

2026

PRESENCE, PLURALITY, CONTINUITY

Handbook on Fostering Jewish Life in Europe



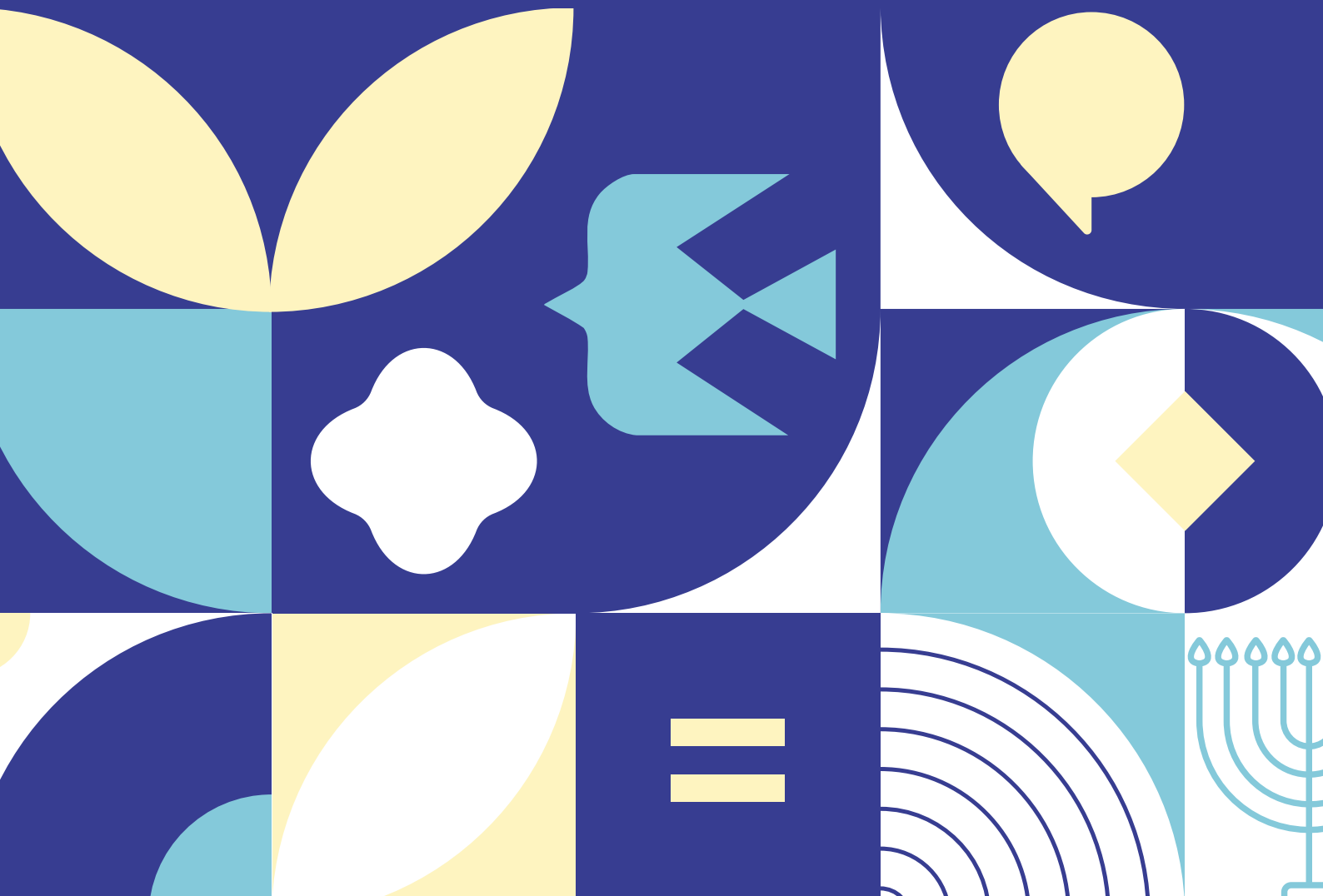
An initiative of the European Union





All actual life is encounter.
Martin Buber

Handbook on Fostering Jewish Life in Europe



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Executive Summary

The future of Jewish life in Europe is increasingly tied to the future of democratic coexistence itself. This Handbook explores the conditions necessary for Jewish life to remain visible, sustainable and fully part of European societies.

Developed within the framework of the European Commission's work on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, the publication argues that Jewish life in Europe cannot be approached primarily through the lenses of antisemitism, security, vulnerability and historical memory that have long shaped institutional and public discourse. While these dimensions remain essential, they do not fully capture Jewish life as a living, evolving and socially embedded presence within contemporary European societies.

The Handbook therefore proposes a broader strategic transition, encouraging European institutions and policymakers to move beyond predominantly reactive approaches and develop long-term conditions for continuity, participation, viability and democratic inclusion.

The publication approaches Jewish life as a dynamic ecosystem shaped through education, culture, religious practice, heritage, civic participation and everyday forms of belonging. For centuries, Jewish communities have contributed profoundly to Europe's intellectual, cultural, social and democratic development. At the same time, the Handbook recognises that contemporary Jewish life unfolds within increasingly fragile environments shaped by polarisation, demographic transformation, insecurity and the growing destabilisation of public discourse.

One of the Handbook's central concepts is viability. For European policymakers, the question is no longer simply whether Jewish communities continue to exist, but whether they can realistically imagine sustainable futures within Europe. This depends on factors that often remain invisible within traditional policy frameworks, including institutional trust, symbolic belonging, educational continuity, social legitimacy and the possibility of participating openly in public life without visibility itself becoming a source of vulnerability.

The Handbook also highlights the heterogeneity of Jewish life across Europe. Communities differ not only in size and institutional structure, but in historical experience, cultural composition, migration trajectories and relationships with public space and surrounding societies. Policy responses therefore need to remain adaptive, context-aware and capable of responding to highly differentiated local realities.

A major section of the publication focuses on cities and local governance. The Handbook introduces the concept of the "urban ecosystem" to emphasise that Jewish life is experienced concretely within the everyday environments of schools, neighbourhoods, cultural institutions and public space. Cities are therefore not simply sites of implementation, but places where visibility, participation, coexistence and vulnerability continuously intersect. From this perspective, security, education, culture, participation and heritage operate as interconnected dimensions shaping the long-term sustainability of Jewish life.

The Handbook also provides practical resources for policymakers and

practitioners. Beyond conceptual reflection, it includes operational tools intended to support institutions in diagnosing local realities, identifying structural gaps, understanding trade-offs, designing coherent interventions and evaluating long-term impact. The objective is to help policymakers move beyond symbolic gestures towards sustained and systemic approaches capable of strengthening democratic coexistence in practice.

A central dimension of the Handbook is its extensive interview and field research component. In early 2026, the research team conducted interviews with 39 individuals across Europe, including community leaders, educators, rabbis, artists, cultural practitioners, Holocaust survivors, activists and municipal actors. Covering all EU Member States as well as Turkey, Serbia and the United Kingdom, the interviews offer a continent-wide perspective on how Jewish life is experienced, negotiated and perceived across very different European contexts.

The interviews reveal a highly complex reality marked simultaneously by fragility and renewal. Security concerns and antisemitism have intensified significantly, particularly following the events of 7 October 2023, and many interviewees describe growing social polarisation, public hostility and emotional exhaustion. Yet the interviews also reveal strong attachment to Europe, renewed engagement with Jewish identity, and remarkable creativity within educational, cultural and civic initiatives. The publication therefore rejects simplistic narratives of either decline or optimism and instead presents Jewish life as a dynamic and evolving field requiring nuanced, long-term and participatory policy approaches.

The Handbook presents fostering Jewish life as a broader democratic concern rather than a narrowly communal issue. The extent to which Jewish communities can live openly, confidently and sustainably within European societies reflects the strength

of democratic coexistence itself. Policies that support participation, continuity and trust therefore contribute to the resilience of European democratic life more broadly.

The publication ultimately situates itself within a broader European reorientation already visible across institutions and policy frameworks. Alongside the necessary work of protection and security, increasing attention is being given to the conditions that allow Jewish life to remain visible, participatory, socially embedded and sustainable over time. The objective is to ensure that Jewish communities can continue to contribute actively to the democratic and cultural life of contemporary Europe, while remaining a living and evolving presence within European societies.

This Handbook is intended as a strategic resource for European institutions, national governments, municipalities, educators and civil society actors engaged in shaping the future of pluralism and democratic coexistence in Europe. Ultimately, the question raised throughout these pages extends beyond Jewish life alone. It concerns whether European societies can continue to sustain democratic environments in which visibility remains possible without fear, plural identities remain socially legible, and participation in public life continues to be experienced as a credible horizon for the future.

The future of Jewish life in Europe will depend, ultimately, on the future Europe is capable of imagining for itself.



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Introduction

1. A presence that exceeds its categories

Jewish life in Europe is not merely one presence among others. It represents a thread running through European history: a form of continuity that has renewed itself across profound ruptures while maintaining a singular capacity to generate thought, nourish cultural practices, stimulate knowledge, and enrich intellectual and scientific perspectives. Within this long historical trajectory, memory and interpretation, tradition and transformation, belonging and critical reflection have remained deeply intertwined. Together, they have contributed in lasting ways to the construction of the European space, far beyond the boundaries of the communities that embody them.

And yet, this presence increasingly risks being understood only partially. Over recent decades, European institutions have progressively recognised the importance of Jewish life through strategies, policy instruments, public initiatives, and new spaces for dialogue. However, what is formally acknowledged at the institutional level does not always coincide with what is fully understood in practice. Jewish life continues, in many respects, to exceed the

categories through which it is commonly observed. It cannot be reduced either to a minority condition or to a heritage to be preserved. By its very nature, it unfolds as a living and evolving process.

More than a static presence, Jewish life represents an experience that traverses generations, geographies, languages, and social contexts. It continuously reshapes the relationship between individual and collective life, between cultural transmission and civic participation, between knowledge and responsibility. Its significance therefore cannot be understood only through demographic, institutional, or commemorative categories. It must also be approached through the conditions that allow this presence to remain active, visible, and capable of contributing to the broader fabric of European society.

2. Regimes of visibility and forms of attention

The difficulty today does not lie primarily in the absence of attention, but in the way attention itself is organised. Jewish life tends to become highly visible during moments of rupture or crisis: episodes of violence, political tensions, public controversies, memorial anniversaries, or broader social conflicts that reactivate Europe's relationship with its past. In these moments, media attention intensifies, institutions react, and public discourse rapidly structures itself around recognisable narratives and urgent responses.



Jewish life continues, in many respects, to exceed the categories through which it is commonly observed. It cannot be reduced either to a minority condition or to a heritage to be preserved.

Over time, however, this dynamic produces a deeper effect. Visibility becomes increasingly associated with exceptionality. What appears relevant is often what manifests itself through crisis, vulnerability, or public emergency.

As a consequence, the ordinary dimension of Jewish life becomes less legible. Yet it is precisely within this ordinary dimension that continuity is sustained: in everyday community life, in education, in cultural practices, in urban belonging, in intergenerational transmission, and in the ongoing interaction between Jewish communities and wider European societies. These less visible dimensions rarely emerge through spectacular events, but they constitute the conditions through which Jewish life persists, transforms itself, and continues to contribute to European public life.

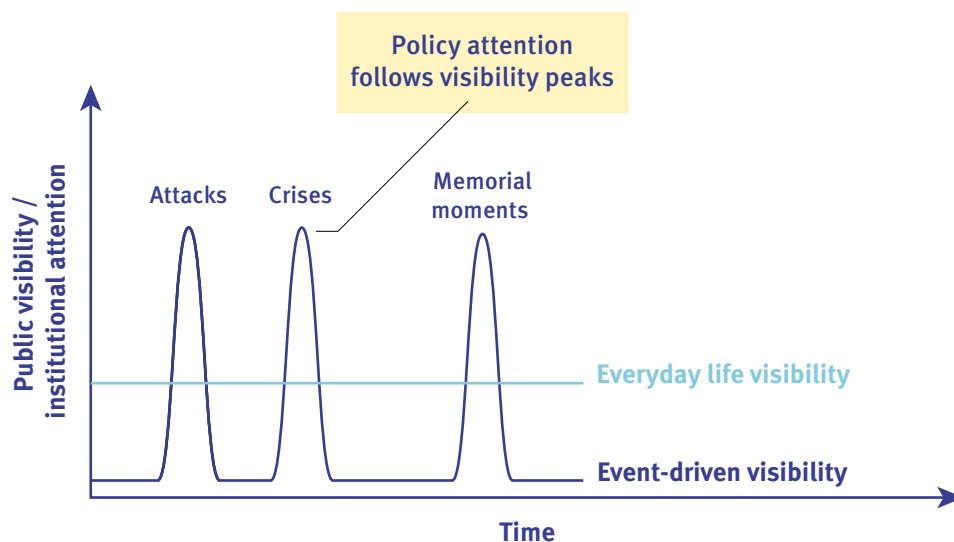
This gap between the extraordinary and the ordinary is not simply a matter of perception. It also shapes the way institutional action is structured. When attention concentrates primarily on

moments of rupture, interventions tend to organise themselves around emergency responses, security concerns, public reactions, and short-term visibility. These dimensions are both necessary and unavoidable. Yet their predominance can unintentionally obscure the longer-term conditions that allow Jewish life to flourish over time.

An imbalance therefore emerges — not only in the distribution of visibility, but in the hierarchy of priorities that visibility itself creates. What appears with greater intensity tends to define what is considered politically relevant. What remains less visible becomes harder to frame, formalise, and integrate into institutional reflection.

Within this framework, for example, the centrality of security concerns — fully justified in the current context — often comes to structure the field implicitly. Resources, competences, and public attention naturally gravitate towards protection and crisis response. At the same time, other dimensions that are less immediately visible, less measurable, or

Visibility Regimes: Events and Everyday Life



less “newsworthy” struggle to occupy an equivalent space within policy frameworks, even though they profoundly shape the long-term sustainability and quality of Jewish life in Europe.

European strategies have progressively opened space for a broader perspective. In a period marked by heightened exposure and vulnerability for Jewish communities globally, the explicit inclusion of “fostering Jewish life” alongside the fight against antisemitism within the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life represents an important conceptual shift. It recognises that protecting Jewish communities cannot be separated from strengthening the conditions through which Jewish life can continue to develop, participate, and contribute openly within European societies.

At the same time, increasing attention has been directed towards the local level, where the everyday conditions of

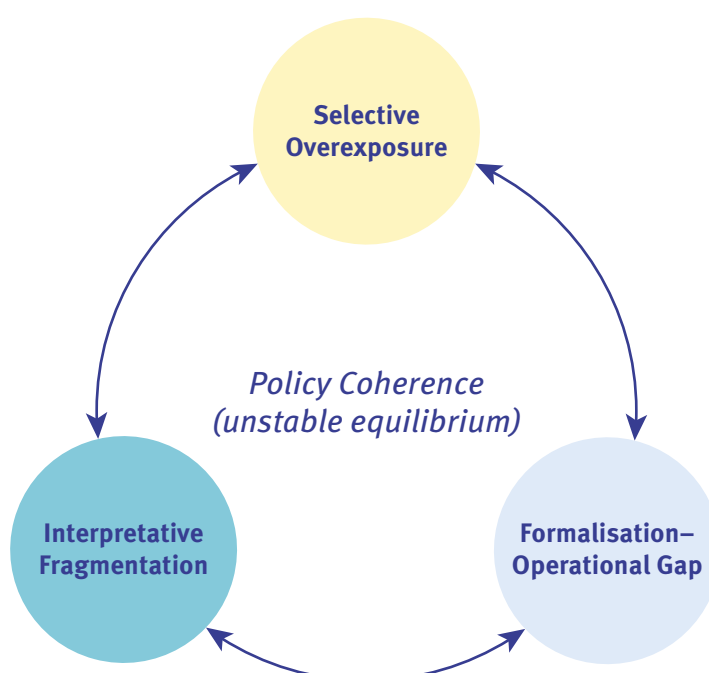
coexistence, participation, and social integration are concretely shaped. Cities, cultural institutions, educational actors, and civil society organisations increasingly emerge as central spaces in which these processes take form.

And yet, a gap remains between the broadening of this perspective and its operational translation into durable practices. While initiatives continue to multiply across Europe, they do not always develop within sufficiently shared frameworks capable of generating continuity, cumulative learning, and long-term institutional growth. It is within this tension that a new field of reflection — and action — begins to emerge.

3. Implicit dynamics, persistent effects

If this gap continues to reproduce itself, it is because it is rooted in a series of underlying dynamics that shape the field in persistent ways, often without being fully articulated.

Recurrent Structural Configurations



These are not isolated phenomena, but structural configurations that influence both how Jewish life is perceived and how public intervention is organised.

A first dynamic concerns visibility itself. Jewish life tends to emerge most intensely during moments of crisis, while its ordinary forms of existence remain more difficult to describe, recognise, and integrate into decision-making processes. As noted earlier, this asymmetry gradually reinforces a mode of interpretation in which what appears relevant coincides with what presents itself as urgent. Over time, Jewish presence risks becoming framed primarily through vulnerability, even when institutional strategies seek to broaden the understanding of Jewish life beyond this horizon.

A second dynamic concerns the relationship between institutional recognition and operational practice. Over recent years, the European framework has progressively equipped itself with strategies, instruments, dedicated bodies, and shared policy languages. This undoubtedly represents a major advancement. Yet the translation of these frameworks into continuous and grounded practices remains uneven, particularly at the local level, where Jewish life takes shape in its most concrete forms.

The difficulty here cannot be reduced simply to a lack of resources or technical expertise. It also concerns the ability to engage with a reality characterised by plural identities, territorial differences, diverse historical trajectories, and varying forms of community organisation. Without sufficient contextual understanding, even well-designed interventions risk remaining disconnected from the realities they seek to address.

A third dynamic concerns the fragmentation of the interpretative field itself. A wide range of actors operates across partially overlapping domains, mobilising categories, priorities, methodologies, and institutional cultures that do not always

converge. This plurality reflects an important level of engagement and commitment. At the same time, however, it can make the construction of durable common frameworks more difficult.

Effective practices often remain localised and difficult to transfer. Experiences do not always accumulate into shared institutional knowledge. Continuity across different levels of governance remains fragile. As a result, valuable initiatives frequently struggle to evolve into a coherent and cumulative ecosystem of practices.

Within this broader configuration, the relationship between memory and contemporary presence also becomes unstable. Memory policies continue to play an essential role in preserving Europe's relationship with Jewish history and with the legacy of the Holocaust. Yet when memory remains disconnected from the contemporary realities of Jewish life, public perception can gradually become unbalanced: the past appears highly visible — though sometimes increasingly contested — while the present remains less articulated and the future correspondingly less imagined.

At stake, therefore, is the possibility of restoring continuity to a presence that otherwise risks being perceived only in fragments, suspended between historical legacy and contemporary emergency.



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4. Making the field legible

Making these dynamics more legible is essential if public action is to acquire continuity, coherence, and depth. When underlying assumptions remain implicit, even interventions that appear consistent may fail to generate cumulative effects,



Ultimately, the challenge is not only to guarantee the survival of Jewish life in Europe, but to strengthen the conditions through which it may continue to live, evolve, contribute, and share its value openly within European society.

because they continue to operate within partially disconnected frameworks of interpretation.

The challenge, therefore, is not only to define priorities or expand available instruments. It is also to stabilise a sufficiently shared understanding of the field within which these instruments can operate over time.

Such a framework cannot simply be imposed from above. It is constructed through the categories used to describe reality,

the distinctions that organise public perception, the relationships considered relevant, and the tensions recognised as meaningful. To intervene at this level is therefore to act on the very conditions that make coherent action possible.

Without this work of interpretation, the diversity of contexts risks reinforcing fragmentation rather than strengthening the adaptability of public policy across different European realities.

This challenge cuts across all levels of governance. European strategies may define broad priorities and directions, but their effectiveness ultimately depends on their capacity to be translated into national and, above all, local contexts — the places where Jewish life is concretely lived and experienced.

In this regard, cities assume a particularly important role. They are not merely sites of implementation, but spaces in which interpretation itself directly shapes the quality of action: through the construction of continuous relationships, the recognition of plural identities, the integration of Jewish presence within wider social processes, and the creation of forms of coexistence capable of sustaining long-term social continuity.

Presence and Historical Disruption



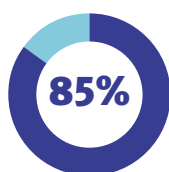
Around 1.5 million Jews currently live in the European Union



Before the Holocaust: approximately **9.5 million** Jews in Europe

Source: J. Boyd, Jews have been leaving Europe for a century and a half, and show no sign of stopping, 2021

Perceived Increase of Antisemitism



85% of Jews consider antisemitism a serious problem



9 out of 10 believe it has **increased** in their country

Source: FRA, Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism – Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU, 2018

At the same time, the construction of a shared understanding necessarily involves a plurality of actors: Jewish communities, civil society organisations, educational institutions, cultural actors, local authorities, and European institutions. Each contributes, in different ways, to shaping the field itself. Without a gradual alignment across these different levels and actors, initiatives will continue to struggle to evolve into a durable ecosystem capable of generating continuity over time.

From this perspective, the evolution of European policies on Jewish life acquires a broader significance. Attention to Jewish life is expanding, becoming more articulated, and progressively taking root across multiple domains of European public life. In doing so, it also contributes to redefining the place of Jewish presence within the European space itself.

The relationship with the past continues to shape the normative framework. Yet this relationship must increasingly engage with the realities of the present and open new possibilities for the future.

The purpose of this Handbook is precisely to contribute to this effort: to help identify a renewed point of balance between memory and presence, between history and contemporary life, between European geographies and the multiple temporalities that traverse them. Ultimately, the challenge is not only to guarantee the survival of Jewish life in Europe, but to strengthen the conditions through which it may continue to live, evolve, contribute, and share its value openly within European society — not as an exception, but as an integral part of Europe's collective future.



PILLAR I:

WHY JEWISH LIFE IS A EUROPEAN ISSUE

1 — Why Fostering Jewish Life Matters Today

Fostering Jewish life today means engaging with a reality that cannot easily be captured through the ordinary instruments of public policy. Jewish life does not concentrate only in events, nor can it be fully contained within fixed categories or institutional definitions. Rather, it unfolds through continuous processes distributed across time and space: through practices, relationships, institutions, cultural expressions, and forms of transmission that resist reduction to a single interpretative framework.

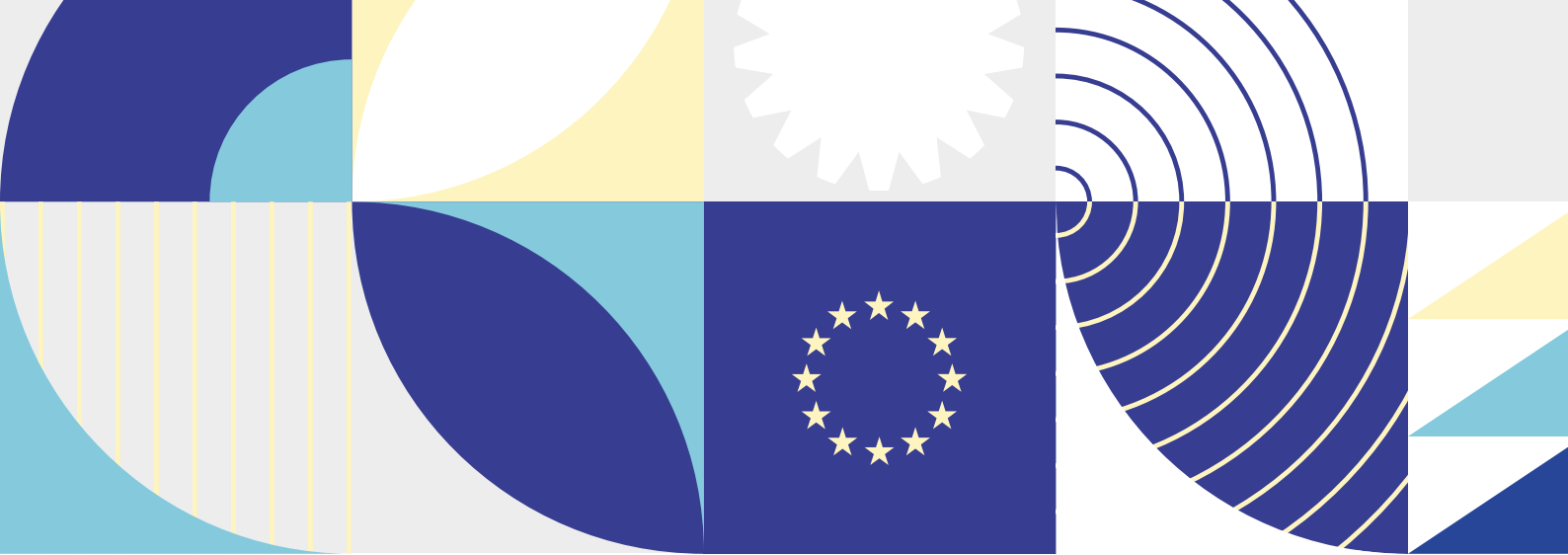
It is precisely within this continuity that the conditions are built for a presence that concerns not only Jewish communities themselves, but the broader capacity of European societies to include, understand, transmit, and transform meaning across generations. In this sense, Jewish life should not be approached merely as a static object of policy intervention. It also represents a field through which wider social and political dynamics become visible: the relationship between memory and the present, between belonging and

participation, between institutional stability and cultural transformation, between particular identities and shared civic spaces.

Approaching Jewish life in this broader way also means recognising that its significance extends beyond moments of crisis or public controversy. It concerns the everyday conditions through which a plural and democratic society sustains cultural continuity, protects diversity, and creates spaces for participation and exchange over time.

1.1. When Recognition Follows Disruption

Within the European context, the field has progressively taken shape around a set of priorities that today define a relatively clear framework for public intervention. The fight against antisemitism, security policies, and Holocaust remembrance have all contributed to the development of institutional instruments, governance structures, and forms of coordination across different levels of public action. This evolution represents an essential



achievement. It has strengthened institutional recognition of Jewish presence and improved Europe's capacity to respond to threats and forms of exclusion.

At the same time, however, this framework has also influenced the way Jewish life itself is perceived and understood. Jewish presence often becomes most visible when it enters into a relationship of rupture with its surrounding environment: when it is threatened, contested, attacked, or recalled through memory. Public institutions have progressively become more capable of responding to these moments of disruption. Yet they often encounter greater difficulty in engaging with the dimensions of Jewish life that unfold not through rupture, but through continuity.

This asymmetry deeply shapes the relationship between public attention and institutional priorities. Processes that develop gradually over time — educational initiatives, cultural ecosystems, community networks, intergenerational transmission, or forms of civic participation — often struggle to achieve the same level of visibility and institutional recognition. Not because they are less important, but because they operate through forms that do not naturally align with the mechanisms through which public attention is usually activated.

The 2021 EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life explicitly acknowledges this shift. By placing the fostering of Jewish life alongside the fight against antisemitism, the Strategy does more than introduce a new policy objective. It changes the point of observation itself. Attention moves from the conditions that require protection and response towards the broader conditions through which Jewish presence can continue to develop, participate, and contribute openly within European societies.

This shift opens an important new space for action. Yet the challenge now lies in making this perspective operational and sustainable over time.

The main difficulty is not necessarily the absence of initiatives or institutional commitment. Across Europe, projects, networks, and public interventions continue to multiply. The challenge lies rather in the capacity to read the field in its full complexity: to recognise the relationships that structure it, to connect interventions operating at different levels, and to create continuity across otherwise fragmented initiatives.

