it could be easy to find an equitable way of living together with them. Over the last five years, the interviewee stressed, many Jews asked themselves again if they had done the right thing in unpacking their cases, and if there was a future for a Jew in Austria, for a Jewish life in a Jewish community, as, after the debate on the restitutions and the status of Jewish culture in Austria, they were missing a positive message that the State wanted them as a living community.



## **9. DESIRES AND PROPOSALS OF THE INTERVIEWEES**

The following desires and proposals were elaborated by the interviewees.

### **On the Middle East conflict**

In Germany, the interviewees said that the Middle East policy of Germany and the EU should be decisive. Until now, they said, not enough criticism had been addressed towards the Palestinian side, which they considered a worrying fact. They suggested a tougher attitude.

In Austria too, a change in the discourse on the Middle East was suggested. At least, the interviewees said, the EU must launch a debate on the limits that must not be transgressed if Israel was criticised.

In France, the French Middle East policy was criticised as not necessarily contributing positively to the national debate on this issue.

### **On the relations with the Muslims**

In Belgium, the interviewees underlined that whereas the State paid for the teachers of the Islamic faith, the content of their teaching was not monitored. They therefore suggested that the State should be more careful concerning the appointment and monitoring of religious instruction teachers in public education.

The interviewees in Spain estimated that if Muslims in Spain and in the EU could be persuaded to participate in a more decisive way in the constitutional process in the EU, if more efforts could be done in the EU to improve the employment situation and the social integration of Muslims and if the Member States would consider more carefully the actual living conditions of their minorities, this would contribute in a decisive way to improve the life of the Jewish people.

### **On citizenship**

In Italy, some interviewees stated that it was important that States insist on the integration of the new immigrants in the EU by stressing the rules of the secular State and of citizenship. EU States should be careful granting the double citizenship to individuals coming from a dictatorship if they did not fulfil criteria of political, social and societal compatibility or are behaving as the

emissaries of authoritarian States. They emphasised that the EU Member States should not be intimidated by countries ruled by extremist religious leaders.

## On the media

The complaints about the media, especially in relation with the Middle East conflict or the Shoah and its consequences, were quite harsh in almost all the interviewees.

In Germany, the interviewees suggested a critical self-reflection about unequal treatment of Israel and the Palestinians in parts of the media and of the public sphere, as they estimated that some media reported on the events in a way that contributed to a rise of antisemitism

In Austria, the wish was clearly uttered that media should speak more openly instead of muddying the discourse on painful national debates such as restitution.

In Belgium, the interviewees pleaded in favour of a less partial reporting on the Middle East conflict. They also declared their wish that the press should avoid caricatures which offend the sensitivities of the Jewish community as a whole.

In France, as in Belgium, Italy and the UK, strong warnings were expressed about the influence of distorted reporting and the discourse of hatred spread by some important Arab media among local Muslim households.

In Greece, the interviewees stated that they would appreciate it if there was an end put to the confusion in the press between Jews and Israelis and if more objectivity characterised the reporting on the Middle East conflict. They also stressed that slander against Jews and their religion should receive a treatment equal to the one of slander against the Greek Orthodox church.

In Italy too, the interviewees expressed the desire that parts of the media should be more objective on the Middle East if they did not want to incite hostility in peoples' attitudes.

In Spain, the interviewees said that the life of Jewish people would be improved if media refrained from reviving old antisemitic myths which badly affected the life of the Jewish community.

## **On education**

Criticism was uttered in Belgium and France about unbalanced teaching on the Middle East conflict by some left leaning teachers. The interviewees suggested that such proceedings must be stopped by the responsible authorities.

In Greece and in Italy, school books were criticised. Greek school books reportedly did not dedicate an adequate space to the Shoah, Italian school textbooks reportedly were not free from anti-Israeli prejudices and the teachers had not received proper training on that issue.

In France, the interviewees approved the initiatives and specific steps taken by the State to ensure the application of “laïcité”, especially in the sector of education. In Germany, the interviewees stressed that democratic principles should be better defended and that the State should exclude the veil from the classrooms.

## **Immigration and multiculturalism**

A sensitive question is that of immigration. In Germany, the interviewees stressed particularly that immigration policy should be formulated in a clearer way. They underlined that actions and strategies were necessary also on a local level, which supported the respect and recognition of the "others". German society should celebrate diversity but also show its clear limits, they said, adding that Germany needed a clear positive approach to multiculturalism.

In Austria, the halt to immigration was criticised as it led to a drop in newcomers to the Jewish community.