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A significant part of the current European challenge therefore lies here: not only in making Jewish life more visible, but in making it more intelligible as a field capable of orienting public action, institutional learning, and long-term democratic reflection.

1.2. A Field Shaped by Overlapping Meanings



Narratives tend to stabilise rapidly, often through simplified or polarised representations that compress the plurality of experiences and flatten relationships that are, in reality, far more complex and nuanced.

This shift takes place within a broader context that has profoundly transformed the ways identities are perceived, interpreted, and negotiated in public space. Demographic changes, increased mobility, and the transformation of informational environments have not only produced greater diversity across European societies; they have also reshaped the processes through which meaning is formed, stabilised, contested, and shared.

Identities no longer appear as fixed or stable configurations. They emerge instead across

multiple and often overlapping arenas, shaped by social, cultural, political, digital, and transnational dynamics that do not always operate according to the same logic.

Within this landscape, Jewish life occupies a particularly exposed position. Its long historical layering, its territorial dispersion, and its connection to dynamics operating simultaneously at local, national, European, and global levels mean that broader social tensions often become visible through it with particular intensity. Forms of Jewish belonging today unfold across multiple dimensions — religious, cultural, familial, social, historical, and civic — intersecting with equally diverse forms of participation and identification. These configurations vary not only between countries and communities, but also within them.

Among these dimensions, the relationship with Israel introduces an additional layer of complexity. For many European Jews, Israel may represent a cultural, historical, emotional, familial, or identity-related point of reference, often combining several of these dimensions simultaneously. Within public debate, however, this relationship is frequently interpreted through an exclusively political lens that tends to collapse different registers of belonging into a single frame of interpretation.

This overlap directly affects the way Jewish presence is perceived in European public space. It can produce simplifications, blur important distinctions, and in some cases expose Jewish individuals and communities to forms of projection or instrumentalisation that reduce the complexity of lived experience to external political narratives.

At the same time, the environments through which public representations are formed and circulated have themselves undergone profound transformation. The acceleration of information flows, the fragmentation of public debate, and the growing interconnection between local and global events make the construction of shared meanings increasingly difficult. Narratives tend to stabilise rapidly, often through simplified or polarised representations that compress the plurality of experiences and flatten relationships that are, in reality, far more complex and nuanced.

What becomes publicly recognisable depends increasingly on the forms through which it is represented.

For public institutions, this transformation affects not only the instruments of policy, but also the interpretative environments within which policy operates. The same initiative may produce very different outcomes depending on the frameworks of meaning through which it is received, the categories through which it is interpreted, and the relationships it reinforces or excludes.

It therefore becomes essential to observe not only events themselves, but also the conditions through which these events acquire meaning within public discourse. This dimension is not secondary to public action. It constitutes one of its structural conditions. Without an adequate understanding of narrative and perceptual dynamics, even coherent interventions risk generating effects that diverge from their original objectives or remain confined within limited frameworks of interpretation.

In this sense, fostering Jewish life also requires working on a less immediately visible level: creating the conditions through which Jewish presence can be recognised in its full complexity, without being reduced to partial or external representations. This challenge cuts across policy design, implementation, communication, and long-term institutional learning. Ultimately, it concerns the quality of interpretation itself.

1.3. From Visibility to Conditions of Continuity

These dynamics directly affect the possibility of building continuity in public action. When the field is interpreted through partial, fragmented, or implicit categories, initiatives often develop unevenly, struggling to establish coherence across different levels of governance and between different phases of intervention. The multiplication of projects and instruments does not automatically strengthen the field if it is not grounded in a sufficiently shared understanding of the conditions shaping its evolution.

The question therefore shifts from the simple accumulation of initiatives to the conditions that make sustained action possible over time.

Supporting Jewish life requires recognising processes that unfold gradually and often outside the forms most immediately visible to institutional observation. It means building environments in which these

processes can develop continuity, visibility, and legitimacy over time. This, in turn, requires forms of observation capable not only of identifying isolated phenomena, but also of understanding the relationships between institutional, cultural, social, political, and territorial dimensions — and the ways these relationships evolve.

Within this framework, the local dimension becomes particularly important. It is within cities, educational systems, cultural institutions, neighbourhoods, and social networks that Jewish life takes shape in its most concrete forms. European strategies and national frameworks may establish priorities and directions, but their effectiveness ultimately depends on the capacity to interpret and adapt them within the contexts in which Jewish life is actually lived.

In this transition from strategy to practice, the quality of interpretation directly shapes the quality of action. It affects the ability to recognise plural forms of belonging, to sustain long-term relationships, and to integrate Jewish presence into broader social and civic processes.

At the same time, the internal plurality of Jewish life introduces an additional layer of complexity that cannot be reduced to a single model or representative structure. Forms of belonging, modes of participation, and individual trajectories unfold along multiple lines that intersect without necessarily converging into a unified framework. This plurality makes it more difficult to rely on simplified forms of representation and instead calls for approaches capable of operating across different levels and realities without flattening their diversity.

The capacity to hold these dimensions together directly affects the quality and sustainability of public action. The challenge is not simply to expand the scope of policy indefinitely, but to strengthen

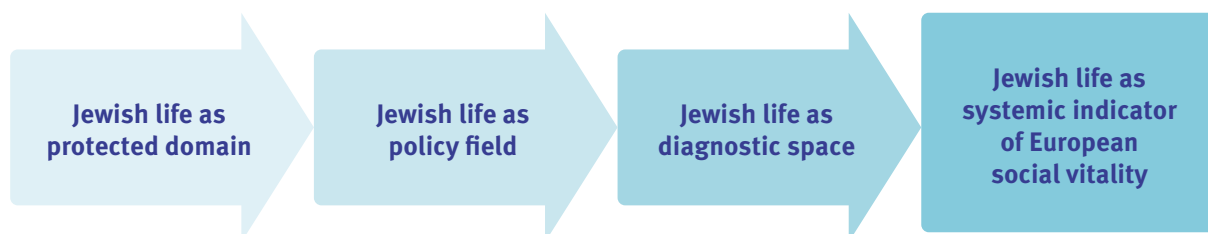
the interpretative frameworks through which the field becomes understandable and operational. What is ultimately at stake is the ability to create conditions in which different components of Jewish life can interact, evolve, and contribute without losing their specificity.

In this sense, fostering Jewish life also becomes a broader test case for the capacity of European institutions to operate within contexts characterised by complexity, plurality, and interdependence. The question is not only how to protect a minority presence, but how European societies sustain diverse forms of belonging and enable their participation within a shared democratic space.

This perspective opens a further question that requires deeper exploration: what do we concretely mean when we speak about “Jewish life”? What dimensions compose it? How are these dimensions articulated? And through which configurations do they become visible, sustainable, and capable of evolving over time?

The next chapter seeks to explore these questions by shifting the focus from the general conditions shaping the field to the ways Jewish life itself is defined, structured, experienced, and made intelligible.

From Sectoral Issue to Systemic Indicator



2 — What is “Jewish Life”? A Plural, Evolving System

2.1. Continuity without a single form

In the contemporary European context, Jewish life takes shape as a layered and evolving reality, traversed by multiple forms of belonging that do not converge into a single model and resist reduction to any fixed definition. Rather than a stable set of characteristics, it is better understood as a dynamic field in which religious, cultural, historical, familial, social, and civic dimensions intersect in different ways across time and space.

This plurality is not simply the result of internal diversity. It is also one of the ways Jewish life has historically sustained continuity while adapting to changing environments and broader social transformations. Its continuity depends less on the rigidity of inherited categories than on the capacity to maintain relationships between elements that evolve while remaining recognisable over time.

Within this dynamic lies a long intellectual and cultural tradition in which interpretation, debate, and disagreement are not exceptions to continuity, but central mechanisms through which knowledge, meaning, and collective experience are produced and transmitted across generations.

Available evidence reflects this structure clearly. In lived experience, Jewish identification rarely appears as a single or uniform condition. Rather, it emerges as a constellation of practices, memories, relationships, values, institutions, and forms of participation that combine differently according to individual trajectories and social contexts. The significance of each

element depends on the relationships it establishes with others, and its relative importance may shift over time, even within the same life experience.

This interdependence becomes particularly visible in the ways Jewishness is lived and experienced. Individuals do not generally begin from an abstract definition of identity that is then applied to everyday life. Instead, belonging often takes shape through practice itself: through education, participation in collective moments, family relationships, cultural experiences, rituals, everyday choices, and forms of social interaction that gradually acquire meaning over time.

At the same time, these practices are never entirely neutral or automatic. They are shaped by motivations, expectations, personal interpretations, and broader social environments that continuously influence the way identity is experienced. Definitions, practices, and motivations therefore interact with one another without stabilising into a fixed or linear order.

Identity, in this sense, is not simply the repetition of a pre-existing model. It is continuously reinterpreted through a process that holds together continuity and transformation.

Within this broader fabric, certain recurring references continue to provide important points of orientation: traditions, religious practices, historical



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memory, family histories, social ties, shared cultural frameworks, and forms of collective belonging. These elements do not function as rigid boundaries. Rather, they act as resources through which continuity can be recognised across diverse experiences while still allowing space for adaptation to changing contexts and individual trajectories.

The boundaries of identity are therefore shaped within this space of adaptation itself. They emerge through ongoing processes of differentiation, interaction, negotiation, and integration that evolve according to social relationships and cultural conditions. Rather than defining a fixed border

between what is “inside” and “outside,” they describe a mobile and evolving field in which meanings of belonging are continuously redefined over time.

This dynamic between continuity and becoming has historically been one of the defining characteristics of Jewish life itself.

2.2. Between inheritance and becoming

Within this framework, a series of tensions emerge that have long shaped Jewish history and experience in distinctive

cultural, philosophical, and social ways. Among the most significant is the relationship between inheritance and choice: between forms of belonging received through historical and familial continuity, and forms of identification that are progressively constructed over time.

For many individuals, Jewish belonging is linked to family histories, collective memory, and inherited traditions that precede individual choice. At the same time, belonging may also develop through processes of personal identification, cultural engagement, intellectual exploration, or evolving participation within communal life. These dimensions do not exclude one another, nor do they resolve into a single

synthesis. Their coexistence keeps the space of identity open, allowing transformation and reinterpretation without necessarily severing continuity with what came before.

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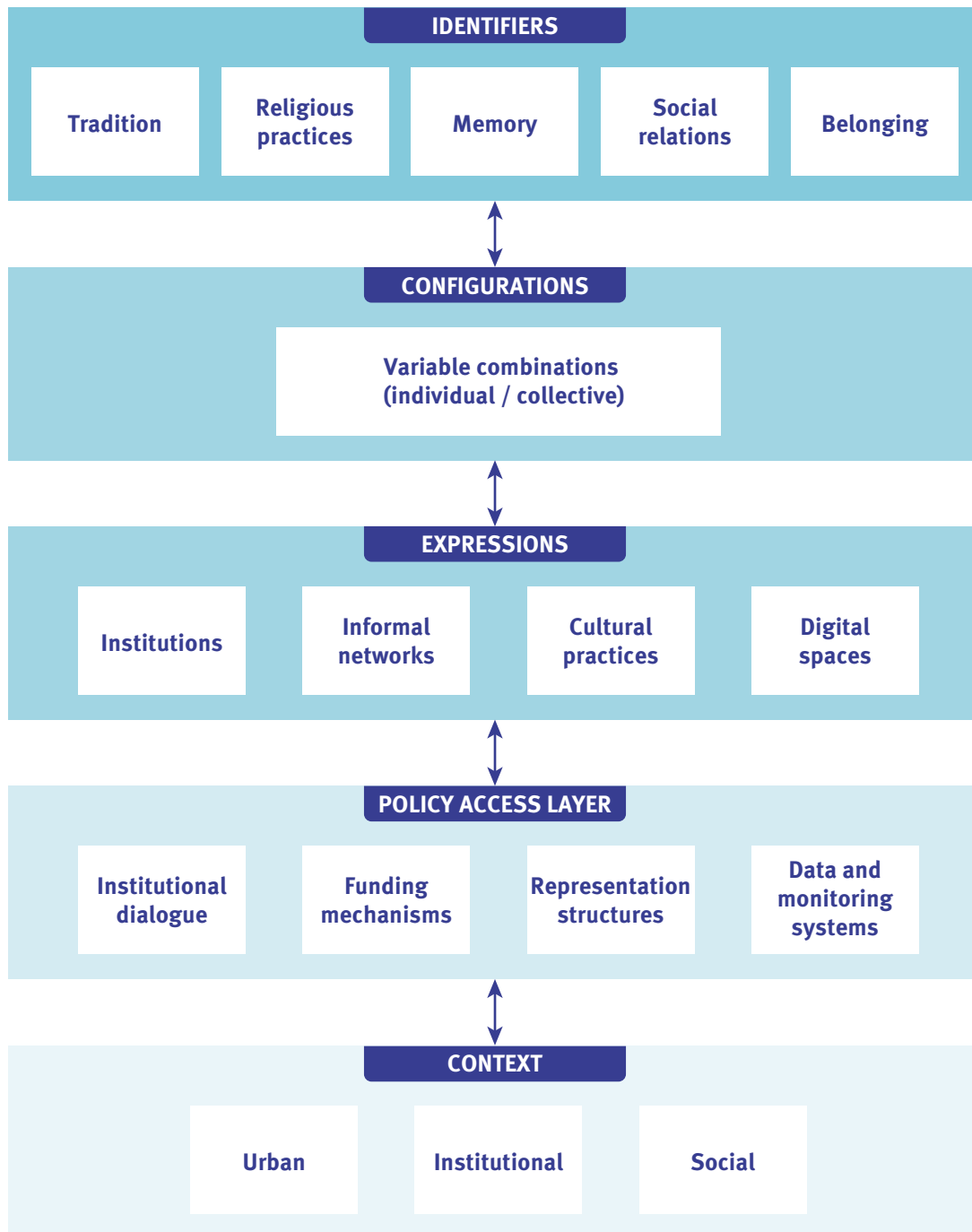
A similar tension can be observed in the relationship between institutional structures and more diffuse forms of participation. Formal institutions continue to play a fundamental role in sustaining continuity, transmitting knowledge, organising collective life, and creating spaces of representation and social cohesion. At the same time, important forms of Jewish experience increasingly develop through less formalised environments: relational networks, cultural initiatives, artistic practices, educational spaces, digital communities, and forms of social participation that do not always translate into structured institutional belonging.

These expressions should not be understood as peripheral to Jewish life. On the contrary, they actively participate in reshaping its boundaries, languages, and forms of articulation within contemporary societies.

The coexistence of these different dimensions creates an important distinction between what is immediately visible and what more subtly shapes Jewish experience over time. Certain forms of participation are easily recognisable because they correspond to established organisational structures or institutional frameworks. Others operate through more dispersed, informal, or relational modalities that require different forms of attention in order to become visible.

Their lower visibility does not diminish their importance. It simply changes the conditions through which they can be perceived, interpreted, and integrated into public understanding.

Configurations of Jewish Life



This distinction has direct implications for institutions, policymakers, researchers, and civil society actors seeking to engage with the field. Observation cannot be limited to identifying isolated indicators or already codified forms of participation. It also requires the capacity to recognise relationships, transitions, interdependencies, and emerging configurations that may not yet fit established categories.

Understanding Jewish life therefore means holding together what provides continuity and what signals transformation. It means recognising stability without overlooking change, and acknowledging plurality without dissolving the possibility of collective experience.

It is within this balance that Jewish life becomes intelligible in its concrete and evolving forms.

2.3. Where Jewish life takes form

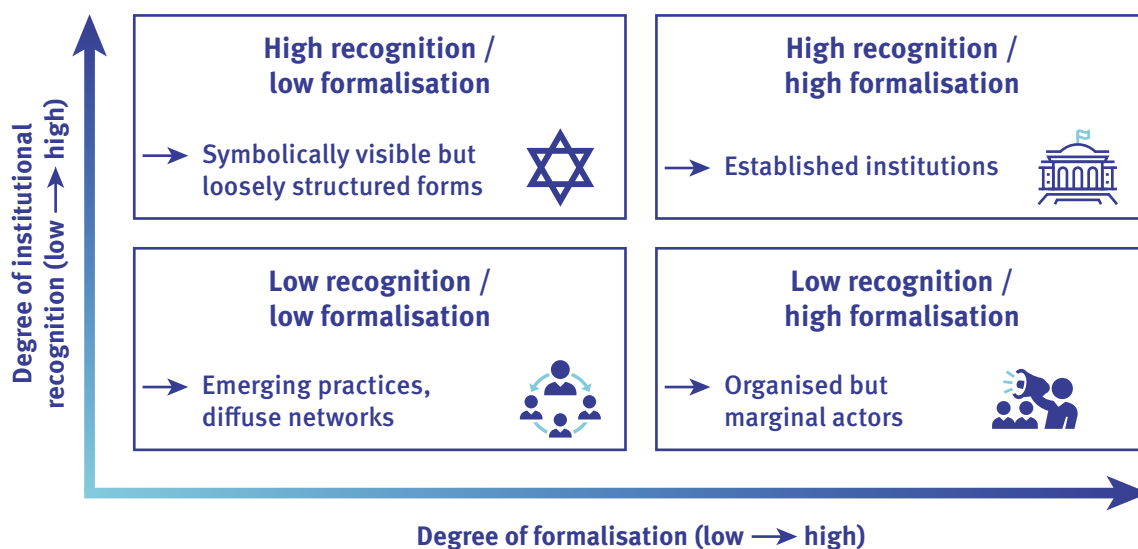
This configuration becomes more visible when observed through its territorial and social dimensions. Jewish life does

not unfold uniformly across Europe. It takes shape in relation to the specific environments in which it develops: different cities, local histories, institutional cultures, demographic realities, and forms of social interaction all influence the ways belonging is expressed, experienced, and transformed over time.

The same practices, traditions, or reference points may therefore acquire different meanings depending on the contexts in which they emerge. Jewish life in a large metropolitan centre does not necessarily take the same form as in smaller cities, peripheral regions, or places where Jewish presence has become fragmented, recently reconstituted, or historically discontinuous.

This variability concerns not only visible expressions of Jewish life, but also the conditions that make these expressions possible. Access to educational infrastructures, community networks, cultural institutions, religious services, social spaces, and supportive relationships with local authorities all directly affect the ability to sustain participation and continuity over time.

Representation and Recognition Gap



Jewish life therefore develops through a continuous interaction with its surrounding environment. Context does not determine its possibilities entirely, but it strongly shapes the conditions under which these possibilities can emerge, evolve, or remain fragile.

This territorial dimension also affects how Jewish life becomes publicly recognisable. More structured and institutionalised forms of participation tend to appear more clearly within systems of observation and governance. By contrast, forms of engagement that develop through more informal, dispersed, or relational modes often require different forms of attention in order to become visible.

The distinction here is not simply a matter of visibility itself. It concerns the conditions through which a form of life becomes legible within institutional and policy frameworks.

At this point, the question of representation becomes particularly significant. Processes through which interlocutors are identified, partnerships established, and priorities defined naturally tend to privilege what appears most organised, structured, and institutionally recognisable. Over time, this dynamic can stabilise certain representations of Jewish life while leaving others less visible within decision-making spaces, even when they play a substantial role in sustaining Jewish continuity and vitality.

This selectivity is not necessarily the result of deliberate exclusion. More often, it reflects the operational logic through which institutions function: the need for identifiable counterparts, formal structures, representative bodies, and clearly articulated organisational frameworks.

Yet over time, these mechanisms can produce cumulative effects. Certain forms of Jewish life become increasingly integrated into institutional processes, while others remain more difficult to access, interpret, or support.

For public action, this introduces an important challenge concerning the quality of attention itself. Engaging seriously with the complexity of the field requires the ability to operate across multiple levels simultaneously: maintaining the essential role of established institutions while also recognising forms of participation and belonging that develop outside more formalised structures.

It is precisely within this capacity that the possibility emerges to sustain continuity without reducing plurality.

The relationship between stability and transformation unfolds within this same space. Consolidated institutions provide continuity, transmission, and structure. Emerging forms introduce adaptation, experimentation, and new modes of participation. Their interaction does not follow a linear trajectory. Rather, it produces evolving balances shaped by social conditions, historical experiences, institutional relationships, and broader political and cultural environments.

From this perspective, Jewish life appears less as a fixed structure than as an evolving system of relationships.

Understanding it therefore requires a shift in perspective: from isolated components towards the conditions that enable interaction, continuity, and transformation over time. The ways these relationships are recognised, interpreted, and represented ultimately shape not only their visibility, but also the operational boundaries within which public action becomes possible.



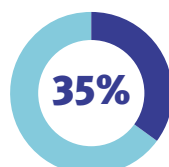
The challenge is not simply to expand the scope of policy indefinitely, but to strengthen the interpretative frameworks through which the field becomes understandable and operational.

Demographic decline and identity patterns

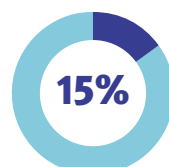


Since 1970, Europe has lost **59%** of its Jewish population

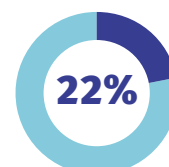
35% of European Jews define their identity primarily in **religious terms** (compared to 15% in the United States and 22% in Israel)



Europe



United States



Israel

Source: Della Pergola, Sergio. Jewish Demographic Policies: Population Trends and Options in Israel and in the Diaspora. Jewish People Policy Institute, 2011

Perceptions, prejudice and internal awareness



21% of European citizens agree that Jews “**pursue their own interests above those of their country**”



60% of European Jews report having **direct knowledge of Jewish communities abroad**



21% of European citizens agree that Jews “**overstate their suffering**”



46% of European Jews are familiar with the **goals of major European Jewish organisations**

Source: Pew Research Center, May 29, 2018, “Being Christian in Western Europe”

Dimentstein, Marcelo. Sixth Survey of European Jewish Community Leaders and Professionals, 2024. JDC International Centre for Community Development (ICCD), 2024

Della Pergola, Sergio, and L. Daniel Staetsky. “The Jewish identities of European Jews: What, why, and how.” London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research JPR, European Jewish Demography Unit, 2021

FRA, Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism – Third survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU, 2023

3 — Europe as an Ecosystem: A Multilevel Framework

3.1. From Presence to Conditions: Where Jewish Life Takes Shape

If the previous chapters have presented Jewish life as a plural and evolving field — one that often exceeds the categories through which policy frameworks tend to interpret it — it now becomes necessary to examine the broader context within which this plurality develops, stabilises, transforms, or at times becomes fragile.

This context should not be understood as a neutral background. It consists of a set of social, institutional, cultural, and political conditions that directly shape the possibility of transforming presence into continuity and visibility into meaningful recognition. It is within these conditions that individual initiatives acquire the possibility of generating lasting effects when connected to wider processes and relationships.

For a long time, this context was interpreted primarily through the lens of a normative architecture. Much of the European Union's strength and legitimacy has historically rested on its capacity to establish shared rules, coordinate different levels of governance, and organise diversity through common frameworks and instruments. This dimension remains essential. It has made possible the emergence of a European field of action in areas such as combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, as reflected in the 2021 EU Strategy.

At the same time, experience increasingly shows that normative frameworks alone are not always sufficient to explain how policies actually produce effects once they encounter social reality.

As policies move across different levels of governance, they are not simply implemented in a linear way. They are interpreted, adapted, negotiated, and sometimes redefined through practice itself. Priorities formulated at the European level encounter national political cultures, institutional traditions, legal systems, and administrative realities that shape their translation in different ways.



As policies move across different levels of governance, they are not simply implemented in a linear way. They are interpreted, adapted, negotiated, and sometimes redefined through practice itself.

At the local level, this process becomes even more dynamic. Cities, educational environments, cultural institutions, and community networks introduce additional layers of transformation, where proximity between actors, relational density, and rapidly evolving public perceptions continuously reshape the meaning and impact of interventions.

What changes in this movement is not only the operational form of policy, but often its practical meaning.

As a result, the relationship between governance levels cannot be understood through a purely linear logic of transmission. European, national, and local levels do not simply align in a hierarchical chain. They interact through ongoing processes of exchange, adaptation, and feedback that continuously redefine their boundaries and influence one another.

Local experiences may reshape broader policy debates through networks, public discussion, and institutional learning,

while global dynamics can rapidly affect European societies in ways that destabilise even seemingly stable arrangements. In this environment, policies increasingly function less as fixed instruments to be applied and more as evolving trajectories that are transformed through the contexts in which they operate.

From this perspective, Europe can be understood as a multilevel ecosystem.

This ecosystem is not merely a technical distribution of competences. It is a network of interdependent relationships in which European institutions, Member States, regional actors, cities, civil society organisations, and communities all participate in shaping the concrete meaning of policy. European strategies may orient the field, but their operational significance ultimately emerges through

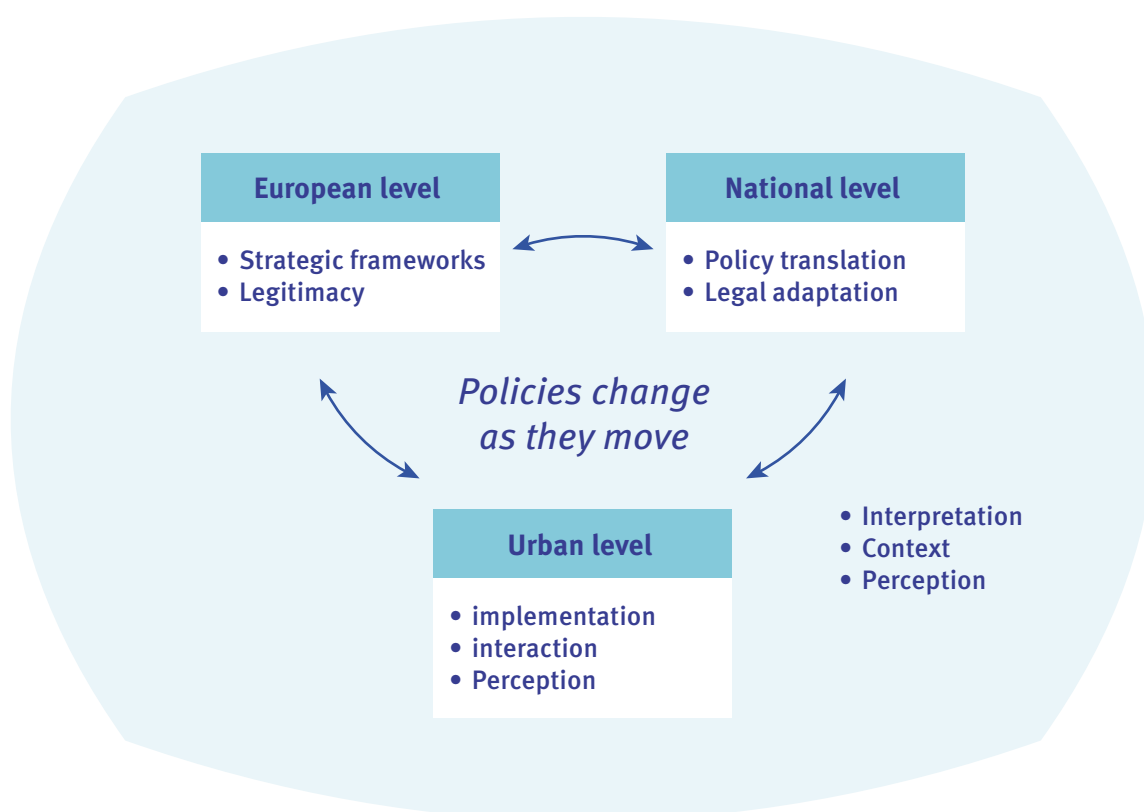
the realities of the environments in which they are translated and enacted — a dimension also emphasised in frameworks such as the NOA Guidelines.

3.2. The Limits of Normative Architecture

This configuration introduces a tension that cannot be resolved through procedural coordination alone. It requires a broader analytical perspective capable of understanding the relationships between the diverse actors, levels, and environments that shape European governance.

On the one hand, this multilevel structure allows for a significant degree of adaptability. Policies can resonate with highly differentiated historical, cultural, and institutional contexts across Europe. On the other hand, this same flexibility introduces considerable variability, making

Multilevel Translation Dynamics



it more difficult to sustain continuity, coherence, and cumulative learning across different levels of intervention.

As a result, the same strategic framework may generate very different outcomes depending on the contexts in which it is interpreted and applied. These differences should not necessarily be understood as failures or deviations from an original model. In many respects, they reflect the intrinsic nature of a governance system operating across diverse political and social realities.

In the field of Jewish life, this tension becomes particularly visible. European strategies have progressively expanded their scope, recognising the need not only to ensure protection and security, but also to sustain presence, participation, cultural vitality, and the broader conditions through which Jewish life can continue to develop openly within European societies.

Yet as these orientations move across different institutional and territorial contexts, divergent interpretations inevitably emerge concerning what it concretely means to support Jewish life in practice.

These differences cannot be explained solely through variations in resources, political priorities, or administrative capacity. They also reflect deeper questions concerning how Jewish presence is situated, understood, and represented within European public space itself.

At stake is the way a presence historically associated with intellectual production, cultural creativity, critical reflection, and the capacity to question existing social frameworks is recognised — or, at times, simplified — within the categories through which public institutions seek to engage it.

This introduces an important challenge for European governance. Supporting Jewish life cannot rely exclusively on

technical coordination or institutional recognition. It also requires interpretative frameworks capable of engaging with complexity, plurality, and transformation without reducing them to simplified or static representations.

The issue, therefore, is not only how policies are implemented, but how the field itself is understood.

3.3. Europe as an Ecosystem of Interdependence

From this perspective, the European landscape can no longer be understood simply as a collection of policies operating at different levels. It

must also be understood through the movement of these policies: the ways they are transformed as they circulate across institutions, territories, and social environments, and the conditions that allow Jewish life not only to be protected, but to establish itself as a living and participatory presence within European societies.



Supporting Jewish life cannot rely exclusively on technical coordination or institutional recognition.

If policies change as they move across levels, the question is no longer limited to how strategies are formulated. It also concerns how continuity can be maintained as priorities are translated into highly differentiated contexts. This continuity does not imply the identical replication of instruments or the formal alignment of every intervention. Rather, it concerns the ability to preserve coherence, adaptability, and effectiveness while policies evolve through different environments.

As already noted, priorities do not distribute themselves evenly across the system. What appears at the European level as an integrated framework — combining security, education, culture, participation,

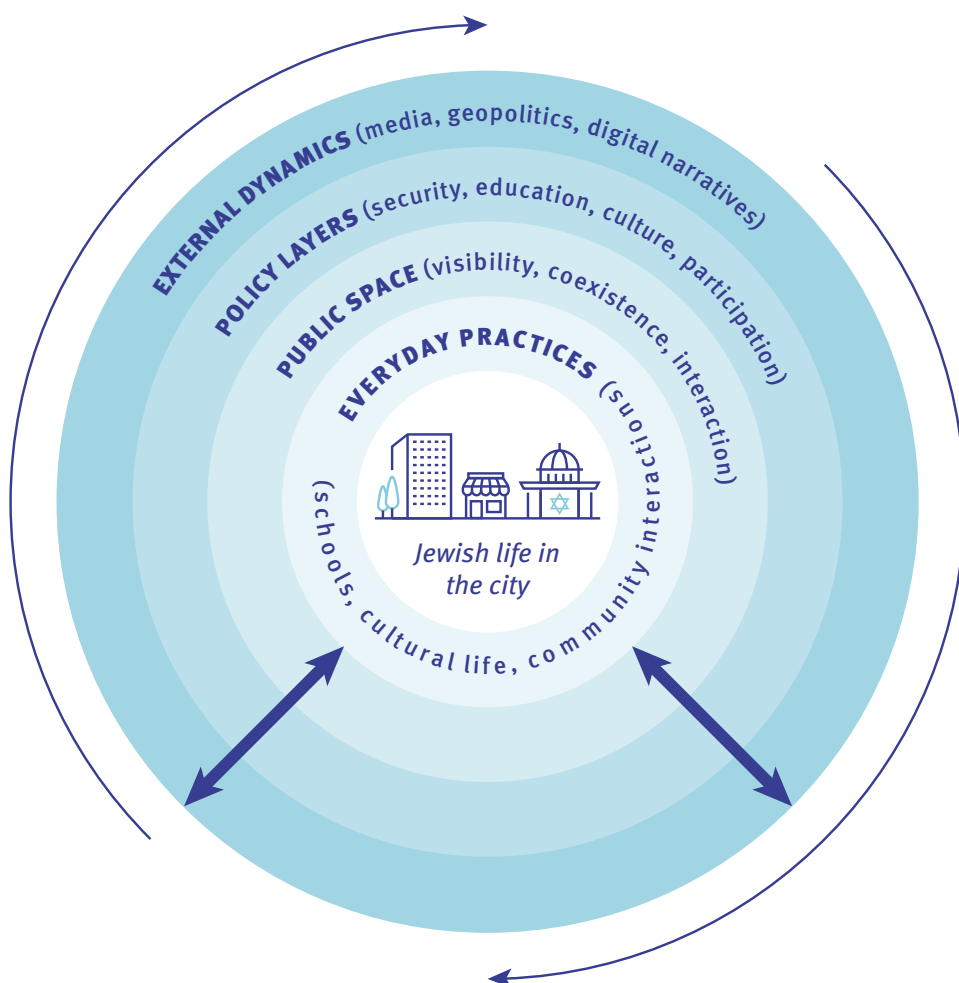
and democratic inclusion — inevitably encounters national and local systems that redefine its operational meaning according to their own institutional realities and social conditions.

At the urban level, these transformations become even more visible. The concrete presence of Jewish communities, the quality of social relations, the role of educational and cultural institutions, and the visibility of Jewish life within public space all directly influence how policies are interpreted and enacted.

In this process, policies do not disappear or lose legitimacy. They are reconfigured through practice itself, taking forms that reflect how they are understood, translated, and operationalised in specific contexts.

At this point, a crucial dimension emerges — one that often remains implicit, yet proves decisive. The ability of institutions to navigate this complexity depends not only on the availability of resources or instruments, but also on their capacity to interpret the environments in which they operate.

Urban Density: Where Policy Becomes Experience



This is not an abstract analytical skill. It is a situated practice that requires familiarity with the concrete ways Jewish life is expressed across different contexts: through established institutions, informal networks, cultural initiatives, educational spaces, hybrid identities, and forms of participation that do not always fit neatly within conventional policy categories.

Where this interpretative capacity exists, differences between contexts are not treated as distortions to be corrected, but as variations that need to be understood and articulated within broader frameworks of continuity.

Where it is absent or limited, public action tends to concentrate on what appears most immediately visible, measurable, and institutionally manageable — typically formal structures and already established interlocutors. While this may provide stability and administrative clarity, it can also produce a narrowing of the field over time, reducing its capacity for adaptation, plurality, and long-term evolution.

These effects often emerge gradually and with limited visibility. Initiatives multiply, yet struggle to generate cumulative

continuity. Effective local practices remain isolated. Experiences capable of producing broader institutional learning do not automatically circulate across levels of governance.

As a result, local innovation does not always find pathways through which it can be recognised, translated, and reintegrated into wider European frameworks.

The challenge, therefore, concerns not only policy coherence in a formal sense, but also the capacity of the system to absorb, reinterpret, and connect experiences across different scales while maintaining sufficient continuity to evolve over time.

When this condition is lacking, symmetrical problems emerge. On the one hand, European strategies risk remaining too abstract in relation to the realities of implementation. On the other, innovative local practices remain fragmented and difficult to transfer beyond their immediate environment.

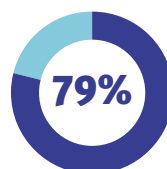


Where this interpretative capacity exists, differences between contexts are not treated as distortions to be corrected, but as variations that need to be understood and articulated within broader frameworks of continuity.

Security Perception and Behavioral Impact



34% of Jews in Europe avoid Jewish events or sites at least occasionally for security reasons



79% do not report the most serious antisemitic incident they experienced



Source: FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights), Survey on Jewish experiences and perceptions of antisemitism

European-level frameworks have increasingly identified this challenge, emphasising the importance of continuous cooperation between public authorities and Jewish communities, particularly within urban contexts — an approach also reflected in the NOA Guidelines. Yet the effectiveness of these frameworks ultimately depends on whether they become embedded within ongoing governance processes rather than remaining isolated recommendations.

When this happens, they help stabilise relationships across levels of governance, allowing policies to integrate the transformations emerging from the contexts in which they operate.

It is precisely at this point that the ecosystem becomes concrete: not as a static layering of governance levels, but as a space in which policies are continuously translated, negotiated, and reformulated.

Within this movement, continuity between intention and outcome cannot be taken for granted. It depends on the capacity to recognise differences across contexts and work through them constructively, rather than ignoring them or attempting to flatten them into uniform models.

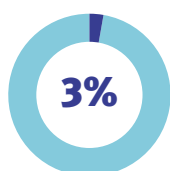
3.4. Cities as Spaces of Presence and Tension

It is within urban environments that these dynamics become most tangible. Cities are not simply the final point of policy implementation. They are the spaces where the different dimensions shaping the system — norms, practices, narratives, perceptions, institutions, and social relationships — come into direct contact and produce effects that cannot be fully anticipated at more abstract levels of governance.

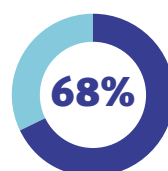
The proximity between actors, the density of social interactions, the visibility of public space, and the bounded nature of local environments mean that every intervention is immediately exposed to processes of interpretation, participation, reaction, and adaptation.

European and national priorities encounter concrete local realities: the presence or absence of organised communities, the quality of intercommunal relations, the role of schools and cultural institutions, the configuration of neighbourhoods and public spaces, and the capacity of local administrations to manage tensions without reducing them to permanent emergencies.

Knowledge and Perception Gap



Only **3%** of Europeans feel “very well informed” about Jewish history, culture and practices



68% consider themselves “not informed”



Source: European Commission / Eurobarometer on antisemitism and Jewish life (latest available data)

Within this setting, Jewish life no longer appears as an abstract policy category or isolated variable. It becomes visible as a living presence embedded within the urban fabric through multiple forms: places of worship, schools, cultural centres, businesses, social networks, artistic initiatives, public events, everyday practices, and informal relationships that connect Jewish communities to wider civic life.

This presence is never purely descriptive. It continuously generates interactions, perceptions, expectations, and tensions.

It is precisely at the urban level that the relationship between visibility and perception becomes particularly intense. The same visibility that enables recognition can also expose communities to conflicting interpretations. The proximity that allows interaction may simultaneously amplify reactions to political events, public controversies, or broader geopolitical tensions. Participation in public space can strengthen inclusion, while under certain conditions also becoming a source of vulnerability or contestation.

Cities therefore make visible, at the same time, both the opportunities and the fragilities of plural democratic coexistence.

In these environments, policies cannot operate in isolation from one another. Security measures, cultural initiatives, educational programmes, participation strategies, communication practices, and urban planning decisions all interact in shaping the conditions under which Jewish life can develop sustainably over time.

When these dimensions reinforce one another, plurality tends to become experienced as an ordinary component of collective life. When they evolve in disconnected or contradictory ways, situations emerge in which Jewish presence may be formally protected yet insufficiently integrated, publicly recognised yet socially distant.

In this sense, Jewish presence can function as a particularly sensitive indicator of the quality of urban coexistence. Not because it exhausts the complexity of the city itself, but because it highlights the ability — or difficulty — of democratic societies to sustain security, participation, recognition, freedom, and plurality simultaneously, without reducing one dimension to another.

The way Jewish life is situated within public space reflects both the quality of the relationships shaping urban environments and the capacity of institutions to accompany these relationships over time.

Local administrations therefore operate in contexts where policies cannot simply be applied mechanically. They must be continuously recalibrated. Managing tensions intersects with building trust; security intersects with participation; cultural programming intersects with public perception and social cohesion.

Every intervention becomes embedded within a broader social fabric where actions influence not only outcomes, but also the ways situations themselves become understandable and meaningful within the public sphere.

European frameworks increasingly acknowledge this complexity, emphasising the importance of stable and continuous dialogue between local authorities and Jewish communities as a structural component of participatory governance rather than an occasional instrument of consultation.

Such mechanisms make it possible to identify emerging dynamics earlier,



Jewish presence can function as a particularly sensitive indicator of the quality of urban coexistence, because it highlights the ability of democratic societies to sustain security, participation, recognition, freedom, and plurality simultaneously.

anticipate tensions, and integrate plural experiences into decision-making processes, thereby strengthening continuity between local realities and broader governance frameworks — a perspective also reflected in the NOA Guidelines.

At the same time, cities play a role that extends beyond their immediate local environment. The quality of urban coexistence influences the broader perception of Europe as an open, democratic, and inclusive space. It affects Europe's capacity to attract talent, investment, cultural exchange, and social trust.

What takes place in cities therefore does not remain local. Urban experiences contribute to shaping how Europe itself is perceived, narrated, and experienced across wider public and political spaces.

3.5. The Circulation of Meaning and the Conditions of Continuity

The dynamics unfolding within urban contexts do not remain confined to lived experience itself. They are constantly interpreted, selected, reframed, and circulated through broader public spaces that amplify, transform, or sometimes distort their meaning.

In contemporary societies characterised by accelerated information flows and fragmented arenas of debate, events rarely produce effects solely through their material reality. Their impact also depends on the ways they are narrated, interpreted, and socially shared.

This dimension does not merely accompany multilevel governance. It permeates it.

Policies increasingly operate within interpretative environments in which meaning is never fixed or fully controllable. Local events may rapidly be reframed at national or European scales. Geopolitical developments may reshape

perceptions of local realities. Digital and media ecosystems may amplify certain narratives while obscuring others.

Jewish life enters this space with particular complexity. Its presence is associated with multiple layers of meaning — historical, religious, cultural, political, symbolic — that do not always stabilise into coherent or shared interpretations. The same practices or expressions may therefore be read through very different frameworks depending on the broader context and the dynamics at play.

Visibility, in other words, does not automatically produce understanding.

This gap directly affects the effectiveness of public action. Initiatives designed to strengthen inclusion may generate divergent perceptions. Necessary security measures may unintentionally reinforce narratives of separation or vulnerability. Cultural programmes may foster dialogue in some contexts while being interpreted elsewhere through polarised political lenses.

These tensions are not accidental distortions external to policy. They constitute part of the structural environment within which policies operate.

The challenge, therefore, is not to attempt to control interpretations directly. Rather, it is to create conditions that allow for greater continuity and coherence in the ways policies are understood, translated, and socially situated over time.

This continuity depends on several interconnected factors: coherence between action and communication, trust between institutions and communities, sustained dialogue across different actors, and the existence of public spaces capable of accommodating complexity without collapsing into simplified oppositions.

European frameworks increasingly recognise the importance of acting at these

levels through education, awareness-raising, cultural initiatives, memory work, and intercultural dialogue. In contexts characterised by informational acceleration and competing narratives, these dimensions become essential for maintaining coherence across governance levels and reducing distortions in processes of translation and implementation.

This broader orientation is reflected in the European Strategy itself, where education, dialogue, and public awareness are treated not as secondary cultural components, but as structural conditions for policy effectiveness.

Viewed as a whole, policies aimed at fostering Jewish life in Europe cannot therefore be reduced either to strategies defined at a single level or to the simple accumulation of initiatives across different contexts. What emerges instead is a system in which policies continuously evolve through processes of interpretation, translation, negotiation, and meaning-making that shape outcomes as much as formal instruments themselves.

Within this framework, strategic, political, and operational coherence is never automatically guaranteed. It must be actively constructed and maintained across levels of governance.

Formally robust strategies may produce fragmented outcomes if continuity between levels is weak. Conversely, highly effective local initiatives may remain isolated if mechanisms do not exist to recognise, connect, and integrate them into broader institutional learning processes.

The multilevel nature of European governance therefore introduces a broader form of responsibility. It requires not only designing interventions, but accompanying policies throughout their trajectory: observing how they are transformed, understanding the environments in which

they operate, and acting upon the conditions shaping their evolution.

This implies a broader shift in perspective: from defining priorities to sustaining processes of translation; from multiplying isolated initiatives to building cumulative trajectories; from managing instruments to connecting levels, actors, and meanings over time.

In this sense, fostering Jewish life does not appear as a separate or isolated policy field. Rather, it becomes a space in which many of the broader characteristics — and challenges — of the European project itself become particularly visible: plurality, interdependence, fragmentation, democratic coexistence, multilevel governance, and the ongoing negotiation between unity and diversity.

Acting within this field therefore means engaging not only with policies themselves, but with the conditions that make policies effective: the ability to move across levels while preserving continuity, to integrate local transformations into broader frameworks, and to sustain meaningful relationships between action, interpretation, and democratic life over time.



This implies a broader shift in perspective: from defining priorities to sustaining processes of translation; from multiplying isolated initiatives to building cumulative trajectories; from managing instruments to connecting levels, actors, and meanings over time.

4 — Data, Evidence and Responsibility

4.1. Rendering Presence: Data and the Conditions of Visibility

Jewish life in Europe is not a reality that can be immediately grasped through simple observation or linear description. As the previous chapters have shown, it unfolds

through multiple and often discontinuous forms of presence, rooted in specific contexts while simultaneously extending across them.

Before it can become an object of policy, it must first be recognised, named, and rendered intelligible within a shared space of understanding.

It is at this point that data acquires a decisive role. Data intervenes at the very moment when reality becomes visible — and in doing so, it also contributes to shaping the form through which that reality is understood.

Through measurement, certain dimensions of Jewish life acquire stability and continuity within systems of observation that make them comparable, analysable, and therefore actionable within institutional frameworks. Demographic presence, territorial distribution, antisemitic incidents, security conditions, and participation in institutional life are among the dimensions that can be more readily captured through quantitative tools.

Other dimensions, however — particularly those linked to lived experience, everyday practices, informal participation, perceptions of belonging, cultural transmission, or the

quality of social relationships — remain far more difficult to measure and often appear only in fragmented or indirect ways.

This distinction is never purely technical. In the European Jewish context, visibility and exposure have historically been deeply intertwined. Across different periods of European history, becoming visible has at times enabled participation, recognition, and integration, while at other moments exposing Jewish communities to forms of vulnerability and persecution whose consequences remain deeply embedded in European memory.

This ambivalence does not belong only to the past. It continues to shape, implicitly or explicitly, contemporary forms of observation, representation, and public recognition.

In practice, what becomes measurable often consolidates as what becomes institutionally legible. Not because measurement exhausts reality, but because it produces forms of visibility that can circulate within public debate, governance structures, and policy processes. Dimensions that enter systems of observation tend to orient institutional attention and influence the definition of priorities. Dimensions that remain more elusive frequently struggle to acquire the same degree of legitimacy, even when they directly affect everyday experience and long-term continuity.

Measurement therefore functions not only as a technical operation, but also as a form of recognition.

At the same time, this process introduces an unavoidable tension. In order to become



What becomes measurable often consolidates as what becomes institutionally legible, because it produces forms of visibility that can circulate within public debate, governance structures, and policy processes.

operational, complex realities must be translated into categories sufficiently stable to allow comparison, coordination, and intervention.

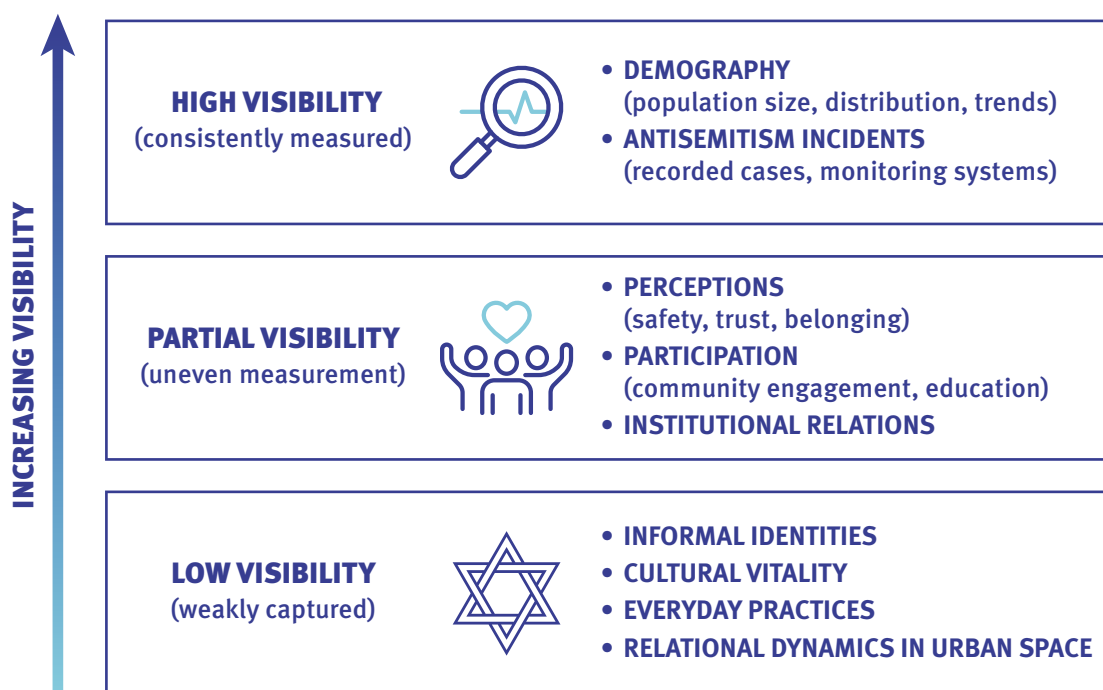
Over recent decades, research infrastructures have played an essential role in making this field increasingly legible. European studies on Jewish demography, antisemitism, perceptions of security, participation, and social attitudes have progressively built a body of knowledge capable of tracing transformations over time and identifying emerging dynamics with greater precision.

In this sense, data introduces a temporal depth that allows institutions to observe not only what exists at a given moment, but also what is changing over time — an approach closely aligned with broader European efforts to ground public policy in evidence, continuity, and longitudinal analysis.

Yet the increasing availability of data does not automatically produce greater clarity. Censuses, surveys, institutional reports, and academic research often rely on different definitions, methodologies, and conceptual frameworks. The result is a layered and sometimes fragmented body of knowledge that requires interpretation capable of connecting heterogeneous forms of evidence without reducing them to a single simplified picture.

This complexity becomes particularly visible in the relationship between recorded indicators and lived perception. Recent surveys increasingly show that these two dimensions do not always coincide. Perceptions of security, trust in institutions, experiences of belonging, and the quality of social relations may influence behaviour more directly than formal indicators themselves.

What Data Makes Visible



What shapes participation and visibility is therefore not only what is objectively measured, but also how reality is experienced and perceived.

It is precisely here that one of the central challenges for contemporary institutions emerges. Data does not merely reflect reality. It also contributes to organising public attention, structuring priorities, and defining which dimensions become central within policy frameworks.

Expanding and diversifying what is measured therefore becomes a strategic

question. It allows institutions not only to observe vulnerability and risk, but also to recognise Jewish life as a living presence capable of generating participation, cultural production, social relationships, knowledge, and democratic contribution within European societies.

4.2. Continuity and the Demographic Imagination

If data makes visibility possible, demography introduces a different dimension: continuity through time.

In the case of Jewish life, demographic observation has never consisted solely in counting a population. It has always also involved a broader question: under what conditions can a presence be sustained, transmitted, renewed, and transformed across generations without losing continuity?

Demographic variables — population size, territorial distribution, migration, age structures, institutional participation, and patterns of transmission — therefore acquire a significance that goes beyond description alone. They do not merely indicate what exists. They raise questions about the

capacity of Jewish life to persist and evolve within changing historical and social environments.

In this sense, demography does not simply observe Jewish life. It accompanies its interpretation as an ongoing historical process.

Within Europe, this process is inevitably shaped by the profound historical rupture represented by the Shoah. The Holocaust cannot be understood merely as a demographic interruption measured through numerical loss alone. It radically transformed the conditions of Jewish presence itself: interrupting lines of transmission, redrawing geographies, fragmenting communities, and reshaping the relationship between rootedness, dispersion, continuity, and reconstruction.

As a result, demographic observation in Europe carries a historical depth that exceeds contemporary statistics. Every demographic indicator exists within a landscape marked by absence, reconstruction, migration, and renewal. Figures are therefore never entirely detached from history. They retain traces of what was interrupted, dispersed, rebuilt, or transformed.

Demography thus allows continuity to be understood not as a fixed condition, but as a social, cultural, and political process that is continuously constructed over time.

At the same time, the contemporary European situation presents an important paradox. European Jews today represent a relatively small proportion both of Europe's total population and of global Jewish life. Yet Europe continues to hold a historical, cultural, and intellectual significance that far exceeds this demographic weight. Many of the traditions, institutions, languages, and cultural forms that shaped Jewish history were formed in Europe and continue to influence Jewish life globally.



Figures are therefore never entirely detached from history. They retain traces of what was interrupted, dispersed, rebuilt, or transformed.

This gap between numerical scale and historical significance requires interpretative caution. Demography provides an indispensable foundation for understanding reality, but it cannot fully capture the meaning or quality of Jewish presence.

A purely quantitative reading may therefore produce a statistically accurate yet substantively incomplete picture.

This complexity is reinforced by the structure of data production itself. National censuses apply different criteria regarding religious affiliation, ethnicity, identity, or cultural belonging. Surveys often allow for more nuanced understandings, but face challenges related to continuity, representativeness, comparability, and methodological consistency.

The result is a growing body of knowledge that remains only partially integrated and requires significant interpretative work capable of connecting different forms of evidence across contexts.

And yet, despite these limitations, demography continues to play a central role. It provides institutions with tools for orientation, planning, and long-term reflection while simultaneously keeping open a broader question concerning continuity itself.

This question does not concern survival alone. It also concerns the quality of the conditions through which Jewish life is transmitted, renewed, and made sustainable over time.

At this point, an important methodological tension emerges. What is more easily measurable tends to orient institutional perception and public attention. Yet continuity, as it is actually lived and experienced, always exceeds what can be fully captured through quantitative indicators alone.

This tension opens directly onto the question of the limits of measurement itself.

4.3. What Escapes Measurement

As demographic frameworks provide an initial structure of legibility, they also make more visible what remains outside their reach.

This gap is not simply a temporary limitation that will eventually disappear through better methodological tools. It reflects something more fundamental about the nature of measurement itself, particularly when dealing with forms of life expressed through relationships, practices, perceptions, and situated experiences that are not always formalised or institutionally visible.

A significant part of Jewish life unfolds precisely within these less measurable spaces. Informal participation, hybrid identities, diffuse cultural practices, intergenerational relationships, evolving forms of belonging, and the ways younger generations engage with tradition often resist stable categorisation. Yet these dimensions play a decisive role in shaping both the quality of Jewish presence and its capacity for renewal.

What escapes measurement is therefore not marginal to the phenomenon. It is internal to it.