## **Political parties**

In Italy, the interviewees suggested as a positive measure that the democratic parties from the right and the left should adopt a code of conduct about the appropriate language and behaviour to adopt toward the Jews, especially when they were using comparisons.

## Sympathy for the living

In relation to the Shoah, or for Spain to the old Sefarad, many interviewees, be it in Austria, France, Germany, Italy or Spain, spoke about their very discomfoting impression that formal tribute was paid to the memories of the Shoah, but that sympathy was not clearly forthcoming to the living Jewish communities.

In Germany, the interviewees said that there were a lot of tough discussions going on about the Shoah Memorial in Berlin or about the antisemitic speeches of MP Hohmann, but that there was not enough awareness among non-Jewish Germans in order to guarantee that the discussion on the Shoah was held in a responsible way. Many Germans, the interviewees stated, did not see and understand that they only had to grasp the solution that stood in front of them. One of the most important goals that had been underlined again and again by the interviewees was to have full respect and the tolerance for the Jewish community on the one side, and on the other side not to reduce anyone to being a “Jew”. The wish was expressed that from the official side, more should be undertaken in favour of a vivid and creative discussion about Jewish people living in Germany with the aim of improving a constructive coexistence.

In Austria, one interviewee spoke about the uneasiness regarding the situation of the Jewish community in the society. The Austrian government, in his opinion, did not show clearly that it did want to have a Jewish community. He added that this debate was fundamental.

## EU action

For the Greek interviewees, although there are indications that the EU will, as they put it, treat the Middle East conflict more objectively, there is still a lot to be done, as, for example, condemning suicide attacks as crimes against humanity.

In France, the interviewees declared, after having made an in-depth analysis of the situation of their community and of the situation of the Jews in Europe, that it was very important to support those people fighting antisemitism and to reassure the Jews that positive measures were being taken, especially now.

On the other hand, they suggested, the EU should also take a positive stance by introducing in the EU Constitution a clause that condemned and outlaws any kind of antisemitism. An Intergovernmental Conference including the Home Affairs, Justice and Education Directorates should convene to discuss concerted measures in the fight against antisemitism.

In Belgium, however, interviewees suggested that EU enlargement might also trigger fears because of the strong tradition of antisemitism in some of the new Member States. This could best be avoided through proper measures in education.

## 10. CONCLUDING REMARKS FROM THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE INTERVIEWEES

The declarations of the interviewees that have been given a voice in this essay suggest that antisemitism cannot be equated with other types of racism. According to the interviewees, this applies to any kind of antisemitism, may it come from the Christian anti-Jewish tradition whose vocabulary, theories and iconography are so deeply rooted in the European countries that they have stayed alive despite Vatican II abandoning the charge of deicide, may it come from the political far right, who still refers positively to the perpetrators of the Shoah, may it come from the anti-Zionist extreme left who had started off criticising Israeli policy and in the end questioned the legitimacy of Israel's existence, at the same time systematically confusing Jews and Israelis. Another form of antisemitism to be mentioned comes from extremist Muslim groups who recur to very violent actions and propaganda against the Jews of the Diaspora. Antisemitism is directly undermining the new start of the process of civilization in Europe after WWII, that the Shoah had ruptured.

Probably no other historical community of our continent has been subject to such a large scale of vexatious practices, symbolical aggressions and violent attacks, which affect the moral and physical integrity of its members, the normal exercise of their citizenship, the security of its community buildings and institutions, its image, its beliefs, its history and its solidarity structures as is the case for the Jews.

After 1945, many people hoped that antisemitism would never reappear in Europe, that never again would the elites tolerate Jewish people to be symbolically and physically attacked. Even if these incidents did not create a situation comparable to the generalised antisemitic atmosphere between the two world wars which existed in several countries, they have become more than a matter of concern. However, since 2002 numerous antisemitic incidents can be perceived in a number of EU Member States. Many of the interviewees appear to believe that in numerous countries, the political elites who are dependent on public votes, have hesitated to recognise the real extent of antisemitism, while swearing that another Shoah will never happen again in Europe. They feel that many of them do not listen to their Jewish fellow citizens, or consider their assessments as exaggerations.

Stating that Jewish people feel more and more uncomfortable in the EU, however, constitutes an understatement. The interviews demonstrate that the Jews feel that their discomfort, and their anguishes and fears are not understood sufficiently by non-Jews, who did not share the experience of discrimination and persecution of this very old community of the European continent.