Systems of observation may capture certain dimensions with considerable precision while remaining less capable of identifying slower or more subtle transformations related to visibility, participation, social trust, symbolic belonging, or the quality of relationships within public space.

Within institutional processes, what is measurable naturally tends to become more central — not necessarily because it is inherently more important, but because it is more stable, comparable, and operationally manageable. Over time, this dynamic can reinforce the centrality of certain dimensions while making others

more difficult to integrate into policy frameworks and decision-making processes.

An additional complexity concerns the relationship between data and behaviour itself. Available evidence increasingly shows that individual and collective choices are shaped not only by objective conditions, but also by perceptions of context. Decisions concerning visibility, participation, mobility, or public engagement often emerge through combinations of lived experience, narratives, social climate, and diffuse signals that cannot always be fully quantified.

In this sense, data and perception operate on different but interconnected levels.

Data provides an indispensable foundation for institutional understanding, yet it remains constrained by structural limitations. Perception, meanwhile, directly influences behaviour and social

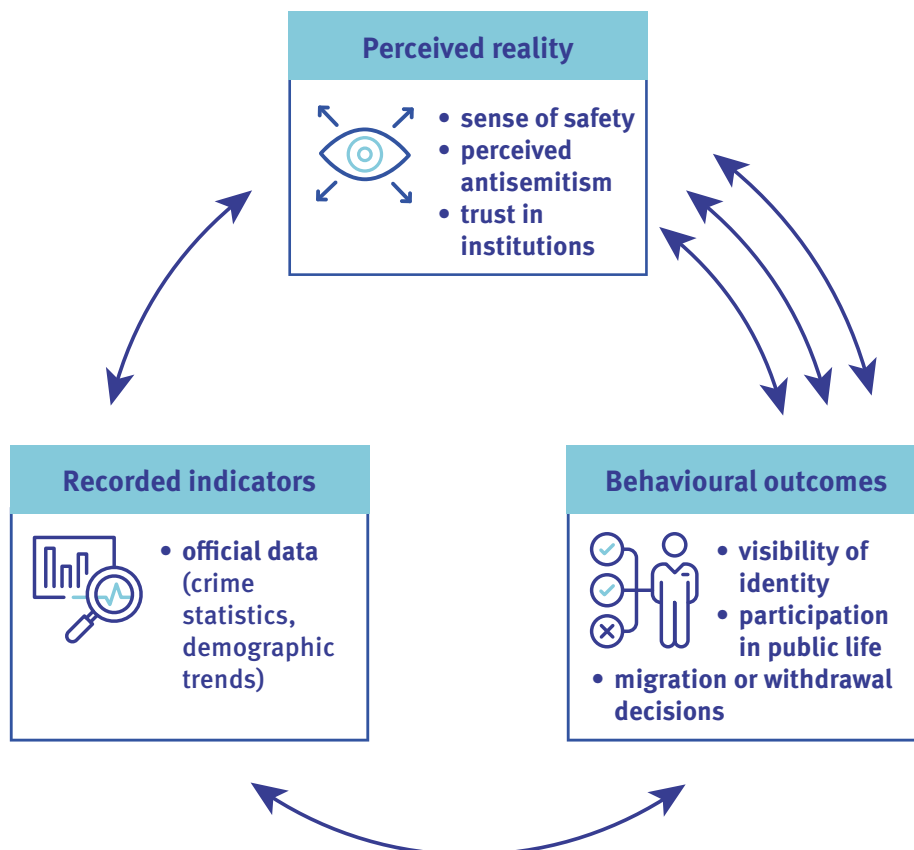
adaptation, even while remaining more difficult to stabilise analytically.

It is precisely within the space between these two dimensions that many contemporary social dynamics unfold.

Behaviour often aligns more closely with perceived environments than with formal indicators alone. Jewish life, as a situated and adaptive experience, continuously reorganises itself in response to these perceived conditions, reshaping visibility, participation, spatial presence, and relationships with surrounding societies over time.

Seen from this perspective, the role of data appears in a different light. Data does not simply describe an already existing reality. It also contributes to constructing the field within which reality becomes visible, discussable, and actionable.

Data–Perception–Behaviour Gap



Methodological choices influence what can be recognised, debated, prioritised, or rendered operational within institutional frameworks.

Recognising this does not diminish the value of data. On the contrary, it strengthens the need for interpretation. The challenge is no longer limited to the accumulation of information itself, but concerns the capacity to connect what data reveals with what remains partially invisible while still shaping social behaviour and long-term transformations.

The quality of public policy ultimately depends on this capacity: reading together what can be measured and what nevertheless continues to structure lived experience, participation, and social continuity beyond the limits of formal observation.

It is from this point that a broader question begins to emerge — not only concerning what is measured, but also how systems of knowledge themselves are organised, interpreted, and translated into institutional action.

4.4. The Architecture of Knowledge

If an important part of reality exceeds what can be directly measured, it becomes necessary to examine how data itself is produced, connected, interpreted, and made operational. The issue is not limited to technical tools alone. It concerns the broader infrastructure through which knowledge takes shape and begins to influence public understanding and institutional decision-making.

In the European context, this infrastructure has developed progressively and unevenly through multiple layers. Academic research, institutional monitoring systems, civil society initiatives, surveys, demographic studies, and EU-level data collection mechanisms coexist without always being fully integrated into a coherent framework.

The result is a landscape that is simultaneously rich in information and fragmented in structure.

This plurality of sources allows Jewish life to be observed from different perspectives and at different scales. At the same time, however, it complicates the construction of a shared and continuous knowledge base.

These differences are not merely technical. They concern definitions, methodologies, categories of identification, periodicity of collection, and the broader assumptions through which Jewish life itself is understood.

This becomes particularly visible in relation to identity. Jewish belonging may simultaneously involve religious, cultural, familial, historical, ethnic, social, or civic dimensions that do not always fit within singular or standardised classifications. Methodologies capable of capturing this complexity often provide a more faithful representation of lived reality, but they also reduce comparability between datasets and institutional systems.

At the same time, the forms through which Jewish life is experienced are themselves evolving. Increasingly, participation develops outside traditional institutional structures and within more fluid or less formalised environments: cultural initiatives, informal networks, hybrid identities, digital spaces, artistic communities, and emerging forms of belonging that remain less visible within conventional systems of observation.

As a consequence, what becomes most visible within data infrastructures often coincides with what is most stable, institutionalised, and structurally recognisable, while processes of transformation remain more difficult to capture.



Data provides an indispensable foundation for institutional understanding, yet it remains constrained by structural limitations.

A similar asymmetry appears in the construction of indicators themselves. Conditions related to security, antisemitism, discrimination, or risk can often be measured with relative precision. By contrast, dimensions related to participation, trust, cultural vitality, intergenerational transmission, social relationships, or the capacity to engage younger generations remain less systematically developed within institutional frameworks.

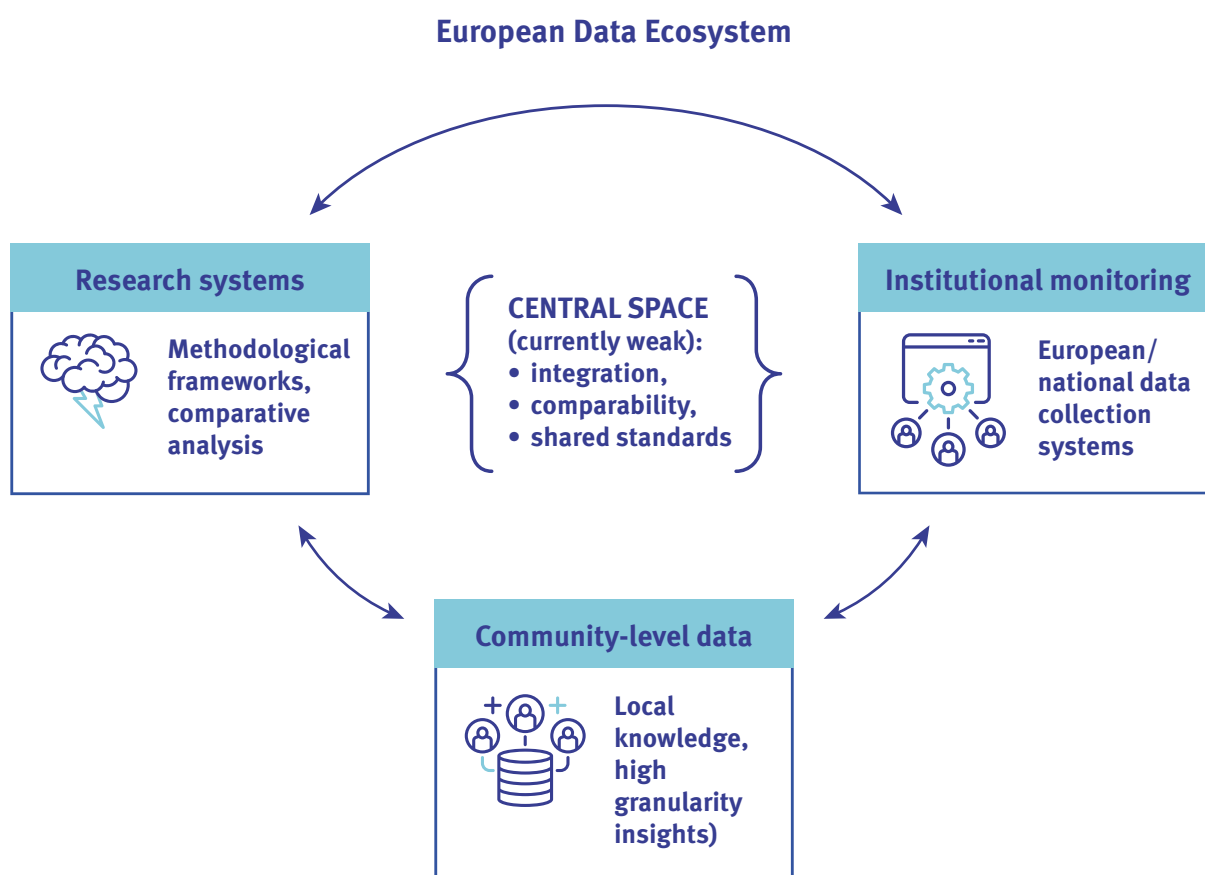
The result is a representation of Jewish life that may unintentionally privilege what is more immediately observable over what is socially generative and transformative over time.

Within this context, the challenge cannot be resolved simply by increasing the quantity of available data. What becomes necessary is a broader effort to connect different sources,

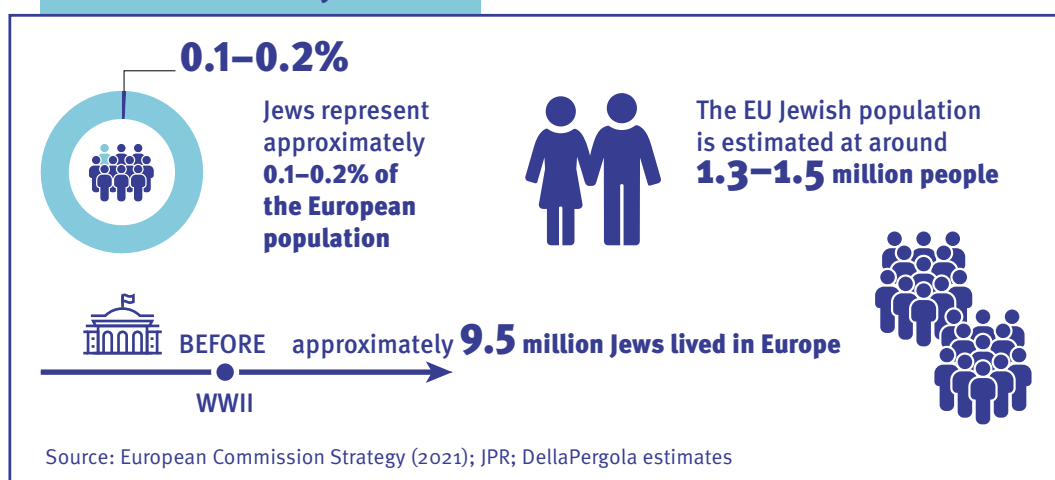
methodologies, and levels of analysis while developing frameworks capable of holding together comparability and complexity.

At this point, the question becomes explicitly strategic. Data governance concerns the choices through which institutions decide what is measured, how information is collected, which categories are prioritised, and how knowledge is ultimately translated into action.

In the case of Jewish life, these choices intersect with particularly sensitive dimensions related to security, privacy, trust, historical memory, and the protection of individuals and communities. The challenge is therefore not to build a perfectly uniform system, but to create an ecosystem of knowledge capable of connecting different levels of observation without flattening their specificities.



Structural Minority Context



Such an ecosystem would allow quantitative and qualitative dimensions to interact more productively, enabling data not only to describe reality, but also to deepen understanding of how Jewish life evolves across different contexts.

This shift requires institutional coordination, methodological development, and new forms of expertise. Yet above all, it requires a shared awareness that systems of measurement actively shape what becomes publicly recognisable and institutionally relevant.

It is within this relationship between visibility, interpretation, and recognition that the conditions are constructed through which Jewish life can be understood, supported, and sustained within the European space.

4.5. Responsibility and the Use of Data

If data contributes to defining what becomes visible and institutionally recognisable, responsibility cannot be understood as something external to the process of knowledge production. It runs through the process itself: from the definition of categories, to the collection of information,

to the interpretation of results, and finally to the ways knowledge is translated into public action.

In the case of Jewish life, this responsibility acquires a particular historical and ethical depth. The production and use of knowledge about populations intersects with a European history in which systems of classification, registration, and identification were at times mobilised for destructive purposes.

This historical memory does not imply a rejection of data collection or institutional knowledge. On the contrary, it reinforces the need for awareness concerning the conditions under which knowledge is produced, organised, protected, and used.

Data therefore cannot be treated as neutral or detached from context. It remains inseparable from the environments of trust, vulnerability, responsibility, and institutional legitimacy within which it operates.



It is within this relationship between visibility, interpretation, and recognition that the conditions are constructed through which Jewish life can be understood, supported, and sustained within the European space.



Responsibility therefore emerges precisely within this tension: between the necessity of knowledge and the awareness of its potential consequences.

At the same time, reliable data remains indispensable for guiding public policy. Without it, many social dynamics would remain difficult to identify, understand, or address effectively.

Responsibility therefore emerges precisely within this tension: between the necessity of knowledge and the awareness of its potential consequences.

This responsibility cannot be reduced to technical compliance alone. It requires the capacity to balance different demands that may at times remain in tension with one another.

The ways categories are defined directly influence how Jewish life is represented, determining which forms of belonging become visible and which remain less recognised. Methods of data collection affect both the quality of information and the willingness of individuals and

communities to participate — particularly in contexts where security, trust, and historical sensitivity play a decisive role.

Interpretation, meanwhile, requires careful attention to social and political context. Data never speaks independently of the frameworks through which it is read. Finally, the operational use of data shapes concrete decisions concerning priorities, funding, representation, institutional intervention, and long-term policy orientation.

When this balance weakens, significant distortions can emerge. Reducing the field to what is most easily measurable narrows institutional understanding. Rigid classifications risk obscuring ongoing transformations. Weak connections between evidence and policy may limit the effectiveness of public action itself.

Addressing these risks does not require abandoning data. It requires using it more consciously, reflexively, and contextually.

This means recognising that the value of data depends not only on accuracy, but also on the ability to interpret it in relation to lived

Perception and Behaviour Shift



78% feel less safe living as Jews in their country/city



38% report distancing from non-Jewish friends



Simultaneous increase in intra-community engagement observed

Source: JDC-ICCD Survey, 2024

realities, to integrate it with qualitative knowledge and social experience, and to use it not merely to document the past, but to orient future transformations.

In this sense, responsibility concerns not only what is measured, but how knowledge itself becomes operational within governance systems.

Expanding the scope of measurement — including dimensions related to quality of life, participation, relational environments, trust, and cultural continuity — contributes to redefining what institutions recognise as socially relevant.

Within the European context, such a shift requires cooperation across multiple institutional levels. The production and use of knowledge become part of a broader capacity to understand complexity, connect different forms of evidence, and orient public action within evolving social realities.

It is precisely at this point that data ceases to function merely as an instrument of observation. It becomes part of a broader practice of governance capable of recognising Jewish life not only as a reality requiring protection, but as an active and evolving presence that contributes to the shaping of European democratic societies.



PILLAR II:

WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING IN EUROPE

5 — Mapping the Current Landscape

5.1. A Numerically Small Minority, a Structurally Central Presence

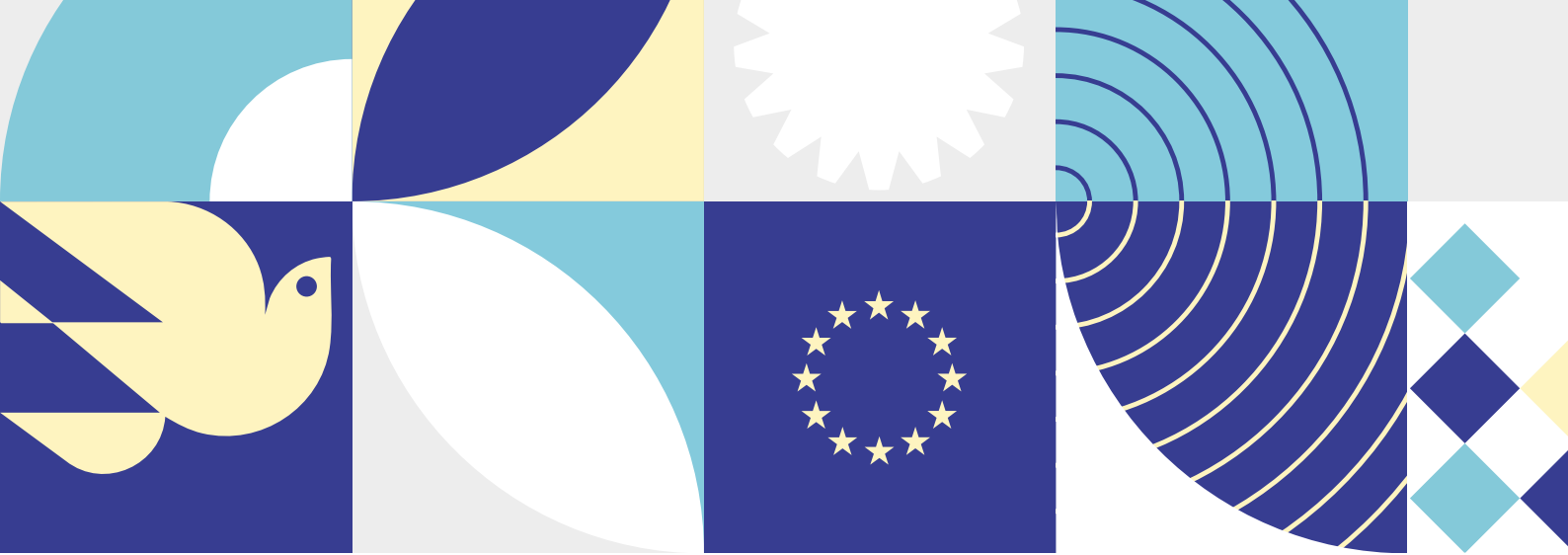
Mapping Jewish life in Europe requires an initial caution. Numbers are indispensable, yet they do not fully explain what they describe. The issue is not simply how many people today experience some form of Jewish belonging within the European space, but rather what position this presence continues to occupy within the cultural, historical, and political structure of contemporary Europe.

Quantitative data immediately reveals a reality of limited scale. Before the Second World War, approximately 9.5 million Jews lived in Europe; today, the EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life estimates the Jewish population within the European Union at around 1.5 million people. Demographic analyses by Sergio DellaPergola and Daniel Staetsky estimate approximately 1.3 million Jews across the broader European geographical area and around 789,000 within the EU, distributed in a highly uneven manner:

France (448,000), the United Kingdom (292,000), Germany (118,000), and Hungary (47,200) currently represent the main demographic poles of European Jewish life. In relative terms, Jewish presence remains extremely limited: among the countries covered by the 2018 FRA survey, the proportion ranges from approximately 6.9 Jews per 1,000 inhabitants in France to 0.1 in Poland.

Yet this demographic fragility coexists with a historical and symbolic density that is difficult to compare with that of other European minorities. Jewish life continues to occupy an unusually intense space within European memory, within the history of cities, intellectual traditions, educational infrastructures, and within the very construction of the modern idea of European pluralism. The EU Strategy itself explicitly describes Jewish communities as an “inextricable part of Europe’s identity.”

This asymmetry produces profound consequences. A relatively small minority can become the object of exceptionally



high symbolic exposure. The result is a permanent tension between demographic fragility and cultural centrality. Across the European space, Jewish presence continues to function as a kind of sensitive surface upon which issues far exceeding the concrete life of Jewish communities are projected: historical memory, geopolitical conflicts, identity debates, collective anxieties, and the transformations of democratic coexistence itself.

It is precisely here that the purely statistical picture ceases to be sufficient. A community may appear numerically small while simultaneously sustaining schools, religious institutions, cultural production, archives, urban heritage, educational initiatives, and associative networks of significant public relevance. Conversely, contexts that appear institutionally stable may be undergoing less visible forms of social thinning: declining participation, difficulties in generational renewal, decreasing attractiveness for younger families, or growing dependence on a limited number of central institutions.

For European policymaking, the central question therefore gradually shifts. The issue is no longer only where Jewish life still exists, but under what conditions it continues to perceive itself as sustainable over time.

5.2. Mobility, Urban Concentration and Internal Transformations

This structural instability becomes even more visible when mobility patterns are taken into account. European Jewish communities have historically been shaped by migration, transnational networks, and continuous processes of recomposition. Daniel Staetsky observes that, within Western societies, Jewish populations display significantly higher shares of foreign-born residents than the general population. In Germany, Austria, Denmark, and Spain, the proportion ranges between 40% and 60%; in France, Belgium, and Sweden, between 25% and 35%.

This introduces an important characteristic of the contemporary European landscape. Jewish life tends to develop a particular sensitivity to the quality of the surrounding social environment. Mobility does not depend exclusively on economic or family reasons; it often also reflects perceptions related to security, institutional stability, the possibility of building educational continuity, and the overall quality of the democratic environment.



A relatively small minority can become the object of exceptionally high symbolic exposure. The result is a permanent tension between demographic fragility and cultural centrality.

From a historical perspective, Staetsky recalls that major Jewish migration movements have frequently accompanied periods of profound political or social transformation: Germany in the 1930s, the North African decolonisation processes, and the post-Soviet space in the 1990s. It would be misleading to interpret these movements as automatic indicators of crisis. What nevertheless remains significant is the extent to which Jewish migratory trajectories

tend to react rapidly to changes in the public climate and in confidence toward institutions.

The internal landscape of European Jewish communities also appears to be undergoing significant transformation.

In several countries, populations maintaining direct connections with Israel are becoming increasingly prominent. In the Netherlands, according to the Jewish People Policy Institute, approximately one third of the Jewish population now includes a direct or indirect Israeli component; in Austria, Israeli-born residents represent around 20% of the country's Jewish population.

In Belgium, meanwhile, the Haredi population accounts for approximately 29% of the overall Jewish community, with growth rates above the communal average.

These transformations concretely reshape the composition of Jewish life in Europe. Expectations toward institutions are changing, as are relationships with cities, educational needs, linguistic patterns, and forms of public participation. The idea of a relatively homogeneous European Jewish community is gradually giving way to a far more differentiated ecosystem, marked by increasingly complex cultural, religious, generational, and transnational dynamics.

Territorial distribution follows a similar logic of simultaneous concentration and thinning. In many European contexts, Jewish life tends to consolidate within a limited number of large urban areas, while other regions experience a gradual loss of communal density. This urban concentration generates organisational capacity, cultural networks, educational services, and social infrastructures; at the same time, however, it also increases visibility and therefore exposure. In territories where the presence becomes thinner, the risk assumes a different form: Jewish life continues to be remembered through heritage, yet becomes progressively less legible as a contemporary lived experience.

5.3. Antisemitism, Perception and the Transformation of Public Space

The question of security inevitably runs through this landscape, yet its meaning has progressively changed. Available data show that the contemporary experience of antisemitism no longer coincides solely with the growth in recorded incidents. Increasingly, it coincides with a transformation in the perception of social space itself.

Already in 2018, the FRA survey revealed very high levels of concern: 47% of European Jews reported fearing antisemitic harassment within the following twelve months, 40% feared physical attack, while 38% had considered leaving Europe because they did not feel safe as Jews within the EU. In addition, 34% stated that they at least occasionally avoided Jewish events or sites for security reasons.

Following 7 October 2023, the situation underwent a visible acceleration. Comparative analyses by Jonathan Boyd record an exceptional rise in antisemitic incidents across numerous European countries during the final quarter of 2023, with particularly significant increases in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Austria,



The idea of a relatively homogeneous European Jewish community is gradually giving way to a far more differentiated ecosystem, marked by increasingly complex cultural, religious, generational, and transnational dynamics.

and the Netherlands. In both the British and French cases, recorded levels exceeded those observed during the Gaza conflicts of 2014 and 2021.

Yet perhaps the most significant issue concerns the growing gap between official data and lived experience. The 2018 FRA survey indicated that roughly four out of five incidents of antisemitic harassment were never reported. The reasons given by respondents — “nothing would change,” “not serious enough,” “too complicated” — suggest that a substantial portion of the experience of antisemitism escapes traditional systems of registration and measurement.

Jonathan Boyd uses the expression “ambient antisemitism” to describe this condition: a growing perception of living within environments that have become more hostile, more polarised, or emotionally less inhabitable even in the absence of direct aggression. This marks an important shift, because it transforms the relationship with public visibility itself. When exposure is perceived as a permanent cost, participation tends to contract; when public space appears unpredictable or hostile, formal citizenship no longer automatically guarantees a full sense of belonging.

Digital environments further intensify this dynamic. The internet has become one of the principal spaces of exposure to antisemitism. Digital platforms accelerate polarisation, simplify complex identities, transform geopolitical conflicts into continuous pressure upon local minorities, and contribute to reducing Jewish life almost exclusively to the languages of trauma, security, or conflict.

Mapping Jewish life in Europe therefore requires a deeper interpretative shift. Counting populations, incidents, or institutions remains essential, but it is no longer sufficient. It becomes necessary to observe the conditions that make an

ordinary, visible, and socially legitimate Jewish presence possible. The NOA Guidelines translate this principle into operational terms by insisting on the construction of urban ecosystems grounded in permanent dialogue, substantive participation, cultural infrastructures, and mutual trust.

It is precisely this perspective that prepares the transition to the next chapter. Because it is within cities that all these dynamics — density, mobility, memory, exposure, security, and belonging — cease to be abstract categories and become the concrete experience of contemporary European space.



Mapping Jewish life in Europe therefore requires a deeper interpretative shift. Counting populations, incidents, or institutions remains essential, but it is no longer sufficient. It becomes necessary to observe the conditions that make an ordinary, visible, and socially legitimate Jewish presence possible.

6 — Jewish Life in Cities: the Urban Ecosystem

Cities are where Jewish life becomes tangible. They are the environments in which presence is experienced in everyday terms: in schools, workplaces, streets, cultural venues, neighbourhoods, and public institutions. While European and national frameworks establish principles and commitments, it is at the local level

that these commitments are translated into lived realities.

This chapter approaches cities not as secondary actors, but as central arenas in which Jewish life is shaped, negotiated, sustained, and made visible over time. A city-based perspective allows policymakers to move from abstract principles toward concrete environments of implementation, where different policies intersect and where the quality of

coexistence is continuously produced through everyday interactions.

Rather than understanding policies as isolated instruments, the urban ecosystem approach examines how spatial, institutional, symbolic, cultural, and social dimensions interact within the city to create conditions that either support or weaken Jewish life as part of the broader democratic fabric.

The City as a Site of Possibility and Risk

Cities concentrate both the opportunities and the vulnerabilities of Jewish life. They create possibilities for visibility, participation, encounter, and cultural

exchange, while simultaneously exposing communities to pressures, contestation, polarisation, and insecurity.

Placing cities at the centre of the handbook's operational framework is therefore not simply a methodological choice. It reflects the reality that Jewish life today is primarily shaped through interaction with wider society and with the institutions that govern urban space and public life.

The city is where Jewish life can become ordinary, visible, and meaningfully integrated into everyday civic experience. It is also where Jewish presence can become over-politicised, securitised, or reduced to exceptional visibility.

By focusing on the urban ecosystem, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how different dimensions — spatial, institutional, cultural, social, and symbolic — interact to shape the conditions under which Jewish life can either flourish or become fragile.

As highlighted in the NOA Guidelines on Fostering Jewish Life for Municipalities and Communities, cities concentrate multiple layers simultaneously: governance, shared public space, education, culture, interreligious relations, participation, memory, and social learning. The central question is therefore not whether cities endorse inclusion in principle, but whether they are capable of sustaining Jewish life in practice.

It is at the urban level that democratic commitments become concrete.

The urban ecosystem approach carries several important implications:



The central question is therefore not whether cities endorse inclusion in principle, but whether they are capable of sustaining Jewish life in practice.

- From sectors to systems: Policies concerning culture, education, security, mobility, heritage, public space, and participation should be understood as interconnected dimensions of a broader urban ecosystem rather than as isolated policy domains.
- From outputs to experiences: The effectiveness of public action should not be evaluated solely through measurable outputs — such as funding allocated or events organised — but also through lived experience, trust, visibility, participation, and perceptions of belonging.
- From visibility to viability: The objective is not only to make Jewish life visible, but to ensure that it remains sustainable, meaningful, and capable of evolving over time.

6.1. Institutions in the Urban Ecosystem

To engage effectively with the urban dimension of Jewish life, policymakers must develop the capacity to understand cities as ecosystems rather than as collections of separate sectors or interventions. This requires moving beyond fragmented approaches towards a systemic understanding of how institutions, policies, public narratives, and lived experiences interact across space and time.

A first step is diagnosis. Municipal actors should be encouraged to consider questions such as:

- Where Jewish life is located, both geographically and symbolically
- How Jewish presence is represented in public space and urban narratives
- What the everyday experiences of Jewish residents are
- How different municipal policies interact to shape these experiences
- Where tensions, contradictions, or gaps emerge
- Where opportunities for cooperation across sectors and communities exist

These questions do not necessarily require entirely new datasets. In many cases, they require new ways of interpreting knowledge that already exists across municipal services, civil society organisations, educational institutions, community structures, and lived experience itself.

Consultation processes should therefore not be understood merely as mechanisms of information gathering. When developed as ongoing and structured dialogue, they become forms of institution-building that strengthen relationships between public authorities and communities over time.

This dimension becomes particularly important during periods of tension or crisis, when trust, familiarity, and existing channels of communication directly influence the effectiveness of institutional responses.

Institutional capacity is therefore not defined only by formal competences or administrative resources. It also depends on the ability to connect perspectives, coordinate across policy areas, and sustain long-term relationships between institutions and communities.

Risks to Be Mitigated

Several risks require careful attention if urban governance is to support genuine inclusion and social cohesion.

One risk lies in reducing Jewish presence to static heritage disconnected from contemporary life, where sites and symbols are preserved while living communities remain insufficiently integrated into the city's everyday civic reality.

Another concerns invisibility within shared urban space, where the absence of Jewish presence from public narratives, cultural programming, or civic representation can quietly reinforce perceptions of non-belonging.

There is also a risk that inclusion remains exceptional or symbolic rather than embedded in the ordinary functioning of urban life. In such situations, Jewish visibility may appear only during commemorative moments or security-related discussions, rather than as a normal component of the city's plural social fabric.

At the temporal level, an additional challenge emerges when Jewish sacred time becomes associated primarily with security

concerns and vulnerability, limiting opportunities for public participation and shared recognition.

Addressing these risks requires policies that move beyond symbolic recognition or purely defensive approaches. The goal is to normalise plural presence — in both space and time — as an ordinary feature of democratic urban life.

6.2. Shared Space and Time

Shared Urban Space as a Condition of Belonging

Urban space reflects whose presence is recognised, whose histories are visible, and whose experiences are integrated into the collective narrative of the city. Shared space must therefore be understood as both physical and symbolic.

Jewish heritage sites, synagogues, cemeteries, schools, museums, neighbourhoods, and cultural institutions are not only traces of the past. They also function as anchors of contemporary presence. When they remain active, accessible, and connected to urban life, they link memory, practice, and everyday participation.

At the same time, Jewish life cannot be confined exclusively to explicitly Jewish spaces. Inclusion within broader civic environments — public institutions, cultural venues, universities, libraries, festivals, and symbolic landmarks — signals that Jewish presence forms part of the city's common narrative rather than an external or exceptional addition.



The goal is to normalise plural presence — in both space and time — as an ordinary feature of democratic urban life.

Examples:

- **Beit project:** Launched in Paris in 2011, The Beit Project is a European and Mediterranean initiative focused on living together. By linking local historical heritage to contemporary issues such as racism, social exclusion, and discrimination, it creates educational spaces where diversity is explored, understood, and actively engaged.
- **FestivALT: Still Standing**” is a performative activity in which the body is treated as a living sculpture created in relation to a place. The action

enters into dialogue with the historical choreography of Israeli choreographer Noa Eshkol, prepared by her for the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

- **House of one:** In Berlin, the House of One project illustrates how cities can foster meaningful coexistence. By bringing a synagogue, church, and mosque together around a shared space for encounter, it creates opportunities for dialogue, visibility, and mutual understanding, key conditions for supporting sustainable Jewish life within a diverse urban environment.

Projects such as the The Beit Project, FestivALT, or House of One illustrate how urban space can function as a platform for encounter rather than separation. By connecting heritage to contemporary social issues, artistic practices, education, and interreligious dialogue, these initiatives demonstrate how cities can create environments that encourage reciprocity, immersion, and civic learning across differences.

Sacred Time in the Urban Rhythm

Belonging is shaped not only through space, but also through time. Urban rhythms — calendars, school schedules, working patterns, cultural programming, and public

events — communicate whose traditions are recognised within collective life.

The NOA Guidelines emphasise the importance of acknowledging Jewish sacred time within these shared urban rhythms. When Jewish holidays and practices are recognised and accommodated within institutional and civic structures, they become part of the city's common temporal landscape.

At the same time, Jewish sacred time has become increasingly sensitive in many contexts, often associated with heightened security concerns. This can limit public expression and reduce opportunities for visibility, participation, and encounter.

Examples:

- **Chanukah:** The European Jewish Community Center has, for the past 20 years, installed the EuroMenora at the Schuman Roundabout during the eight days of Chanukah. Last year's candle-lighting ceremony, attended by Ursula von der Leyen, Philippe Close and European diplomats, highlighted the public visibility of Jewish life in the European institutional heart.
- **Prayer rooms:** in EU hospitals and airports illustrate how public institutions translate religious diversity into concrete, everyday infrastructure. Typically multi-faith and non-denominational, they provide quiet, accessible spaces for prayer or reflection for patients, staff, and travellers. From a handbook perspective, they show how Jewish life, and broader religious practice, is enabled through urban and institutional design, where inclusion is embedded in the functioning of public services rather than limited to symbolic recognition, while also

raising key questions of access, neutrality, and equal recognition within shared civic spaces.

- **Mimouna:** The Mimouna festival, which has become a symbol of coexistence between Jews and Muslims in Morocco, was also celebrated in Amsterdam in a typically Moroccan style, with offerings of diverse dishes and pastries, mint tea, and music of the gharnati tradition performed by a troupe brought specially from Morocco, all in a festive atmosphere characteristic of this celebration held at the end of Passover.
- **Eruv:** In Vienna, a functioning eruv exists, enabling observant Jews to carry objects within a defined public area during Shabbat in accordance with religious practice. From a handbook perspective, it illustrates how urban infrastructure can be adapted, through legal, spatial, and technical arrangements, to support the continuity of Jewish life within the city.

Cities therefore have an important role to play in ensuring that Jewish sacred time is recognised not only through the lens of security, but also as a legitimate and visible component of cultural and civic life.

Risks to Be Mitigated

Several risks affect the relationship between Jewish life and shared urban time.

These include misalignment between Jewish religious calendars and dominant institutional schedules, which may restrict participation in education, work, or public life; insufficient recognition of Jewish holidays within civic communication and planning; and the marginalisation of minority temporalities within highly standardised urban rhythms.

There is also a risk that Jewish sacred time becomes perceived primarily through the lens of vulnerability and security, overshadowing its broader cultural, spiritual, and communal dimensions.

Addressing these challenges requires greater institutional flexibility, visible recognition of Jewish holidays, and the integration of diverse temporal rhythms into the ordinary functioning of urban life.

6.3. Interreligious Dialogue and the Multicultural City

In urban environments, diversity is not an abstract principle but a daily reality shaped through proximity, interaction, and shared space. Religious and belief communities coexist within the same neighbourhoods, institutions, infrastructures, schools, and public environments. Within this setting, interreligious dialogue cannot be understood as a separate or isolated policy field. It functions instead as a broader method of engagement that cuts across governance, culture, education, social services, and civic participation.

It is through these everyday interactions that mutual understanding is either strengthened or weakened over time.

Interreligious Dialogue as Structured Interaction

Dialogue does not emerge automatically from proximity alone. Shared space can generate encounter, but it can also generate distance, parallelism, or tension if not accompanied by structures that enable meaningful interaction.

Cities therefore play a central role in creating frameworks that allow communities to engage around shared concerns — such as education, social cohesion, youth participation, cultural life, neighbourhood relations, or social services — rather than engaging exclusively through identity-based discussions.

Within this context, representation should be approached as contextual and dynamic rather than fixed. Communities are internally diverse, and different situations require different forms of expertise and participation. Religious leaders, educators, artists, social workers, cultural actors, youth organisations, and community organisers may each become relevant interlocutors depending on the objectives pursued.

This flexible approach allows municipalities to move beyond rigid models of representation and to ground dialogue in practical collaboration connected to the realities of urban life.

Dialogue Across Urban Domains

Interreligious dialogue extends far beyond formal interfaith councils or symbolic meetings between representatives. While such structures provide important relational infrastructure, they are rarely sufficient on their own.

Dialogue also develops through concrete forms of cooperation: educational

programmes, social initiatives, cultural projects, neighbourhood partnerships, youth activities, public services, and collaborative responses to shared urban challenges.

This perspective reflects the broader approach developed in the NOA Guidelines, where dialogue is embedded across policy areas rather than confined to a specialised domain. When municipalities identify and mobilise the full range of resources present within communities — including religious institutions, cultural organisations, charities, schools, and civic associations — they create opportunities for multilateral engagement rooted in everyday practice.

As a result, dialogue shifts from being occasional and symbolic to becoming continuous and operational. It becomes part of how institutions function rather than an additional activity activated only under exceptional circumstances.

A Driver of Social Cohesion

When grounded in shared projects and sustained interaction, interreligious dialogue contributes directly to social cohesion. It enables communities to recognise common concerns while preserving their distinct identities and experiences.

Relationships built through practical cooperation are often more resilient during moments of tension, polarisation, or crisis because they are rooted in familiarity, trust, and ongoing collaboration rather than symbolic declarations alone.

Cultural and heritage spaces play a particularly important role within this dynamic. When approached as active civic environments rather than exclusively commemorative or closed spaces, they can host encounters, educational programmes, artistic initiatives, and collaborative activities that bring different communities into contact through shared experience.

In this way, dialogue becomes grounded in practice and participation rather than remaining at the level of abstract exchange.

For municipalities, this approach creates concrete opportunities to:

- Strengthen democratic participation by diversifying interlocutors and forms of engagement
- Prevent polarisation through sustained and structured interaction
- Embed pluralism within everyday governance and service delivery
- Build long-term trust between institutions and communities



When grounded in shared projects and sustained interaction, interreligious dialogue contributes directly to social cohesion. It enables communities to recognise common concerns while preserving their distinct identities and experiences.

Risks to Mitigate

Several risks require careful attention.

Over-formalisation may freeze representation and unintentionally exclude internal diversity or emerging actors. Dialogue that remains symbolic or disconnected from concrete policy impact may generate frustration rather than trust. There is also a risk that engagement becomes reactive — activated primarily during moments of crisis — instead of functioning as a normal and continuous dimension of urban governance.

To avoid these dynamics, interreligious dialogue must remain ongoing, purpose-driven, and connected to real forms of cooperation across sectors and communities.

6.4. Cultural Development

Urban cultural life constitutes one of the main entry points through which Jewish presence becomes integrated into the shared narrative and collective experience of the

city. Cultural development should therefore not be understood as a single policy area, but as a broader set of processes through which culture is sustained, transmitted, made visible, and incorporated into civic life.

Cultural Development for Itself

The first dimension concerns the internal vitality of Jewish cultural life itself: the capacity to sustain traditions, languages, knowledge, memory, artistic expression, and cultural creativity on its own terms.

This includes both heritage and contemporary cultural production. It encompasses religious traditions, literature, music, visual arts, intellectual life, food culture, festivals, educational initiatives, and emerging forms of expression developed by new generations.

Supporting this internal cultural vitality is foundational. Communities that remain culturally active, confident, and capable of renewal are better positioned to engage with wider society, contribute to urban life, and adapt to changing environments.

At this level, cultural development strengthens continuity, plurality, and intergenerational transmission, anchoring Jewish presence within lived practice rather than symbolic representation alone.

Cultural Development as Urban Presence

The second dimension concerns the visibility of Jewish culture within the broader city itself.

Public cultural programming, exhibitions, festivals, artistic collaborations,

museums, municipal cultural spaces, and partnerships with urban institutions allow Jewish culture to become part of the city's shared symbolic landscape.

This visibility is not only a matter of representation. It is also a question of recognition.

When sustained over time and developed in partnership with communities, cultural visibility helps counter invisibility, fosters familiarity, and strengthens a sense of belonging. Jewish culture becomes integrated into the everyday narrative of the city rather than appearing only in exceptional, commemorative, or crisis-related contexts.

In this sense, cultural policy contributes directly to the normalisation of plural presence within democratic urban life.

Cultural Development of Shared Urban Culture

The third dimension is broader and more systemic. Here, cultural development becomes a way of shaping the shared culture of the city itself.

Through intercultural initiatives, co-creation, artistic collaboration, and shared cultural production, Jewish culture contributes to wider processes of collective meaning-making and civic imagination.

Within this dimension, diversity is not merely displayed as symbolic coexistence. It becomes actively engaged through participation, negotiation, and shared experience. Cultural spaces become environments where citizens learn to navigate difference, develop mutual recognition, and construct forms of coexistence capable of sustaining plurality without erasing distinct identities.

Together, these three dimensions form an interconnected system:



Through intercultural initiatives, co-creation, artistic collaboration, and shared cultural production, Jewish culture contributes to wider processes of collective meaning-making and civic imagination.

- Internal vitality enables continuity and confidence
- Visibility enables recognition and participation
- Shared cultural development strengthens the collective identity of the city

Risks to Mitigate

Several risks require attention within this field.

Culture may become reduced to heritage alone, disconnected from contemporary Jewish life and creativity. Dominant or singular narratives may overshadow internal diversity and flatten the plurality of Jewish experiences. Visibility may become episodic or tokenistic rather than sustained and structurally integrated into urban cultural life.

There is also a risk that culture becomes instrumentalised for branding, tourism, or symbolic diversity management without genuine inclusion or participation. Similarly, forms of inclusion that seek visibility at the expense of specificity may unintentionally encourage assimilation rather than meaningful pluralism.

Addressing these risks requires long-term partnerships, attention to representation and diversity, and a sustained understanding of culture as a living, participatory, and evolving component of the urban ecosystem.

6.5. Education and Social Learning

Education and social learning are among the most important mechanisms through which cities foster inclusion, resilience, and social cohesion over time. In the urban ecosystem, education extends far beyond formal schooling alone. It also includes the non-formal and informal environments through which citizens encounter diversity, construct social understanding, and develop relationships with the histories and experiences of others.

Together, these different forms of learning shape how Jewish life is perceived, recognised, and integrated within the broader civic culture of the city.

Education as Social Learning

Within the urban ecosystem, education functions as an ongoing process of social learning.

Formal education — schools, universities, and public educational systems — provides a structured framework through which Jewish history, culture, heritage, and contemporary life can be integrated into broader narratives about European societies and democratic coexistence. When approached in this way, education helps shift perceptions of Jewish life away from exceptionality or marginality and towards normalisation as part of the shared social fabric.

At the same time, important forms of learning also develop outside formal educational structures. Museums, cultural institutions, festivals, public programmes, workshops, heritage initiatives, libraries, artistic projects, and community-based activities create spaces for experiential engagement in which encounters with culture, memory, and lived experience generate forms of understanding that are simultaneously cognitive, emotional, and relational.

These environments become particularly important in contexts where Jewish life is less visible or where direct contact between communities may be limited. In such situations, non-formal education helps bridge gaps in knowledge, perception, and familiarity, creating opportunities for recognition that cannot always be achieved through formal curricula alone.

Education as a Bridge

Education also operates at the level of relationships.

Collaborative initiatives involving schools, universities, municipalities, cultural institutions, civil society organisations, and Jewish communities create opportunities for shared ownership of knowledge and collective participation in learning processes.

Guest lectures, exchanges, participatory workshops, educational visits, co-created teaching materials, oral history projects, artistic collaborations, and intercultural programmes transform education into a space of dialogue and encounter rather than simple transmission of information.

In this sense, education functions as connective tissue across the urban ecosystem. It links governance, culture, heritage, memory, participation, and civic life through processes that strengthen familiarity and trust over time.

Even where municipalities do not directly control formal education systems, cities still play a crucial role. They can convene partnerships, provide spaces and infrastructures, support cultural initiatives, facilitate cooperation between actors, and shape the broader public environments within which social learning takes place.

Risks to Mitigate

Several risks require careful attention.

An over-reliance on Holocaust education alone may unintentionally narrow public understanding of Jewish life by associating Jewish presence primarily with persecution, memory, or absence if not complemented by contemporary perspectives and living cultural realities.

One-off educational initiatives without continuity often fail to generate lasting impact or sustained relationships. There is also a risk that education becomes disconnected from lived experience, producing abstract knowledge that does not

translate into familiarity, recognition, or meaningful social engagement.

At the same time, non-formal and informal education may remain undervalued despite their strategic importance for shaping public perception and social cohesion within diverse urban contexts.

Addressing these risks requires continuity, plurality, and sustained connection between education and everyday life.

When embedded across formal and non-formal environments and connected to the wider urban ecosystem, education becomes more than a sectoral policy area. It becomes a structural driver of democratic coexistence and social cohesion.

Within this framework, diversity — including Jewish life — is no longer approached primarily as a challenge to be managed, but as a shared civic resource that contributes to the cultural, social, and democratic vitality of the city itself.

7 — Strategic Levers to Foster Jewish Life

Strengthening Jewish life is often approached through targeted actions: funding a cultural event, securing a building, or supporting an educational initiative. While necessary, such interventions remain partial if they do not also transform the broader environment within which Jewish life unfolds.

In practice, national policymakers rarely strengthen Jewish life through explicitly targeted measures alone. The most decisive interventions often operate indirectly, shaping the conditions that allow Jewish life to exist, develop, and sustain itself over time.

This chapter therefore focuses on structural levers: those dimensions of policy that influence visibility, continuity, participation, and recognition across society.

7.1. Beyond Tolerance: Conditions of Viability

A central challenge for national governments is to move beyond a paradigm of tolerance — understood as the minimal acceptance of difference — toward a paradigm of viability.

Viability refers to the conditions that enable diverse forms of life not only to exist, but to be recognised, sustained, and meaningfully integrated within society through active participation and cooperation.

For Jewish communities, viability depends on a set of interdependent conditions:

- Security: protection from violence, intimidation, and harassment
- Access: availability of institutions, services, and resources
- Recognition: inclusion within the symbolic and cultural life of society
- Participation: the possibility of engaging in public life on equal terms
- Continuity: the ability to sustain practices, transmission, and belonging across generations

These dimensions are deeply interconnected. Weakness in one area often affects the others: limited access to education weakens continuity; lack of recognition reduces participation and trust; insecurity affects all aspects of everyday life.



The central question is not simply whether Jewish life exists, but whether it can continue to thrive over time.

National policymakers are therefore increasingly called to move beyond isolated interventions and toward integrated strategies capable of assessing whether Jewish life is being genuinely facilitated, merely tolerated, or gradually rendered less viable.

The central question is not simply whether Jewish life exists, but whether it can continue to thrive over time.

This shift can be understood through three broader transitions:

- From tolerance to viability: moving beyond minimal acceptance toward environments in which Jewish life can develop sustainably
- From fragmentation to coherence: ensuring that policies across sectors reinforce rather than contradict one another
- From symbolic recognition to lived inclusion: embedding Jewish life within everyday systems, rather than limiting

recognition to legal frameworks or heritage narratives

By acting in a coordinated way across space, time, education, narratives, and digital infrastructures, governments help shape environments, not only policy outputs.

7.2. Symbolic Signalling and the Architecture of Recognition

Public policies and institutional arrangements do not only organise access to rights and resources. They also communicate what a

society considers legitimate, visible, normal, and worthy of recognition.

These signals are often indirect, embedded within everyday systems such as:

- cultural programming,
- public communication,
- urban design,
- school curricula,
- and media representation.

Together, they create implicit hierarchies of visibility and attention that shape how different forms of life are perceived within the public sphere.

Structural levers therefore operate simultaneously at two levels:

- they enable or constrain practical participation,
- and they communicate broader normative expectations concerning belonging and legitimacy.

When Jewish life appears primarily through frameworks of security, heritage, or commemoration, institutions may unintentionally reinforce the perception that it belongs mainly to the past or is defined principally through vulnerability.

Conversely, when Jewish presence becomes visible across contemporary cultural, civic, educational, and professional domains, it is recognised as an active and ongoing part of society.

Inclusion is therefore not only a matter of access, but also of signal consistency. What is repeatedly made visible, normalised, and publicly legitimised gradually shapes collective perceptions of what belongs within the shared social landscape.

Example — Cities that integrate Jewish cultural programming into mainstream festivals, public exhibitions, and cultural institutions — rather than isolating it within specialised or commemorative frameworks — signal that Jewish life forms part of the shared cultural present. This type of integration reshapes perception without requiring explicit messaging.

7.3. Structural Levers and National Policy Examples

Legal and Spatial Frameworks

National legal systems determine whether Jewish life can be physically and institutionally present. Constitutional protections, legal recognition of religious practice, and support for community infrastructure create the baseline conditions for visibility and continuity.

Spatial arrangements also signal whether Jewish life belongs to the present or remains confined to heritage.

Example — The German federal government provides constitutional protection for religious freedom and supports Jewish institutions through structured funding mechanisms. This enables synagogues, schools, and community centres to function across the country.

Key insight: Legal and spatial frameworks do not only protect Jewish life; they enable its practical and visible presence within society.



Inclusion is therefore not only a matter of access, but also of signal consistency. What is repeatedly made visible, normalised, and publicly legitimised gradually shapes collective perceptions of what belongs within the shared social landscape.

Time and Institutional Rhythms

Calendars, school schedules, and administrative timelines shape inclusion in everyday life. Even where rights are formally guaranteed, misalignment in institutional rhythms can create barriers to participation.

Institutional rhythms therefore signal whose practices are recognised as compatible with public life.

Example — While freedom of worship is protected in most European countries, minority religious holidays are rarely integrated into school calendars. Adjusting schedules to accommodate Jewish observance improves participation and reflects structural inclusion.

Key insight: Time is also a governance issue. Flexibility within institutional systems translates formal rights into lived accessibility.

Education and Narrative Environments

Education shapes not only knowledge, but also interpretative frameworks and civic attitudes. The ways Jewish history and contemporary Jewish life are taught directly influence how Jewish presence is perceived within society.

Curricula therefore signal which narratives are considered central — or marginal — to collective memory.

Example — In the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life (2021), the European Commission encourages Member States to integrate Jewish history and contemporary Jewish life into educational curricula, moving beyond an exclusive focus on the Holocaust to include culture, contributions, and continuity.

Key insight: Educational policy shapes not only what societies know about Jewish life, but also how they learn to relate to it.

Media and Narrative Responsibility

Media and narrative environments play a decisive role in shaping whether Jewish life is understood as a complex, living reality or reduced to simplified, episodic, or crisis-driven representations.

Beyond formal education, journalism, cultural production, digital media, and institutional communication structure how visibility is granted, how legitimacy is framed, and how public attention is distributed.

Narrative responsibility therefore concerns not only accuracy, but also the capacity of media ecosystems to sustain nuance, plurality, and continuity in the representation of Jewish life.

Media environments also function as signalling systems that shape whether Jewish presence is perceived as a normal component of society or as an exceptional, problem-oriented, or external reality.

Example — Public broadcasting guidelines and partnerships with cultural institutions in France have contributed to more diverse representations of Jewish life, including contemporary cultural production and everyday experiences. While coverage often remains centred on antisemitism or security concerns, these efforts have helped broaden the public narrative.

Key insight: Media environments do not merely reflect social reality; they actively contribute to structuring it. When Jewish life appears only through the lenses of crisis, conflict, or memory, public perception becomes compressed and reactive. Sustained visibility across cultural, social, and civic domains is therefore essential for maintaining legitimacy and preventing reductive representations.

Digital Infrastructures

Digital environments increasingly shape visibility, safety, participation, and public recognition. National policies concerning online regulation, digital heritage, algorithmic amplification, and public communication directly influence how Jewish life is represented and protected.

Digital infrastructures also signal what is amplified, monitored, searchable, or marginalised within the public sphere.

Example — Efforts to regulate online hate speech through the Digital Services Act, combined with broader European initiatives promoting Jewish heritage digitally, contribute simultaneously to protection and visibility.

Key insight: Digital environments are now part of civic infrastructure. They influence inclusion and exclusion in ways increasingly comparable to physical public space.

7.4. Interconnection and Cumulative Effects

Structural levers do not operate independently. Weakness in one area can undermine progress in others, while alignment across sectors creates cumulative effects.

Legal recognition without corresponding inclusion in education or public narratives may leave Jewish life formally protected but socially marginalised. Conversely, coordinated action across education, culture, digital affairs, urban policy, and security can generate environments in which Jewish life is simultaneously visible, legitimate, and viable.

Policymakers should therefore approach structural levers as interconnected dimensions of the same democratic ecosystem, rather than as isolated policy domains.

7.5. Actionable Recommendations for National Policymakers

Treat structural levers systemically: Address time, space, education, narratives, and digital governance as interconnected dimensions of the social fabric.

Design ordinary systems for inclusion: Ensure that schools, workplaces, and public administration incorporate sufficient flexibility to enable participation without requiring exceptional arrangements.

Align policies for cumulative impact: Strengthen coordination across ministries and policy domains to avoid contradictions and reinforce long-term outcomes.

Measure conditions, not only outputs: Develop indicators related to viability, including security, access, recognition, participation, trust, and continuity, rather than focusing exclusively on programme-based outputs.