This report aimed to summarise assessments and statements of some of the Jewish leaders or relevant figures. They speak only about perceived incidents which seem to represent the tip of the iceberg. The views expressed here will not be shared by all Jewish people or organisations. Nevertheless, it is important for political decision makers, media representatives, NGO activists and representatives of other denominations to listen to Jewish voices, without forgetting what Robert Badinter once said: “When Jews are persecuted, democracy is in danger”. They will discern how broad and deep the gap is perceived between the official discourse that commemorates and honours the victims of the Shoah and praises a future Europe almost free from antisemitism, and the present reality. And hopefully will take action.

# ANNEX I

## Alphabetical list of the interviewee's

<b>Frédéric Attali,</b>	director of the Consistoire central de France, Paris
<b>Moses Constantinis,</b>	president of the KIS, Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece
<b>Serge Cwajgenbaum,</b>	secretary-general of the Congrès juif européen, Paris
<b>Peter Fischer,</b>	officer on integration, New Länder and memorials, Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland, Berlin
<b>Couky Frohmann,</b>	vice-president of the Forum der Joodse Organisaties, Antwerp
<b>Jacobo Israel Garzón,</b>	president of the Federación de Comunidades Israelitas de España (FCIE), Madrid
<b>Stefano Gatti,</b>	assistant of the department of Studies on prejudice and antisemitism, Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea, Milan
<b>Adriana Goldstaub,</b>	director of the department of Studies on prejudice and antisemitism, Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea, Milan
<b>Nicole Guedj,</b>	at the time of the interview member of the Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme, member of the Consistoire Israélite de Paris
<b>Susanna Harms,</b>	officer for “Bürgerstiftungen für demokratische Kultur” and “Projekte gegen Antisemitismus”, Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, Berlin
<b>Anetta Kahane,</b>	chairwoman of the board, Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, Berlin

<b>Jean Kahn,</b>	president of the Consistoire central de France, Paris
<b>Stephan Kramer,</b>	executive, Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland, Berlin
<b>Michel Laub,</b>	secretary general of the Consistoire central israélite de Belgique, Brussels
<b>Dalia Levinsohn Marcovich,</b>	president of the Jewish community of Barcelona, vice-president of the Federación de Comunidades Israelitas de España (FCIE), Barcelona
<b>Philippe Markiewicz,</b>	chairman of the Comité de coordination des organisations juives de Belgique (CCOJB), Brussels
<b>Léon Masliah,</b>	adviser of Jean Kahn, Consistoire central de France, Paris
<b>David Meghnagi,</b>	Unione delle comunità ebraiche d'Italia, Rome
<b>Ariel Muzicant,</b>	chairman of the Austrian Jewish Community, Vienna
<b>Neville Nagler,</b>	director general of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, London
<b>Doron Rabinovici,</b>	historian and writer, Vienna
<b>Heike Radvan,</b>	press officer and officer for “Projekte gegen Antisemitismus”, Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, Berlin
<b>Elie Ringer,</b>	president of the Forum der Joodse Organisaties, Antwerp
<b>Aubrey Rose CBE,</b>	former Commissioner and Chair of the Legal Committee at the Commission for Racial Equality, member of the Trustee Committee of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and a former vice-president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, London



<b>David Saltiel,</b>	vice-president of the KIS (Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece), president of the Jewish community of Thessalonica
<b>Julien Klener,</b>	President of the Consistoire central israélite de Belgique, Brussels
<b>Julius Schoeps,</b>	professor and director of the Moses Mendelssohn Zentrum für Europäisch-Jüdische Studien an der Universität Potsdam, Potsdam
<b>Ady Steg,</b>	president of the Alliance israélite universelle, Paris
<b>Adina Stern,</b>	cultural affairs officer, Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland, Berlin
<b>Richard Stone,</b>	chair of the Jewish Council for Racial Equality, advisory member of the Mayor of London's Cabinet for Community Partnerships and Equalities, member of the Home Secretary's Race Relations Forum, London
<b>Marita Strasser,</b>	press officer, Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland, Berlin
<b>David Susskind,</b>	honorary president of the Centre des Communautés Laïques Juives de Belgique, Brussels
<b>Dario Tedeschi,</b>	Unione delle comunità ebraiche d'Italia, Rome
<b>Michael Whine,</b>	director of the Defence & Group Relations Division, Board of Deputies of British Jews, London
<b>Ruth Wodak,</b>	university professor of applied linguistics, Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Wien, Vienna

## **EUMC Mission Statement**

The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) is a thinking, acting and challenging network organisation, working in all sectors of society for equality and diversity, and against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in the European Union - as a network of knowledge, a bridge-builder and a service organisation.

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2004