Expand narrative visibility: Support representations of Jewish life that include contemporary experiences, creativity, and participation, alongside memory and security frameworks.

7.6. Conclusion: Architecting Viability

National policymakers act not only as administrators of programmes, but also as architects of conditions.

By aligning structural levers across law, time, education, narratives, and digital governance, they shape the environments within which Jewish life becomes visible, valued, and sustainable over time.



Policymakers should therefore approach structural levers as interconnected dimensions of the same democratic ecosystem, rather than as isolated policy domains.

Thriving Jewish communities reflect a broader societal capacity to embed pluralism within democratic life.

Moving from symbolic recognition to lived inclusion, from tolerance to viability, and from fragmented interventions to coherent environments is therefore not only beneficial for Jewish life itself. It also reflects the resilience, openness, and democratic maturity of European societies.

PILLAR III:

HOW TO ACT, AND WHAT IS AT STAKE

8 — Policy & Governance Recommendations

8.1. Reading Beyond Visibility

The previous chapters have sought to show, from different perspectives, that Jewish life in Europe cannot be understood through a single interpretative lens. The territorial contexts, cultural practices, urban experiences, historical trajectories, educational initiatives, civic dynamics, and forms of participation explored throughout this handbook describe a layered and evolving reality in which memory, culture, religious life, social transformation, mobility, and democratic participation continuously intersect.

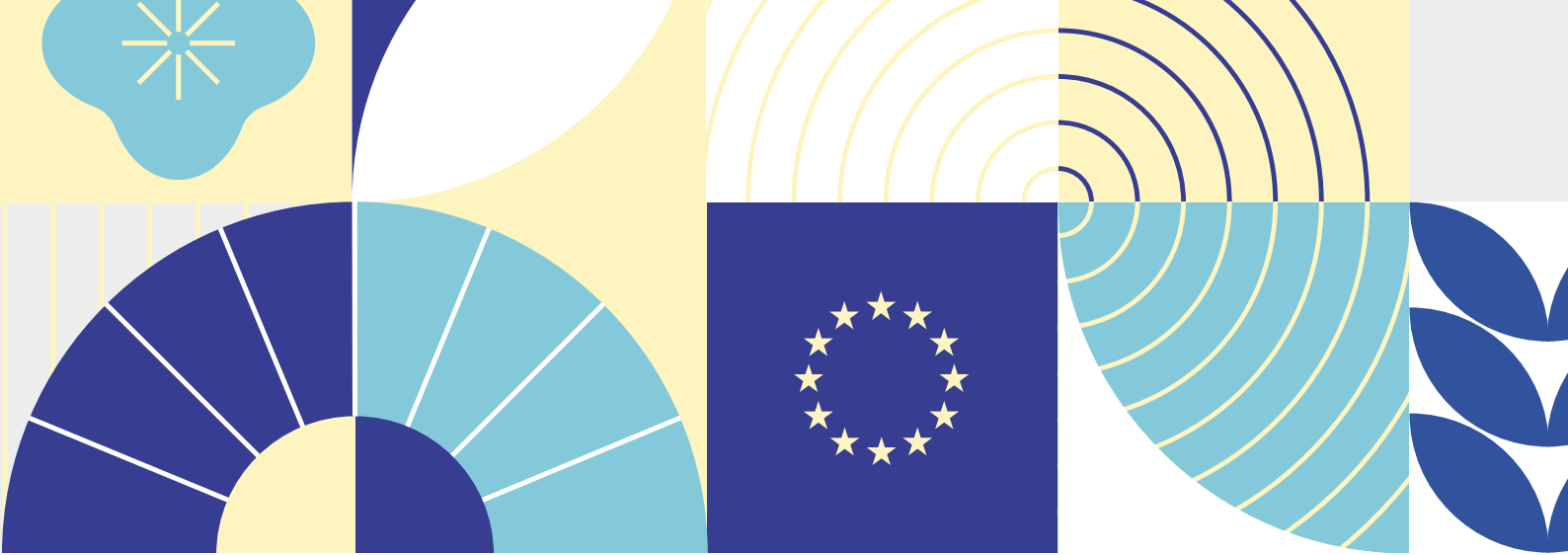
Jewish presence therefore takes shape through diverse and often fluid configurations that frequently exceed the categories through which public policy traditionally organises social reality.

As this handbook has argued throughout, the partial inadequacy of existing descriptive categories is not a marginal issue. It directly shapes both the possibilities and the limits of public action itself.

A significant part of contemporary Jewish life develops through diffuse cultural networks, hybrid forms of belonging, informal participation, evolving social environments, and modes of transmission that do not always correspond to the formalised structures, institutional interlocutors, and stable classifications upon which governance systems generally depend.

This challenge acquires an even broader significance when situated within the longer trajectory of European history. For centuries, Jewish presence formed part of Europe's cultural, intellectual, and civic infrastructure through distinctive characteristics that deeply influenced the development of European societies: traditions of interpretation and debate, multilingual circulation of ideas, urban and commercial networks, educational cultures, ethical reflection, and forms of intellectual production shaped through historical resilience and diasporic experience.

Many of the ways Europe developed its relationship to pluralism, critical thought,



mediation, knowledge production, and cultural exchange also emerged through this long and deeply interconnected Jewish presence within European modernity.

The 2021 EU Strategy itself explicitly recognises Jewish life as an inseparable part of European identity.

In recent years, European institutions have progressively broadened their approach, moving beyond an exclusive focus on protection and security and increasingly recognising the fostering of Jewish life as connected to the democratic, cultural, and relational quality of European societies themselves.

The NOA Guidelines articulate this transition particularly clearly by linking the fostering of Jewish life to democratic resilience, social cohesion, participation, and the inclusive capacity of European cities.

8.2. Where Policies Lose Traction

It is precisely within this evolving framework that some of the deepest tensions now emerge.

European institutions increasingly demonstrate the capacity to mobilise in response to the most visible manifestations of antisemitism or during moments of

acute public exposure and crisis. What remains more difficult, however, is identifying and accompanying the slower transformations unfolding within the ordinariness of everyday life: changes in social climate, educational continuity, participation, symbolic belonging, public trust, cultural vitality, and the broader relational environments within which Jewish presence experiences its possibility of existing openly within European society.

These transformations rarely take the form of sudden rupture. More often, they accumulate gradually, reshaping the conditions of presence long before clear institutional indicators or fully legible evidence emerge.

It is precisely within this gap between visibility and depth that policies often begin to lose traction.

The difficulty rarely lies in a complete absence of initiatives. Public interventions are frequently launched, programmes are developed, and institutional commitments are articulated. In many cases, these efforts generate important forms of recognition and produce meaningful local impact.



It is precisely within this gap between visibility and depth that policies often begin to lose traction.

What proves more difficult is sustaining continuity across institutional levels, political cycles, social transformations, informational environments, and changing forms of participation over time.

Part of this difficulty reflects a structural tension between the operational logic of public policy and the actual configuration of the field in which policy operates.

Institutions necessarily function through relatively stable categories: recognised interlocutors, formal competences, administrative procedures, funding structures, and institutionalised forms

of representation. Yet a substantial part of contemporary Jewish life evolves through far less linear dynamics.

This distance does not necessarily produce direct exclusion. More often, it creates a gradual selectivity in how the field becomes visible and institutionally legible. Certain forms of Jewish presence become immediately recognisable and easier to integrate into decision-making processes, while

others remain more difficult to identify despite playing a decisive role in sustaining continuity and collective life.

A similar tension also shapes the relationship between different levels of governance.

European strategies increasingly provide broad and sophisticated frameworks. Yet their operational meaning — and ultimately their effectiveness — is continuously reshaped through the processes of translation accompanying implementation at national, regional, and urban levels.

Each context reorganises priorities, visibility, constraints, and forms of intervention

according to its own historical experiences, institutional structures, political cultures, and social realities.

This process is not necessarily problematic in itself. On the contrary, it is often both necessary and desirable because it allows broader visions to acquire concrete meaning within lived contexts. Cities, after all, are the environments in which security, participation, cultural production, social relations, polarisation, and democratic coexistence intersect in everyday life.

The decisive challenge therefore concerns the capacity to understand the transformations generated through these adaptive processes and to maintain sufficiently strong connections across the different levels of the system.

The relationship with data reflects the same tension.

In recent years, the analytical field has gained access to increasing quantities of information: monitoring systems concerning antisemitic incidents, perception-based research, territorial observations, social analysis, and digital monitoring tools. The challenge no longer concerns only the availability of data itself. It concerns the capacity to integrate these different forms of evidence into broader interpretations capable of identifying long-term transformations while they are still unfolding.

Many changes emerge gradually: in perceptions of safety, trust toward institutions, public visibility, participation, social climate, or the willingness to express one's belonging openly. By the time such transformations become fully measurable and institutionally visible, they often reflect processes that are already well advanced.

At this point, the question of Jewish life ceases to concern only the technical effectiveness of policy instruments. It



Institutions necessarily function through relatively stable categories [...] Yet a substantial part of contemporary Jewish life evolves through far less linear dynamics.

becomes inseparable from the broader capacity of institutions to understand the environments within which they operate and to recognise the connections linking security, participation, culture, perception, democratic coexistence, and the quality of the European public sphere itself.

8.3. Perception, Environment and Democratic Space

The transformations affecting Jewish life in Europe never unfold in isolation.

Events occurring within a single city can rapidly acquire national or European significance through media circulation, digital environments, geopolitical tensions, and transnational informational flows that continuously reshape how events are interpreted, narrated, and socially perceived.

A local incident may become part of a wider European debate within hours. Conversely, conflicts or polarisation generated elsewhere may profoundly alter the social atmosphere within which communities experience everyday life in entirely different contexts.

This interconnection fundamentally changes the terrain on which policies operate.

Public interventions do not enter neutral environments. They operate within spaces already shaped by expectations, historical memory, symbolic conflict, polarisation, and competing narratives that immediately influence how policies are interpreted and received.

The same measure may therefore generate profoundly different effects depending on the broader interpretative environment within which it is proposed, negotiated, communicated, and implemented.

An intervention that appears formally coherent may fail to strengthen trust or participation. A policy that functions administratively may nevertheless reveal

significant relational fragilities within public space.

For this reason, many of the conditions shaping the quality of Jewish life depend not only on material dimensions such as physical protection or institutional access, but also on perceptions of the surrounding social environment.

European research consistently reflects this tension. According to the 2018 survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 38% of European Jews reported having considered emigrating because they did not feel safe living as Jews in Europe, while 71% indicated that they avoid, at least occasionally, displaying visible signs of their Jewish identity.

These figures do not merely describe questions of security. They reveal deeper transformations concerning belonging, visibility, freedom, participation, and the quality of democratic space itself.

The possibility of openly inhabiting one's identity within public life remains one of the clearest indicators of the relational quality of a democracy.

Informational environments play a decisive role within this dynamic.

The European Strategy repeatedly highlights the growing impact of online antisemitism, conspiratorial narratives, disinformation, and digital polarisation in reshaping the European social climate. Yet these processes do not operate only through explicitly hostile content.

More often, they function through gradual shifts in language, symbolic associations, patterns of visibility, repetition, framing, and the overall tone of public conversation. Over time, these shifts may profoundly affect conditions of recognition and participation without necessarily producing immediate institutional rupture.

The challenge therefore extends well beyond the management of risk alone. It concerns the broader capacity of institutions to understand the relationships linking informational environments, public perception, education, social trust, and democratic participation.

Without this interpretative capacity, policies inevitably tend to intervene only after tensions have already become fully visible, losing the possibility of accompanying transformations while they are still emerging and shaping the environments within which democratic coexistence evolves.



Within this framework, security, culture, education, participation, urban governance, and public perception no longer function as separate policy domains.

8.4. Reframing Governance

In light of these dynamics, the way public policies define their own objectives also requires gradual realignment.

A significant part of institutional action continues to organise itself around circumscribed problems addressed through sectoral instruments, clearly defined competences, specialised interventions, and relatively stable indicators. This approach

remains necessary and often effective. Yet it becomes insufficient when applied to fields characterised by historical continuity, social transformation, multilevel interdependence, and evolving forms of participation — conditions that strongly shape Jewish life in contemporary Europe.

Many of the conditions that sustain Jewish continuity do not appear as isolated problems waiting to be solved. They emerge instead through fragile and evolving balances that must be continuously maintained over time: trust between institutions and communities, cultural transmission, educational continuity, intercommunal relationships, participation in public life,

and the possibility of inhabiting public space without constantly negotiating vulnerability or exposure.

Within this framework, security, culture, education, participation, urban governance, and public perception no longer function as separate policy domains. They increasingly become interconnected dimensions of the same ecosystem of conditions shaping the quality and sustainability of Jewish life.

Protection and security naturally remain essential. Yet their meaning changes significantly when understood within this broader perspective. Security no longer concerns only the reduction of risk. It directly affects the capacity to participate openly in civic life, to maintain educational and cultural continuity, to build relationships, and to inhabit public space without perceiving visibility itself as a permanent source of exposure.

This interdependence often remains difficult to integrate into more traditional decision-making structures. Policies may continue to be evaluated sector by sector, while their real effects accumulate transversally over time.

An educational initiative may gradually reshape the social climate. A decision concerning urban space may alter perceptions of belonging and accessibility. A cultural programme may strengthen — or weaken — forms of mutual recognition between communities.

Reframing governance therefore means developing a more systemic capacity to understand the environments within which Jewish presence evolves, transforms itself, and continues to perceive itself as part of European democratic space.

It also means recognising that policies do not act only upon immediate realities. They continuously contribute to shaping what becomes publicly visible, institutionally legitimate, socially

desirable, and collectively shareable within European societies over time.

8.5. Building Conditions for Continuity

If the effectiveness of public action ultimately depends on the capacity to understand connections, transformations, interdependencies, and multilevel dynamics, then the governance of Jewish life cannot be reduced to the production of isolated interventions alone.

As this handbook has sought to demonstrate throughout, a decisive part of governance concerns the construction of the conditions that make continuity possible over time:

- continuity of relationships,
- continuity of trust,
- continuity of participation,
- continuity of cultural transmission,
- and continuity of the possibility of perceiving oneself as an integral part of European society.

This perspective also changes the meaning of institutional coherence itself.

Coherence can no longer be understood simply as the persistence of programmes or instruments over time. It increasingly depends on the capacity to maintain meaningful connections:

- between European strategies and local realities,
- between quantitative evidence and lived experience,
- between security and participation,
- between cultural life and democratic space,
- and between institutional action and social perception.

When these connections weaken, fragmentation tends to emerge. Initiatives continue to multiply, but struggle to generate cumulative learning or long-

term transformation. Practices remain isolated instead of reinforcing one another, while institutional knowledge becomes dispersed across disconnected sectors and levels of governance.

The 2021 EU Strategy explicitly emphasises the need to integrate the fight against antisemitism and the fostering of Jewish life across policy domains, recognising that these questions intersect with security, education, culture, urban governance, research, participation, and the digital sphere.

This approach is essential. Yet it can produce meaningful results only if institutions also develop the capacity to keep implementation processes intelligible over time. Without such capacity, mainstreaming risks gradually becoming a dispersion of responsibility rather than a strengthening of coherence.

Within this broader framework, cities occupy a particularly strategic position.

It is at the urban level that security, participation, cultural production, social trust, public visibility, and polarisation concretely intersect within everyday life. The NOA Guidelines therefore assign a central role to cities, emphasising the importance of permanent structures of dialogue between administrations and Jewish communities, territorial observatories, and governance mechanisms capable of accompanying long-term transformations within the social fabric.

Their importance, however, does not lie only in information gathering itself.

What becomes decisive is the capacity to develop forms of observation sensitive enough to detect weak signals before they evolve into deeper fractures:

- shifts in participation,
- changes in perceptions of safety,

- gradual invisibilisation within public space,
- weakening trust in institutions,
- or progressive withdrawal from social and civic environments.

Many of the processes affecting the overall quality of Jewish presence unfold slowly and often remain difficult to detect through conventional indicators alone.

European research consistently shows that a significant proportion of European Jews adapt their behaviour, visibility, and participation according to their perception of the surrounding social environment. What emerges from these dynamics concerns not only direct risk, but the broader relationship between belonging, trust, democratic participation, and the quality of public life itself.

For this reason, building continuity also requires a different institutional sensitivity toward the ordinary dimensions of Jewish life.

For decades, Jewish presence within European public space has often been perceived primarily through two dominant frameworks: the memory of the Shoah and the fight against antisemitism. Both dimensions remain fundamental and indispensable. Yet when they become the only available interpretative frameworks, the risk — as this handbook has repeatedly sought to demonstrate — is that everything exceeding vulnerability gradually becomes less visible:

- everyday life,
- cultural creativity,
- plural forms of belonging,
- education,
- participation,
- and the capacity of Jewish life to contribute actively to contemporary European societies.

Making these dimensions visible is not merely a symbolic exercise.

It expands the field through which institutions observe social reality and strengthens their capacity to understand the conditions that allow Jewish life to continue evolving as a living, dynamic, and generative component of European democratic space.

From this perspective, the central challenge can no longer consist only in responding to emergencies.

It increasingly concerns the ability to develop stable capacities for orientation capable of accompanying slow, cumulative, and often initially invisible transformations over time.

The continuity of Jewish life in Europe depends less and less exclusively on reactive responses to crisis and increasingly on the capacity to construct democratic, cultural, and relational environments within which trust, plurality, participation, and openness can endure.

It is from this necessity that different methodologies and governance tools can begin to emerge.

If the complexity of the field cannot be reduced without losing essential dimensions, the challenge is not to simplify reality artificially, but to render it operationally intelligible.

The recommendations and tools developed in the following sections emerge precisely from this objective: supporting institutions, cities, and territorial actors in developing forms of observation, coordination, adaptation, and governance consistent with the evolving and multilevel nature of Jewish life in contemporary Europe.

9 — Operational Toolkits

9.1. Reading the Context

As we have seen throughout this handbook, the transformations shaping Jewish life in Europe rarely emerge in ways that are immediately visible or institutionally legible. More often, they accumulate gradually, progressively altering relationships, behaviours, perceptions, participation, and the overall conditions of presence long before fully recognisable signals begin to appear.

Within this slow accumulation, security, trust, cultural transmission, public visibility, informational environments, democratic participation, and the broader quality of social relations increasingly interact with one another, continuously reshaping the field over time.

When the field presents itself in this way, the meaning and effectiveness of policy instruments also begin to change.

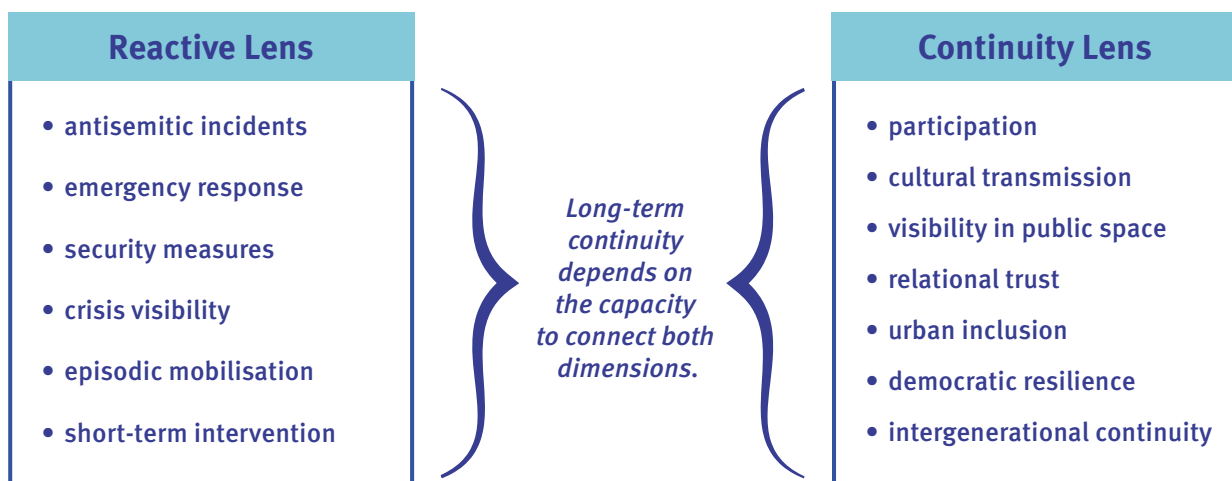
The central challenge no longer concerns only the availability of programmes, resources, or interventions. It concerns the capacity to maintain continuity of interpretation while the context itself continues to evolve.

Many of the dynamics affecting the quality and continuity of Jewish life remain only partially visible within traditional decision-making frameworks. Gradual shifts in public atmosphere, perceptions of belonging, social trust, or participation rarely align neatly with stable administrative categories or sectoral policy structures.

The operational toolkits proposed in the following sections emerge precisely from this need for orientation.

They are not conceived as fixed models to be mechanically replicated, nor as technical procedures capable of reducing complexity to simplified sequences of action. Their objective is instead to help institutions,

From Protection to Continuity



municipalities, and local actors preserve the legibility of the broader transformations continuously reshaping the field:

- the relationship between protection and participation,
- between memory and contemporary presence,
- between symbolic recognition and everyday life,
- between emergency response and long-term continuity.

More than offering definitive solutions, these tools aim to strengthen capacities for observation, adaptation, and strategic discernment consistent with the relational, evolving, and multilevel nature of Jewish life in contemporary Europe.



What ultimately shapes continuity is not simply the existence of infrastructures or activities, but the ways individuals are able to move through them.

Ultimately, the continuity of collective presence depends not only on the measures adopted, but also on the capacity to understand the environments within which those measures acquire meaning, become socially perceived, and gradually contribute to redefining the shared European space itself.

9.2. Diagnosing the Real Issue

Reading the context requires a significant shift in perspective.

Public policy inevitably tends to focus on what is most immediately identifiable: established organisations, recognised interlocutors, visible programmes, existing networks, and available datasets. This level remains indispensable. Yet it does not automatically coincide with the deeper quality of the environments within which Jewish life actually develops.

A community may appear highly active and institutionally visible while simultaneously

experiencing gradual processes of rigidity, fragmentation, or relational exhaustion. Conversely, less immediately recognisable forms of participation may preserve important cultural and social energies essential for future continuity.

What ultimately shapes continuity is not simply the existence of infrastructures or activities, but the ways individuals are able to move through them:

- whether entry into communal or civic spaces feels accessible,
- whether participation requires mastering implicit cultural codes,
- whether Jewish presence is perceived as legitimate within wider public life,
- and whether visibility can exist without constantly being experienced through caution or vulnerability.

These transformations rarely produce sudden rupture. More often, they slowly reshape expectations, perceptions, and forms of participation over time, gradually altering the relationship between individuals, communities, institutions, and public space.

For this reason, interpretative environments acquire increasing importance.

Geopolitical tensions, symbolic conflicts, digital polarisation, strategic disinformation, and broader shifts in public discourse can rapidly alter the meanings attached to Jewish presence within European societies. These dynamics influence not only external perceptions, but also how Jewish individuals and communities themselves perceive the possibilities and limits of visibility, participation, and belonging.

Reading the context therefore means developing forms of observation capable of recognising not only what is already consolidated, but also:

- incomplete transformations,
- emerging fragilities,

- weak signals,
- changing perceptions,
- and new forms through which Jewish life continues to redefine itself within contemporary Europe.

9.3. Framing Trade-offs

Even when the broader context becomes more intelligible, another difficulty immediately emerges: understanding what is happening does not automatically mean identifying the real issue at stake.

This distinction is decisive because public interventions often begin to lose effectiveness precisely when institutional urgency concentrates attention on the most visible event while deeper transformations continue to unfold beneath the surface.

Within the field of Jewish life, this dynamic becomes particularly evident.

An antisemitic incident, a sudden controversy, a public conflict, or a visible decline in participation inevitably attracts political and media attention. Yet such moments rarely coincide, on their own, with the deeper transformation underway.

More often, they represent the moment at which longer processes suddenly become visible:

- gradual weakening of trust,
- growing caution around visibility,
- deterioration of social climate,
- reduced accessibility of public space,
- or increasing perceptions that certain environments are becoming more difficult to inhabit openly.

For this reason, effective diagnosis requires distinguishing between the event itself and the broader dynamics that made the event possible.

A decline in participation, for example, may reflect security concerns, but it may also

emerge from communal fatigue, generational changes, reduced accessibility, weakened transmission, or broader transformations in how belonging and social relationships are constructed within contemporary societies.

Similarly, strong institutional visibility does not automatically translate into continuity if informal networks, emerging cultural practices, or new forms of participation remain outside institutional attention.

Diagnosis therefore acquires a strategic function.

The challenge is not simply to accumulate additional information, but to identify which processes are genuinely reshaping the relationship between Jewish presence and the surrounding European environment.

Some vulnerabilities concern material infrastructures:

- security,
- resources,
- organisational sustainability,
- demographic continuity.

Others develop within more unstable and relational terrains:

- perceptions,
- symbolic climates,
- public narratives,
- trust,
- and the broader quality of social relations.

Increasingly, these dimensions reinforce one another, making rigid separations between cultural, social, political, and security-related factors progressively less useful.

Effective diagnosis therefore requires forms of interpretation capable not only of describing fully visible problems, but also of recognising slower transformations while they are still unfolding.

It is often within this less visible temporality that the long-term continuity of Jewish life is ultimately shaped.

9.4. Designing the Intervention

Even when the underlying problem becomes clearer, decision-making continues to involve tensions that cannot simply be eliminated.

Every intervention alters an existing balance. It strengthens certain conditions while potentially exposing others. It creates openings while simultaneously generating new vulnerabilities.

Within the field of Jewish life, these tensions become particularly complex because they involve, simultaneously:

- security,
- visibility,
- memory,
- participation,
- identity,
- and the relationship with public space.

Increasing the visibility of Jewish life may help counter marginalisation, invisibility, and exclusion, reaffirming Jewish presence as part of contemporary European society. Yet visibility also inevitably produces exposure, particularly within contexts

shaped by polarisation, symbolic conflict, or heightened social tension.

In a similar way, security measures remain indispensable for continuity and protection. Yet they may also transform the relationship between communities and their surrounding environments, reshaping how public spaces are perceived, inhabited, and socially experienced.

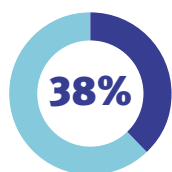
A comparable tension also structures the relationship between memory and contemporary presence.

The memory of the Shoah constitutes one of the moral foundations of democratic Europe and remains central to European strategies against antisemitism. Yet when Jewish presence becomes narrated almost exclusively through persecution, trauma, or vulnerability, it becomes more difficult to recognise its living, creative, plural, and generative dimensions within the European present.

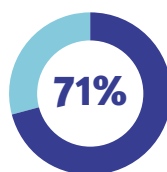
These tensions are not peripheral complications. They form part of the actual terrain within which policy must operate.

Making them explicit therefore does not weaken decision-making. On the contrary, it strengthens the possibility of developing interventions that are:

Jewish Presence and Perception in Europe



38% of European Jews have considered emigrating because they did **not feel safe** living as Jews in Europe.



71% avoid displaying Jewish symbols at least occasionally.



Source: FRA Survey 2018

- more aware of their own effects,
- more adaptable to diverse European contexts,
- more attentive to long-term continuity,
- and more capable of balancing immediate response with broader democratic and relational objectives over time.

9.5. From Positioning to Implementation

Once the broader dynamics and tensions shaping the field become clearer, a further challenge emerges: how can this awareness be translated into concrete interventions without reducing complexity to a rigid operational sequence?

At this stage, design acquires a decisive role — not simply as a technical exercise, but as a space where interpretation and action must remain continuously connected.

Within the field of Jewish life, the most effective interventions are rarely those that attempt to replicate identical solutions across different contexts. European cities do not share the same histories of Jewish presence, nor the same relationships between institutions, public space, memory, social trust, and cultural pluralism.

Some contexts possess consolidated infrastructures but fragile relational environments. Others maintain strong social and communal density despite having fewer organisational resources. In some cities, the central challenge concerns security and sustainability; elsewhere, the priority may involve rebuilding trust, accessibility, participation, or connections with individuals who no longer identify with more traditional forms of communal life.

For this reason, designing an intervention requires first identifying which conditions the intervention is intended to strengthen.

A measure that appears highly effective in the short term may gradually produce forms

of rigidity that weaken continuity over time. Conversely, highly visible cultural initiatives may generate symbolic recognition without substantially affecting the quality of everyday relationships or participation.

The decisive question therefore concerns not only what an intervention does immediately, but also the type of environment and relational configuration it progressively helps create.

This also requires a different understanding of policy tools themselves.

Operational toolkits should not function as closed procedures or fixed templates. They should instead operate as adaptive systems capable of helping institutions and local actors orient themselves within rapidly evolving realities.

Their effectiveness depends less on the standardisation of solutions than on the ability to preserve the legibility of the relationships linking:

- strategic objectives,
- contextual transformations,
- lived experience,
- and the less immediately visible consequences of public decisions.



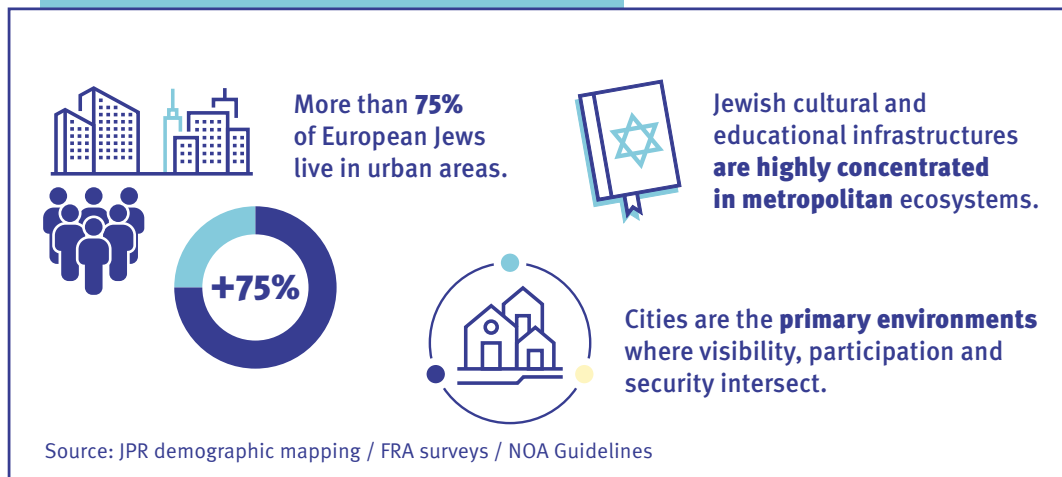
The most effective interventions are rarely those that attempt to replicate identical solutions across different contexts.

9.6. Learning and Adjustment

The transition from strategic orientation to implementation is often the point at which continuity risks breaking down.

Once translated into programmes, administrative procedures, institutional frameworks, or operational structures, policies inevitably encounter institutional constraints, sectoral languages, competing priorities, and fragmented bureaucratic environments that can progressively reduce the original complexity of the issue.

Cities as Infrastructures of Jewish Life



It is precisely at this stage that institutional positioning becomes particularly important.

Acting within the field of Jewish life does not simply mean adding initiatives targeted at a specific minority. It also means contributing to the broader ways European societies understand pluralism, democratic coexistence, participation, visibility, and the right to belong openly within public space.

For this reason, the quality of implementation depends largely on the ability to preserve the relationship between operational measures and the broader interpretation of the context from which those measures emerge.

Communication also becomes a central dimension of policy effectiveness.

Policies do not operate solely through regulations, infrastructures, or funding mechanisms. They also operate through the ways they are perceived, narrated, interpreted, and integrated into public life.

An intervention may be formally coherent while nevertheless generating distance, misunderstanding, or rigidity if it fails to engage with the tensions, perceptions, and symbolic environments already shaping the local context.

For this reason, interpretative clarity and narrative awareness must become integral components of institutional capacity. They help create the conditions through which policies are perceived as legitimate, relevant, intelligible, and socially shareable.

Implementation should therefore not be understood as the final stage of policymaking, but as a continuous process of adaptation.

Every intervention reshapes the environment within which it operates. It generates new relational configurations, modifies expectations, and often reveals vulnerabilities that initially remained less visible.

Maintaining continuity between strategy and practice therefore depends on the ability of institutions to learn continuously from these transformations without losing overall orientation.

The fostering of Jewish life requires an ongoing process of:

- observation,
- interpretation,
- contextualisation,
- negotiation,

- adaptation,
- and strategic realignment.

9.7. Maintaining Coherence Across Levels

In the field of Jewish life, no intervention remains unchanged by the context within which it is implemented.

Every policy progressively reshapes relationships, perceptions, and behaviours, altering the very terrain on which institutions continue to operate. For this reason, the capacity to learn cannot be treated as secondary to policymaking. It must become one of the central conditions of institutional effectiveness.

Many policies fail not because they lack resources or formal instruments, but because they are unable to adapt to the transformations they themselves help generate.

Some interventions produce immediate results without building long-term continuity. Others preserve administrative coherence while progressively losing contact with evolving social realities and cultural environments.

Within complex ecosystems, stability does not mean immobility. It means preserving direction while remaining capable of recalibrating priorities, tools, and approaches in response to changing contexts.

This requires systems of observation that go beyond administrative measurement alone.

Quantitative indicators, programme evaluations, and institutional monitoring remain indispensable. Yet they are rarely sufficient on their own to capture how individuals perceive a context, modify their participation, or adapt their everyday practices over time.

It therefore becomes essential to develop more continuous forms of listening and observation capable of identifying:

- weak signals,
- emerging tensions,
- gradual shifts in perception,
- and incomplete transformations before they solidify into deeper fractures that become far more difficult to address.

Institutional learning also depends on recognising that Europe does not constitute a uniform social space.

The conditions that strengthen Jewish continuity in one city or country may prove insufficient — or even counterproductive — elsewhere. The ability to adapt priorities and tools without losing strategic coherence therefore becomes a fundamental dimension of effective governance.



Within complex ecosystems, stability does not mean immobility. It means preserving direction while remaining capable of recalibrating priorities, tools, and approaches in response to changing contexts.

9.8. Translating Strategy into Practice

This necessity becomes even more visible within Europe's multilevel governance ecosystem.

European strategies establish common orientations, principles, and priorities. Yet their effectiveness ultimately depends on how they are translated into national, regional, and local contexts where Jewish life assumes profoundly different forms.

It is within cities, everyday relationships, educational systems, cultural spaces, and the concrete realities of public life that policies are ultimately tested.

Maintaining coherence across levels does not mean standardising contexts or imposing identical models everywhere. It means creating conditions that allow shared orientations to remain recognisable while adapting to realities that differ substantially across European territories.

When this connection weakens, strategies risk fragmenting into disconnected initiatives that struggle to reinforce one another over time. At the same time, excessively rigid approaches often overlook the historical, relational, and cultural specificities through which Jewish life develops in different contexts.

For this reason, coherence should not be understood merely as administrative alignment.

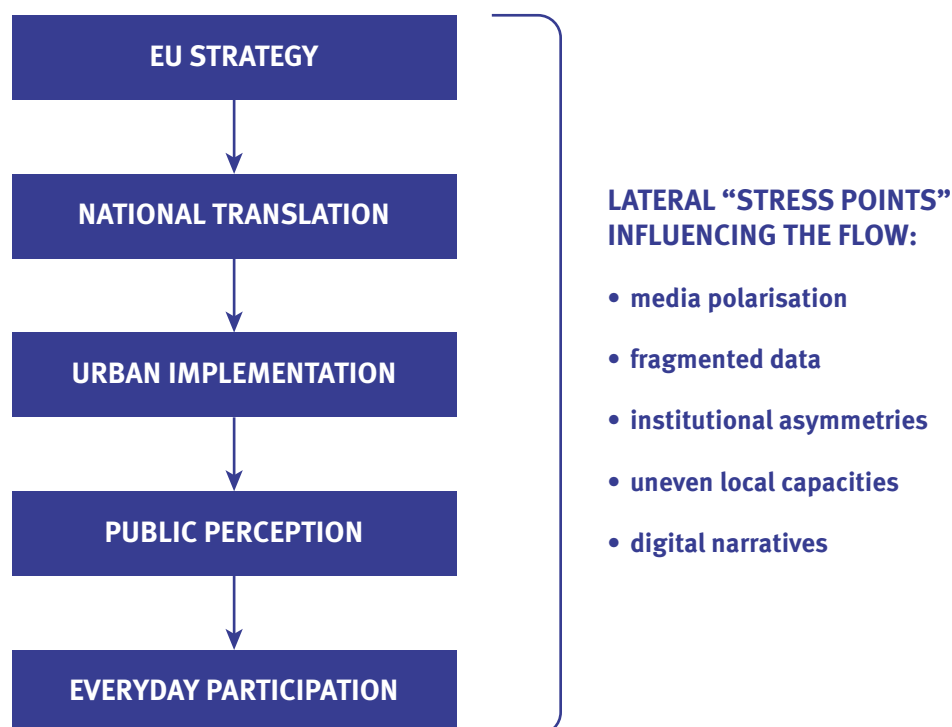
It should instead be understood as the capacity to preserve shared direction across differentiated environments through ongoing processes of translation, adaptation, and contextualisation.

This requires tools, languages, and priorities that remain flexible enough to respond to local realities while maintaining their connection to the broader objectives underpinning European strategies against antisemitism and for the fostering of Jewish life.

The operational toolkits that follow emerge precisely from this perspective.

Their purpose is to strengthen, across the European space, the capacity of institutions, cities, and communities to recognise Jewish life not simply as a protected minority reality, but as a living, generative, and structurally significant component of Europe's democratic, cultural, and civic landscape.

Where Policy Loses Traction



Tool 1: Context Reading Canvas

Understanding What Shapes Behaviour,
Not Only What Is Visible

Description: This tool is designed to support a contextual reading capable of holding together what is visible and what, while less immediately evident, concretely shapes behaviours, participation and relationships. It does not simply map actors or initiatives, but helps identify the conditions that make certain practices possible, others difficult, and others still marginal or invisible. The objective is not to describe everything, but to understand where the system functions, where it generates friction, and where transformations are beginning to emerge.

1. Presence and Access

Where something exists, but not equally for everyone

- Is Jewish presence concentrated in a limited number of places, or more broadly distributed?
- Who is actually able to access these activities or spaces? Does participation already require familiarity, networks or implicit codes?
- Are there initiatives that function well but remain unintentionally closed?
- Do some forms of participation require more cultural or relational capital than they initially appear to?

2. Friction and Practical Accessibility

What is formally possible, but concretely difficult

- Is it easy to participate, be visible or simply be present, or does it require caution, adaptation or constant attention?
- Have some behaviours become more complex over time, even without formal changes?

- Are there barriers that are never explicitly stated, yet widely recognised (social climate, expectations, implicit norms)?

3. Shifting Motivations

Where the meaning of participation changes

- Are people participating in the same way as before, or are they becoming more selective about where and how they engage?
- Are some traditional forms of participation losing attractiveness without being clearly replaced?
- Are more informal, temporary or less visible forms of participation emerging?
- Do people participate out of conviction, habit or inertia?

4. Perceptions and Gaps

When behaviours do not follow the data

- Are conditions of security or openness perceived in the same way by everyone?
- Are there signals of caution, withdrawal or selectivity that cannot be fully explained through available data?
- Do some groups react in advance of visible transformations?

5. Interpretive Environment

Where meaning is constructed

- When Jewish presence becomes visible, through which interpretive lens is it understood?
- Does the issue enter public space only under certain conditions (crisis, memory, conflict)?
- Do external events rapidly reshape how local contexts interpret what is happening?

6. Relationships

Where the system holds together (and where it weakens)

- Are there spaces of relationship that genuinely function, rather than only formally existing?
- Where is Jewish presence recognised without generating meaningful interaction?
- Do some actors or groups remain systematically marginal?
- Are connections stable, or do they depend on specific individuals or isolated moments?

Tool 2: Trade-off Positions

Making Choices Explicit Before Acting

Description: Every intervention strengthens some conditions while weakening, exposing or transforming others. In the field of Jewish life, these implications often remain invisible until tensions emerge later in the process. This tool is designed to surface them earlier. Its purpose is not to eliminate tensions or search for abstract balance, but to clarify what kind of intervention is actually being built, what it prioritises, and what consequences it may generate within a specific context.

How to Use It: Work on one concrete decision. Do not try to analyse every dimension equally. Some tensions will be central; others irrelevant. For each relevant tension: identify where your intervention is positioned; clarify what it strengthens; make explicit what becomes more exposed, selective, fragile or marginal. If this cannot be articulated clearly, the intervention is probably still underdefined.

1. Visibility ↔ Exposure

Increasing Jewish visibility may strengthen recognition, legitimacy and participation. In some environments, however, visibility also changes the level of exposure and affects perceptions of safety, social comfort and relational openness.

- Is visibility embedded in everyday life, or concentrated around symbolic moments?

- Does it unfold in open public space or in more controlled environments?
- Can the level of exposure be sustained over time?
 - Does visibility remain concentrated around exceptional moments, or does it become part of ordinary public life?
 - Could this intervention unintentionally increase symbolic pressure on the people it aims to support?

Clarify the Position

This intervention increases visibility through: _____

This creates a level of exposure that we consider: _____

Its sustainability depends on: _____

This intervention normalises visibility through: _____

2. Protection ↔ Participation

Security conditions directly shape who participates and how. Some protective measures alter accessibility, spontaneity or the social composition of participation itself. The key question is how protection reshapes participation within this specific context.

- Do some measures introduce practical or symbolic barriers?
- Does participation become more selective?
- Is a distance emerging between protected spaces and public space?
- Are some groups likely to disengage because participation begins to feel more controlled, monitored or demanding?

Clarify the Position

To guarantee _____, we accept that _____ becomes more limited or selective. This changes participation in the following way: _____

The forms of participation most affected by these measures are: _____

3. Institutional Actors ↔ Distributed Practices

Public interventions usually work through structured actors: institutions, recognised organisations, formal leaderships. This increases visibility and governability. At the same time, many important dynamics develop elsewhere, through informal networks, temporary spaces, cultural experimentation and less recognisable forms of participation. The risk is reinforcing only what is already visible.

- Is the intervention centred on established actors?
- Does it also reach informal practices or weaker relational spaces?
- Which forms of Jewish life remain outside the intervention's field of attention?
- Are we recognising existing informal dynamics, or expecting them to adapt to institutional formats in order to become visible?

Clarify the Position

We are primarily investing in: _____

This strengthens: _____

It leaves less supported: _____

At this stage, we consider this acceptable because: _____

The forms of participation we may be overlooking are: _____

4. Memory ↔ Contemporary Presence

European strategies have rightly placed memory at the centre of democratic responsibility. Yet memory alone does not automatically generate recognition of Jewish life in the present. The issue here is the image of Jewish life that the intervention ultimately reinforces.

- Is the intervention mainly focused on remembrance, education or commemoration?
- How does it make contemporary Jewish presence visible?

- Do these dimensions reinforce one another, or remain disconnected?
- Does the intervention allow Jewish life to appear as part of the European present, or mainly as part of European history?

Clarify the Position

This intervention primarily foregrounds: _____

It reinforces the perception of Jewish life as: _____

It leaves less space for: _____

5. Openness ↔ Internal Coherence

Opening outward can strengthen legitimacy, dialogue and social integration. It can also produce internal tensions, redefine balances or create forms of resistance that remain partially invisible. These tensions need to be recognised and managed.

- Is openness broad or carefully mediated?
- Are all internal actors aligned around the intervention?
- Are some groups feeling more represented than others?

Clarify the Position

This intervention expands: _____

This creates tension around: _____

We intend to manage this through: _____

6. Immediate Impact ↔ Long-Term Continuity

Some interventions generate rapid and visible results. Others slowly build relational conditions that are less visible but more durable. Short-term visibility can easily overshadow long-term continuity.

- Is the intervention designed to produce immediate visibility?
- What remains active after the intervention ends?
- What actually changes over time?
- What conditions would need to exist for

this intervention to remain meaningful beyond its initial momentum?

tomorrow, would this intervention still make sense?

Clarify the Position

This intervention is primarily oriented toward: _____

Its visible impact concerns: _____

Its long-term continuity depends on: _____

What this intervention leaves structurally strengthened is: _____

Tool 3: Intervention Readiness Checklist

Is This Intervention Aligned with the Shift in Perspective?

Description: This checklist is designed to test whether an intervention is genuinely aligned with the broader shift in perspective proposed throughout this document. This tool is not designed to add complexity, but to remove ambiguity before action turns it into unintended consequences. It can be used quickly, including on interventions that are already planned or underway.

How to Use It: You do not need to “tick every box.” Some questions will matter more than others depending on the context. When ambiguity appears, stop there. That is usually where the real issue begins.

1. Starting Point

- Does this intervention emerge from a concrete contextual transformation, or from a generic priority (“increase visibility”, “strengthen memory”, “raise awareness”)?
- Could you explain, in one sentence, what is actually changing in the context without relying on abstract language?

2. Logic of the Intervention

- Are we intervening on visible symptoms or on the conditions producing them?
- If the triggering event disappeared

3. Positioning and Trade-offs

- Is it clear what this intervention genuinely strengthens?
- Is there something we are consciously leaving less supported, less visible or more exposed?
- Are we fully aware of the tensions this choice may generate in this specific environment?

4. Access and Participation

- Does this intervention make participation easier, or simply make existing structures more visible?
- Does it change anything for people who currently remain outside the field of participation?
- Are we broadening access or reinforcing existing audiences?

5. Contemporary Presence

- Does this intervention communicate a living presence or mainly a symbolic representation?
- Is contemporary Jewish life clearly visible, or does it remain secondary to memory, ceremony or institutional framing?

6. Relationships

- Are durable relationships being created here, or only temporary connections linked to the initiative itself?
- Which actors matter in this ecosystem but remain absent from the intervention?

7. Public Environment

- In this context, will the intervention actually be interpreted as intended?
- Could it be reframed through polarisation, simplification or external narratives?

8. Time Horizon

- What remains once the intervention ends?
- Does it leave behind infrastructure, trust, relationships, access or only visibility?
- Six months later, what will still exist?

9. Final Coherence Check

- Looking at the intervention as a whole, is there anything that no longer aligns?
- If you had to explain the intervention in a few lines, would it sound coherent or internally contradictory?

10 — Future Scenarios & Strategic Foresight

10.1. The Future Is Already Reshaping the Present

The conditions that will shape the future of Jewish life in Europe are already emerging within the broader transformations currently reshaping European societies.



The trajectories affecting Jewish communities often make visible broader tensions that traverse European democratic societies as a whole.

Forms of public participation are evolving. Relationships between individuals and institutions are changing. The ways people construct belonging, imagine continuity, and position themselves within democratic societies are being redefined by environments increasingly marked by acceleration, polarisation, informational fragmentation, and perceptual instability.

Cities, digital ecosystems, educational systems, cultural institutions, and the growing overlap between geopolitical tensions and everyday social experience are progressively transforming the environments within which democratic coexistence takes shape.

Within these processes, Jewish life occupies a particularly sensitive position.

The possibility of openly inhabiting a Jewish identity — religious, cultural, social, or simply publicly perceived as such — continues to depend on the existence of democratic spaces genuinely capable of sustaining pluralism, reciprocity, complexity, and legitimate disagreement without transforming difference into permanent vulnerability or exposure.

For this reason, the trajectories affecting Jewish communities often make visible broader tensions that traverse European democratic societies as a whole, even when these tensions remain less immediately recognisable elsewhere.

The most significant transformations rarely appear through sudden rupture.

As this handbook has repeatedly emphasised, they tend instead to sediment gradually, progressively reshaping behaviours, expectations, and perceptions concerning the future.

Geographic mobility, urban concentration, evolving cultural and religious practices, the digital mediation of social relationships, and constant exposure to global informational flows of highly variable quality are all modifying the relationship between identity, visibility, participation, and belonging.

These transformations do not operate only at the level of ideas or symbolic representation. They directly affect the conditions through which individuals and communities decide:

- how visible to remain,
- how much to participate,
- whether continuity appears imaginable,
- and whether long-term emotional, cultural, or economic investment in a surrounding environment still feels possible.

At the same time, tensions themselves increasingly follow non-linear trajectories.

Geopolitical conflicts rapidly generate local consequences. Digital ecosystems compress

highly complex realities into emotional and polarised narratives. The distinction between global events and everyday social environments becomes progressively thinner, continuously reshaping the perceptual climate within which trust, security, participation, and mutual recognition evolve.

It is precisely within this context that strategic foresight acquires growing relevance for European policymaking.

In recent years, European institutions have progressively strengthened anticipatory approaches to social transformation, recognising that many contemporary vulnerabilities become fully visible only once they have already acquired structural form.

Within a historical period marked by geopolitical volatility, technological acceleration, informational instability, and deep international interdependence, democratic resilience increasingly depends on the capacity to identify:

- emerging signals,
- cumulative transformations,
- weak indicators,
- and perceptual shifts while they are still developing.

From this perspective, the future begins taking shape long before it becomes fully visible.

The conditions for continuity or fragmentation emerge through the ways societies interpret their present, recognise incomplete transformations, and develop the capacity to intervene before tensions consolidate into trajectories that become progressively more difficult to reverse.

10.2. Slow Transformations and Invisible Thresholds

Many of the transformations affecting the continuity of Jewish life unfold gradually rather than dramatically.

They often emerge through:

- declining participation,
- increasing caution in public visibility,
- weakening trust,
- reduced civic engagement,
- and growing difficulty in imagining continuity over the long term.

The challenge in governing such processes lies precisely in their silent accumulation.

Changes sediment progressively through layers of visible and invisible transformation that rarely produce an immediate perception of crisis, even while substantially altering the conditions of democratic coexistence over time.

Trust becomes one of the dimensions most exposed to these dynamics.

This concerns trust in institutions and their capacity to guarantee democratic continuity, but also trust in the possibility of being recognised as a legitimate and integral part of society itself:

- trust in public space,
- trust in the resilience of democratic culture,
- trust in the possibility of sustaining disagreement without exclusion,
- and trust in the openness of the surrounding social environment.

When this trust weakens gradually, its effects tend to emerge through adaptation rather than rupture:

- reduced visibility,
- greater caution,
- declining participation,
- emotional distancing,
- and changing expectations regarding the future.

The weakening of territorial attractiveness often follows similarly imperceptible trajectories.

European cities and countries rarely cease abruptly to be perceived as environments where Jewish life can develop. More often, a gradual perception emerges that certain essential conditions are becoming more fragile:

- the quality of social relations,
- the predictability of democratic environments,
- the capacity for participation,
- and the possibility of feeling part of an open and shared civic space.

Under such conditions, institutional continuity may coexist with a gradual weakening of cultural vitality, participation, and long-term confidence that only becomes fully visible once its effects are already advanced.

Many of the most significant transformations develop below the threshold of conventional policy attention.

Governance systems generally respond more effectively to explicit and immediately recognisable events:

- visible violence,
- overt discrimination,
- public crises,
- sudden escalation,
- or direct security threats.

They encounter greater difficulty in recognising distributed, cumulative, perceptual, and relational transformations unfolding more slowly across the social environment.

Yet some of the most important thresholds are crossed precisely in this way: through the gradual normalisation of tension, symbolic hostility, exclusionary language, mistrust, or social withdrawal without any single identifiable moment of rupture.

This limitation reflects not only methodological difficulties, but also

the challenge of developing forms of systemic analysis capable of understanding cumulative transformation beyond the management of immediate contingency.

The growing European interest in anticipatory governance partly emerges from the recognition of this limitation.

Practices such as horizon scanning, signal detection, foresight analysis, and scenario development reflect attempts to strengthen institutional capacity to interpret processes while they are still emerging, before they consolidate into structural realities that become far more difficult to reverse.

In the case of Jewish life, this requires expanding the analytical lens beyond the most immediately available indicators.

Alongside security data and demographic observation, increasing importance must also be given to dimensions that remain more difficult to measure but are essential for understanding long-term trajectories:

- the quality of participation,
- relationships between communities and institutions,
- changes in narrative environments,
- public trust,
- cultural vitality,
- and perceptions concerning whether continuity still appears possible.

Some of the most important signals emerge precisely in the gap between apparently stable institutional conditions and a growing underlying perception of vulnerability, isolation, exhaustion, or weakening democratic confidence.

Strengthening anticipatory capacity therefore means developing tools capable of reading the present not only through visible events, but also through the less immediately visible environments where the future conditions of continuity — or fragmentation — are already beginning to form.

10.3. Building Anticipatory Capacity

Integrating an anticipatory perspective into the governance of Jewish life requires more than simply expanding analytical tools or forecasting methodologies. It implies a deeper transformation in the way institutions observe, interpret, and accompany the environments within which they operate.

This means learning to recognise not only what becomes immediately visible, but also the slower relational, perceptual, informational, and social shifts that progressively affect the possibility of sustaining continuity over time.

For this reason, quantitative data — while remaining indispensable for guiding public policy — can rarely capture the full complexity of ongoing transformations on its own.

The most sensitive changes often begin to emerge beyond directly measurable events:

- in perceptions of belonging,
- in expectations concerning the future,
- in the quality of everyday relationships,
- and in the ways individuals and communities redefine their relationship with public institutions and shared civic space.

Strengthening anticipatory capacity therefore requires the development of more permanent forms of:

- listening,
- territorial dialogue,
- distributed observation,
- qualitative interpretation,
- and institutional interaction capable of identifying emerging vulnerabilities before they consolidate into more difficult-to-reverse trajectories.

As this handbook has repeatedly shown, many of these transformations become visible first at the urban level.

Cities often register early changes in:

- intercommunal relations,
- educational environments,
- universities,
- cultural spaces,
- public atmosphere,
- and forms of participation.

At the same time, they may also reveal new possibilities for cooperation, trust-building, and democratic renewal.

Within these dense and interconnected ecosystems, Jewish life interacts continuously with the surrounding social environment, often making visible broader transformations affecting the democratic quality of coexistence itself.

Strengthening anticipatory capacity at the local level therefore means increasing the ability to identify emerging dynamics while they are still incomplete and to develop responses capable of adapting to rapidly evolving environments without relying exclusively on reactive crisis management.

A foresight perspective also changes the relationship between public policy and time itself.

Strategies designed exclusively around present conditions risk rapidly losing effectiveness within environments shaped by technological acceleration, geopolitical volatility, informational fragmentation, and rapidly changing social expectations.

From this perspective, scenarios become useful not because they predict a single future with certainty, but because they make it possible to test the resilience of policies under different conditions.



Strengthening anticipatory capacity therefore requires the development of more permanent forms of listening, territorial dialogue, distributed observation, and qualitative interpretation.

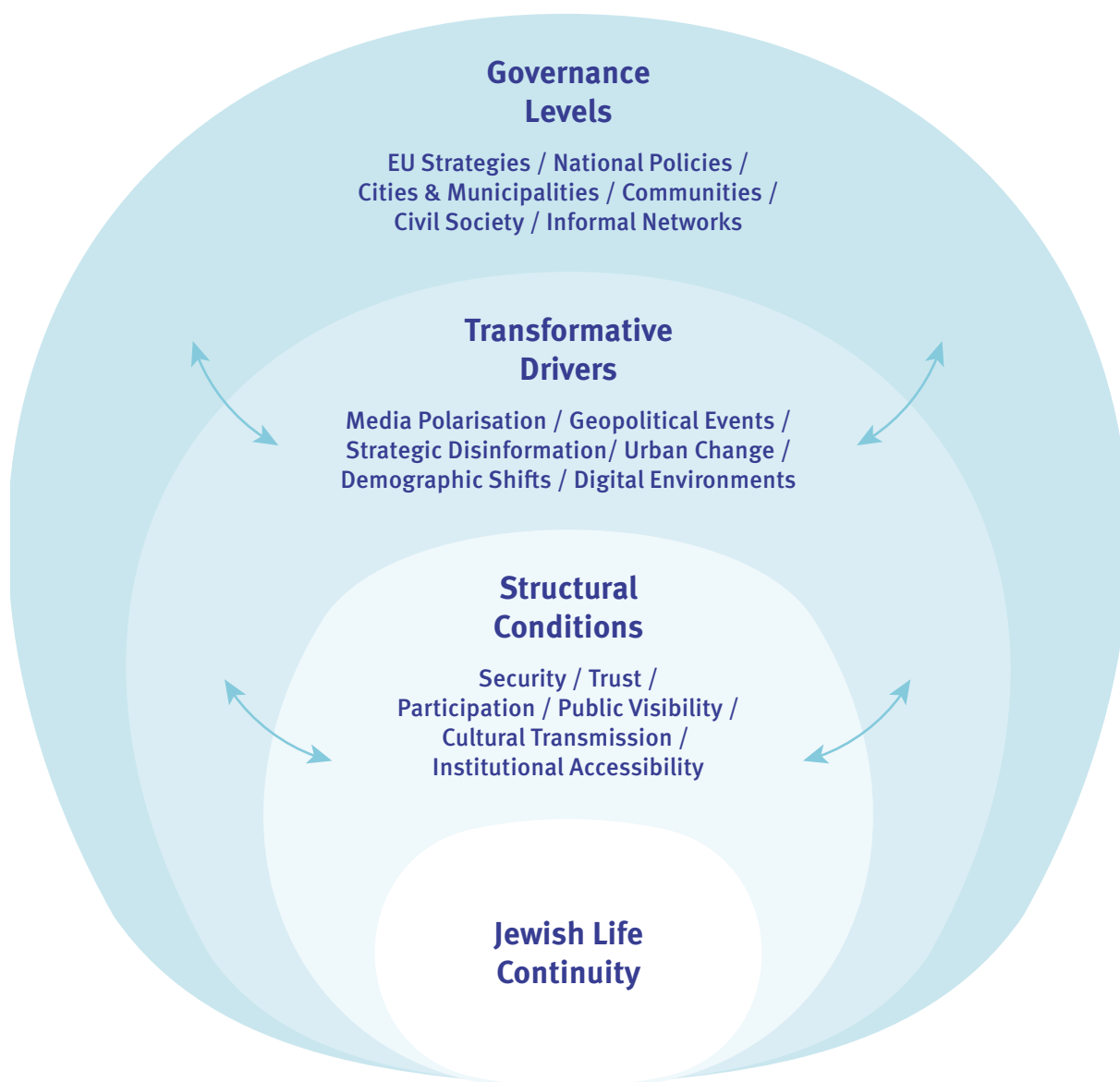
They help institutions evaluate whether strategies remain coherent and effective even within more unstable, uncertain, and rapidly transforming environments.

In the case of Jewish life, this perspective inevitably raises deeper questions concerning the conditions that still make it possible to imagine continuity within European democratic space.

Security remains indispensable. Yet long-term continuity also depends on:

- the quality of social relations,
- the possibility of participating openly in public life,
- the perception of legitimacy and belonging,
- and the capacity of institutions to create environments in which future generations continue to recognise themselves as integral participants within European democratic societies.

Reading Complexity: How Context Shapes Jewish Life



Looking Ahead: A Strategic Foresight Lens for Jewish Life Policies

Strategic Foresight Principle	Key Implication for Jewish Life Policies
1. Observe Changes Before They Become Crises	The most significant transformations rarely appear immediately as visible incidents. Declining participation, self-limitation in public visibility, relational fatigue, or loss of trust can accumulate gradually before producing structural effects. Strengthening anticipatory observation capacities means paying attention to slow changes in the social climate before they consolidate into more visible forms of crisis.
2. Connect Quantitative Data with Lived Experience	Statistical indicators, security data, and the monitoring of antisemitic incidents remain essential, but they do not fully capture ongoing trajectories. Permanent dialogue with communities, qualitative observation, and territorial listening help identify emerging vulnerabilities that often remain invisible within the most immediately available data.
3. Treat Cities as Early-Warning Environments	Many transformations become perceptible first at the urban level: in schools, cultural spaces, universities, local media, and the digital ecosystems shaping everyday life. Cities can therefore play a decisive role both in the early identification of emerging tensions and in the development of innovative practices of cooperation and trust-building.
4. Test Policies Against Multiple Future Conditions	Policies designed exclusively around present conditions risk losing effectiveness in contexts shaped by technological acceleration, increasing polarisation, or geopolitical volatility. Integrating scenario-thinking approaches helps institutions assess whether policies and strategies would remain effective under different social configurations.
5. Build Conditions That Make Continuity Possible	The continuity of Jewish life depends on far more than security alone. Cultural accessibility, the quality of institutional relationships, opportunities for public participation, intergenerational transmission, and the perception of being able to build a future within the European space are all essential for sustaining open, resilient, and democratically vital environments.

10.4. Keeping the Future Open

The future of Jewish life in Europe will continue to depend on the capacity of European societies to preserve environments in which plurality, participation, and belonging can develop without progressively becoming conditions of exposure or vulnerability.

This requires more than institutional protection alone.

It requires the development of a broader democratic responsibility: a collective capacity for observation, adaptation, mediation, and civic imagination capable of recognising emerging transformations before they harden into exclusionary or irreversible trajectories.

It is precisely in this sense that strategic foresight acquires importance within the European framework.

Its relevance does not lie only in preparing for possible crises. More fundamentally, it strengthens the capacity to

recognise incomplete transformations while their outcomes remain open and still subject to change.

The quality of democratic coexistence increasingly depends on the ability to identify:

- emerging vulnerabilities,
- cumulative tensions,
- relational shifts,
- changes in public atmosphere,
- and transformations in social trust before they consolidate into more rigid, polarised, or exclusionary conditions.

For this reason, fostering Jewish life requires moving beyond purely episodic intervention and beyond approaches focused exclusively on emergency response.

Continuity is built gradually:

- through trust,
- institutional relationships,
- cultural accessibility,
- civic participation,
- intergenerational transmission,
- and the possibility of perceiving oneself as part of a genuinely shared democratic environment.

When these conditions slowly weaken — even in the absence of visible crisis — the capacity to imagine permanence, participation, investment, and future within the European space also progressively weakens.

At this point, however, the issue acquires a broader significance.

The question no longer concerns only the future of Jewish communities, nor solely the capacity to combat antisemitism. It increasingly concerns the way Europe imagines itself during a historical period in which many of the categories that sustained post-war democratic coexistence are themselves undergoing profound transformation.

Forms of political participation are changing. Relationships between citizens and institutions are changing. The mechanisms through which trust is built, memory transmitted, and collective belonging sustained are being reshaped within informational environments increasingly marked by technological acceleration, geopolitical instability, cognitive fragmentation, and declining capacities for shared mediation.

Within this broader framework, Jewish presence continues to represent something that exceeds the minority dimension alone.

Jewish history in Europe has long accompanied — and often anticipated — some of the central tensions of European modernity:



Jewish presence continues to represent something that exceeds the minority dimension alone.

- the relationship between universalism and difference,
- between integration and vulnerability,
- between citizenship and belonging,
- between continuity and transformation,
- between memory and democratic renewal.

For this reason, the conditions that allow Jewish life to flourish often coincide with broader conditions of democratic openness, institutional maturity, cultural vitality, social resilience, and political foresight.

The deeper question therefore concerns Europe's capacity to continue producing future without retreating into exclusively defensive logics.

A society that gradually ceases to imagine its future also progressively loses its ability:

- to sustain plurality,
- to support cultural innovation,
- to preserve democratic openness,
- and to create environments grounded in mutual trust and shared participation.

Conversely, keeping the democratic horizon open means preserving environments in which different memories, identities, histories, and forms of belonging continue to be recognised as integral parts of collective life rather than realities managed exclusively through the frameworks of risk, vulnerability, or protection.

This may constitute one of the deepest challenges currently facing European democratic governance:
not only protecting what already exists, but creating conditions sufficiently open, resilient, and adaptive to allow different forms of life and belonging to continue developing over time.

In this sense, the future of Jewish life also becomes a question of institutional imagination:
the capacity to recognise which democratic,

relational, and cultural conditions may still allow future generations to perceive Europe as a space where belonging, continuity, participation, and plurality remain both possible and desirable.

Democratic societies rarely weaken suddenly.

More often, they undergo gradual processes of erosion during which it becomes increasingly difficult to recognise the transformations altering the conditions of coexistence before those transformations acquire structural form.

Strengthening anticipatory capacities therefore means preserving spaces for:

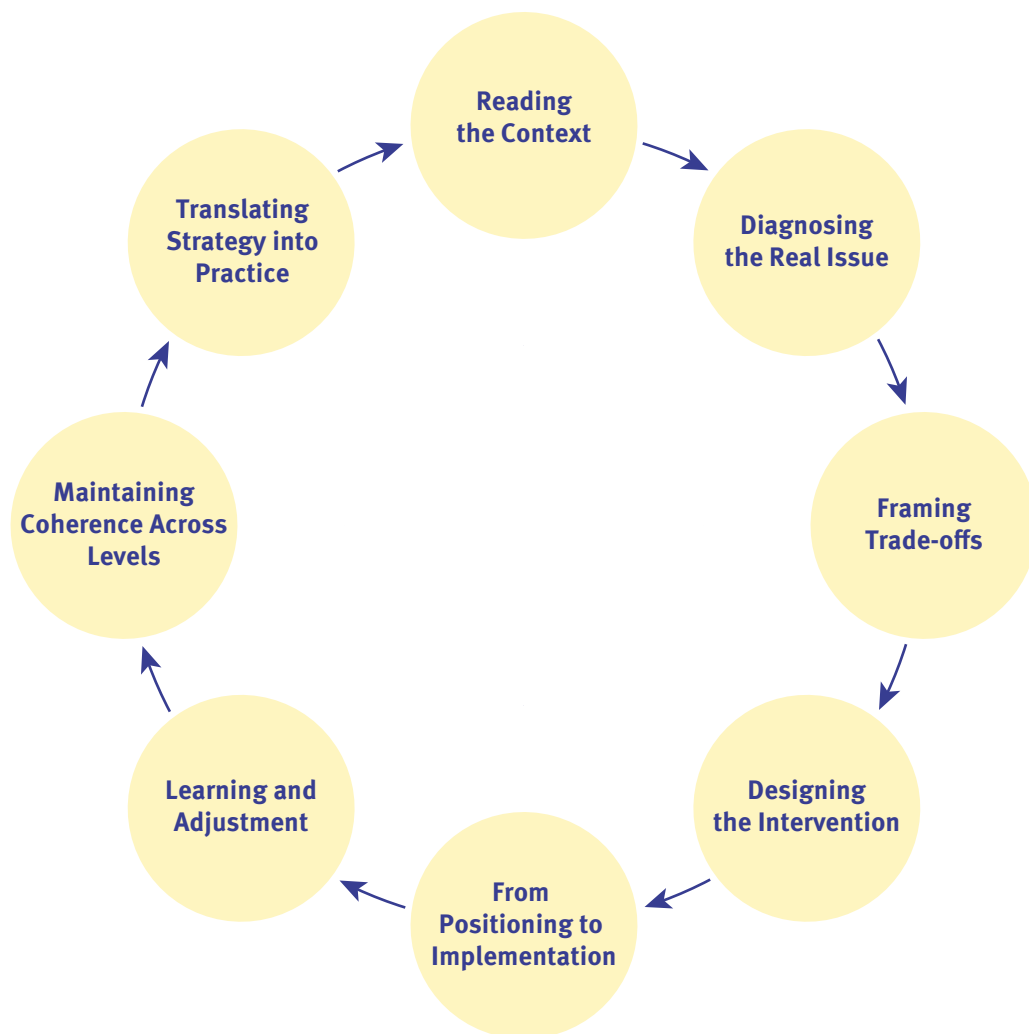
- adaptation,
- mediation,
- democratic negotiation,
- plurality,
- and collective imagination itself.

As Hannah Arendt observed, "imagination is the prerequisite for understanding."

The way Europe imagines the future of Jewish life may therefore reveal much about its capacity to continue imagining — and protecting — its own democratic future.

What is ultimately at stake is not only the continuity of a historical presence fundamental to European history, but the preservation of a political and cultural space in which plurality, memory, difference, and the diversity of human experience can continue to remain living components of the shared European horizon.

From Context Reading to Adaptive Governance



Visible Event vs Underlying Dynamic

Visible Event

Decline in participation



Security concern



Public controversy



Institutional visibility



Underlying Dynamic

Erosion of trust



Perceived exposure



Polarised narratives



Weak informal engagement



PILLAR IV:

PERSPECTIVES, VOICES AND FIELD INSIGHTS



11 — Beyond the Observable: Mapping Jewish Life Through Voices and Experience

At this stage of the reflection, it has perhaps become clear that speaking about Jewish life in Europe means engaging with realities that often exceed the categories through which institutions have traditionally — and legitimately — sought to make them legible.

Data helps measure phenomena, identify vulnerabilities, monitor transformations, and orient priorities. It makes visible trends that, without adequate tools of comparative observation, would risk remaining fragmented or underestimated. In recent years, the work carried out by European institutions, Jewish communities, research centres, and civil society organisations has contributed in a decisive and unprecedented way to strengthening this capacity for interpretation.

The European Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life itself marked an important turning point precisely because it recognised that the Jewish

question concerns not only the protection of a minority, but also the democratic quality of Europe as a whole.

11.1. Beyond What Can Be Measured

And yet, the more this capacity for observation expands, the more evident it becomes — as this Handbook has sought to show throughout its pages — that social life never fully coincides with what can be measured.

Profound transformations rarely announce themselves through sudden events. More often, they emerge gradually:

- in perceptions,
- in hesitations,
- in invisible forms of exhaustion,
- and in the ways people slowly learn how to inhabit — or withdraw from — public space.



Without any obvious rupture, relationships to visibility begin to change. Trust in institutions changes. Trust in the possibility of belonging changes. Even the meaning attributed to continuity itself begins to shift.

It is precisely within these subtle transformations that the language of policy inevitably encounters a limit that cannot be overcome simply by multiplying indicators.

What is at stake concerns not only the collection of information, but the capacity to engage with experiences that remain — inevitably — only partially accessible to traditional forms of institutional observation.

A society may simultaneously appear stable while being traversed by silent processes of withdrawal. A context may seem inclusive while generating diffuse forms of self-limitation. Conversely, it is often precisely within environments perceived as fragile that new cultural energies, relational networks, creative practices, and generative forms of belonging begin to emerge.

11.2. Listening to a Plural Jewish Europe

For this reason, the work accompanying this Handbook has not been limited to the analysis of data, reports, trends, and institutional frameworks.

Alongside quantitative research, the project also sought to understand the socio-political environment through the perspectives of those who inhabit it and actively contribute to shaping it.

Around fifty interlocutors from more than twenty European countries were interviewed, including:

- scholars,
- activists,
- community representatives,
- artists,
- educators,
- rabbis,
- journalists,
- cultural practitioners,
- young leaders,
- and individuals engaged, in very different ways, in the everyday construction of contemporary Jewish life.

These interviews were not conceived merely as narrative complements intended to “humanise” data. They were approached as a way of allowing complexity itself to emerge precisely where interpretative frameworks risk becoming excessively linear.



What is at stake concerns not only the collection of information, but the capacity to engage with experiences that remain — inevitably — only partially accessible to traditional forms of institutional observation.

Listening to these voices reveals a Jewish Europe far more mobile, plural, uneven, and restless than it often appears in public representations.

In some contexts, the dominant perception is one of gradual contraction of democratic space. Elsewhere, there is a strong sense of cultural renewal and social reactivation.

Some interlocutors describe forms of relational exhaustion produced by permanent polarisation and constant exposure to symbolic conflict, particularly within digital environments. Others insist on resisting any reduction of European Jewish life to trauma, security, antisemitism, or vulnerability alone.

Many speak simultaneously of both realities:

- vulnerability and vitality,
- fear and presence,
- exhaustion and creativity,
- tension and long-term commitment.

Alongside this broader process of listening, the volume also includes three written contributions by authors who represent, from different perspectives, some of the most significant voices reflecting on the generative force and enduring vitality of Jewish presence in Europe today.

Their role is not to provide a single conclusion or a definitive theoretical synthesis of the interviews. Rather, they introduce additional layers of reflection, opening the discussion toward broader philosophical, cultural, and political questions that extend far beyond the Jewish question alone:

- the relationship between memory and presence,
- between universalism and belonging,
- between democratic fragility and shared civic space,
- and between historical continuity and contemporary transformation.

The coexistence of these two levels — the situated plurality of interviews and the broader reflections proposed by invited contributors — reflects the wider architecture of the Handbook itself.

On the one hand, there is the need to remain grounded in lived experience, territorial diversity, and the everyday tensions traversing contemporary European societies.

On the other, there is the necessity of situating these experiences within broader questions concerning:

- democratic coexistence,
- cultural transformation,
- political fragmentation,
- and Europe's capacity to imagine its own future.

Perhaps it is precisely this coexistence that reveals something important not only about European Jewish life, but also about the wider democratic condition of Europe itself.

Throughout modern European history, Jewish presence has often functioned as a sensitive surface through which broader social tensions became visible before they fully emerged within the wider political space.

Today, once again, questioning the conditions of Jewish presence also means questioning Europe's capacity to remain a space capable of sustaining:

- plurality,
- democratic openness,
- the legitimacy of difference,
- and the complexity of belonging itself.

11.3. Shared Responsibility and Democratic Life

Within this framework, participation acquires a meaning that extends beyond formal consultation or the occasional involvement of communities.

Recent transformations in European governance culture — including Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/2836 on the effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations — reflect a growing awareness that democratic resilience depends increasingly on shared processes of interpretation, responsibility, and knowledge production.

The pages that follow were therefore conceived first as a space of listening before becoming a space of interpretation.

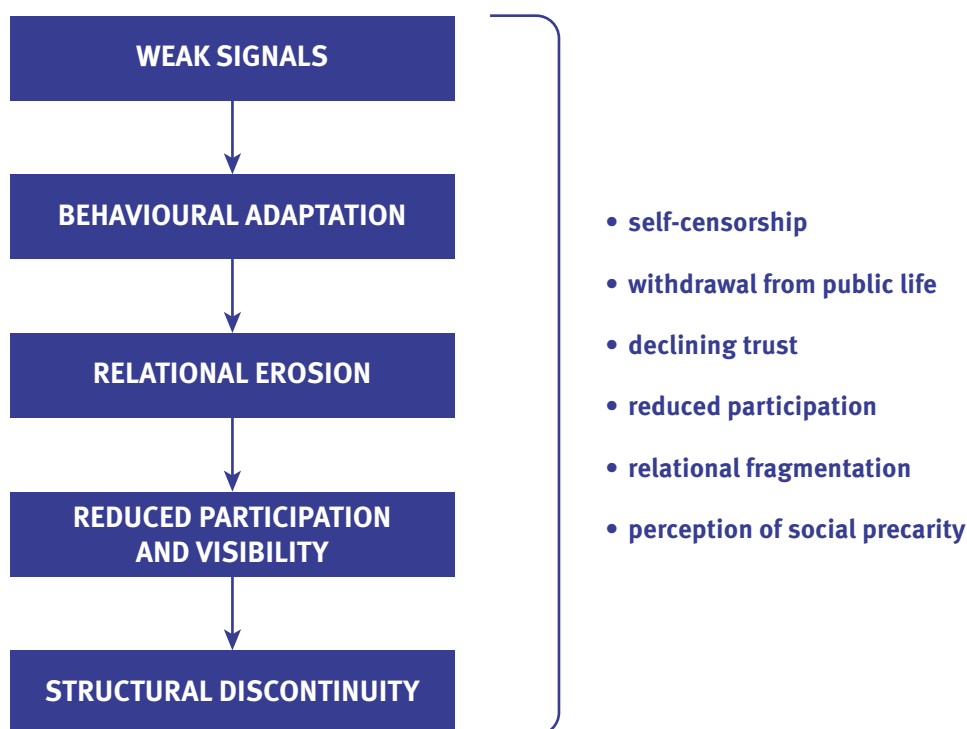
They bring together perspectives that sometimes differ profoundly from one another. Yet it is precisely through this plurality that the density and vitality of contemporary Jewish life in Europe become visible.

Beneath the tensions, uncertainties, and concerns that inevitably emerge, one also encounters:

- attachment,
- creativity,
- intellectual openness,
- and a persistent desire to remain part of the European democratic horizon.

Not despite its fragilities, but through the ongoing effort to inhabit them together.

How Slow Transformations Become Structural



12 — Interviews

12.1. Introduction

In early 2026, the Handbook on fostering Jewish life research team conducted interviews with 37 Jewish and 2 non-Jewish individuals from across Europe, including community leaders, educators, rabbis, advocates, artists, Holocaust survivors, Israelis that settled in Europe and cultural figures.

The individuals were pre-selected by the research team and validated by the European Commission. Geographically, all EU Member States except Cyprus are represented plus Turkey, Serbia and the United Kingdom. Demographically, participants range in age from their twenties to over sixty, with a gender balance.

The interviews were conducted using a structured set of seven open-ended questions. They took place online and were recorded. Recordings were transcribed using digital tools and then edited by the research team. With the support of artificial intelligence, researchers analysed responses and identified recurring patterns and tendencies, which form the basis of this report.

The picture that emerges is complex. Themes such as the normalisation of security concerns, demographic challenges and lack of financial resources consistently come up across interviews. The events of 7 October, 2023, emerged as a turning point for nearly all participants, although attitudes towards Israel vary. Many interviewees expressed a desire to focus more on Jewish life, practice, culture and traditions rather than primarily on combating antisemitism, although concerns about antisemitism have grown in recent years. Issues of inclusivity in Jewish

communities also came up, particularly regarding the place of women, LGBTQIA+ individuals and newcomers such as Israelis or Latin American Jews.

At the same time, notable differences emerge. A recurring theme is the perceived divide between Eastern and Western Europe. Most interviewees suggested that living openly as a Jew is safer in Eastern Europe though easier in Western Europe. Relationships with national and European institutions also vary: for example, French and Danish participants often emphasised consistent governmental support, whereas perspectives from Belgium or Slovenia were more critical. Likewise, communities are often thriving in big cities but declining in the periphery.

In short, Jewish life in Europe cannot be reduced to a single narrative. Jewish life in Europe in 2025 is not a single story. It is Vienna's 23 synagogues and Ljubljana's one cultural centre that cannot afford its electricity bill. It is the Seder table of 35 in Copenhagen, half of them non-Jewish, singing songs Jews have sung for thousands of years, and the Jewish student in Amsterdam who has learned not to identify publicly out of fear. It is Budapest's oversubscribed Jewish kindergartens and Zagreb's community that lost 80% of its members to the Holocaust and has never recovered. It is the young Israeli woman in Dublin who, seven years after leaving Israel, found herself lighting Shabbat candles and could not explain why.

This complexity is not a problem to be solved, but a reality that should be the basis for any serious European policy on Jewish life. The interviews collected here don't

offer a single diagnosis or prescription, but they do present a continent-wide mapping of where Jewish life is thriving, where it is struggling, what is working and what policymakers could do differently.

12.2. Insecurity: The Normalisation of Fear

In 2003, Ariel Heller was a child in Rome walking to his Jewish school past armed police. He did not think this was unusual. He had never known it to be different.

This detail captures one of the most disturbing findings across all the testimonies collected for this Handbook. The security apparatus that now surrounds Jewish life in most of Europe (armed guards at synagogues, police at every community event from football matches to picnics...) has become so embedded in daily Jewish experience that many interviewees no longer register it as remarkable. It has been normalised.

This normalisation is, in itself, a form of harm. As Nehama-Dina Uzan in Brussels puts it: “Being Jewish is increasingly associated with risk, hiding and security concerns. This is extremely damaging because it affects how people raise their children.” The child who grows up understanding that her school requires armed guards is being given a foundational lesson about what it means to be Jewish in Europe.

The security reality is uneven. Nordic countries have been at threat level three or four out of five for years; in Stockholm, cases of workplace and university antisemitism have multiplied since October 2023. In Rome, Brussels, Paris and Berlin, Jewish community members describe environments where visible Jewish identity (a kippah in the street, a Jewish magazine on a café table...) is continually calibrated in light of perceived personal risk. In Ljubljana, neo-Nazi

demonstrators and pro-Palestinian marchers arrived simultaneously, from opposite directions, at the synagogue on the same Shabbat.

On the other hand, interviewees in Helsinki, Warsaw, Riga, Tallinn and Lisbon describe environments that are, by comparison, genuinely open. And yet, no interviewee, from any country, describes Jewish life as simply safe.

What interviewees across all contexts share is the aspiration Tina Schwarz of Copenhagen articulates most clearly: “Security is like hot water from the tap. It’s hygiene. It has to be there, or we are unsafe. Once that is settled, the real work is fostering life.”

The shared goal is a future in which security is no longer the precondition for Jewish life to exist. Marie-Sarah Seeberger in Paris describes this fatigue with security and a desire to reorient. “I feel we are entering a new phase in which Jewish communities must refocus on their core missions: representing themselves, strengthening communal life and embracing the joy of being Jewish.”

12.3. 7 October and the Question of Israel

Most interviewees identify the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October, 2023, and the war that followed, as a turning point in their experience of Jewish life in Europe. In Berlin, Shai Doitsh describes how his community, previously a mix of Germans and Israelis, suddenly contracted: gatherings became confined to Israeli circles. In Rome, Ariel Heller describes “a deep sense of loneliness and rupture,” including the loss of his entire social world. In Belgrade, Mina Pašajlić speaks of a moment when she chose not to wear a hat with Hebrew letters after the office of her organisation was vandalised (she later decided to not hide).

Across countries as different as Slovenia, Turkey, Ireland, Lithuania, France, Portugal, Belgium and Sweden, interviewees describe the same experience: being held responsible for the actions of the Israeli government. In Ljubljana, where there is no Israeli embassy, Robert Walzl puts it plainly: “All projections from what is happening in Israel go directly to us. We represent, in one moment, Israel. We represent all the bad that is happening in the Middle East.” In Dublin, Maurice Cohen notes that even at political events, he is addressed as though the Israeli Prime Minister is his head of state. In Izmir, Jacob Ceki Hazan (who describes himself as agnostic on Zionism) finds himself unable to engage in political debate without being demanded to choose a side he does not recognise as his own.

The relationship between European Jews and Israel is diverse. Some interviewees express deep attachment to Israel as the guarantor of Jewish continuity. Others describe deep discomfort with the current Israeli government. What is consistent is that this complexity is the diaspora’s own, to be worked out from within, not imposed from outside. The conflation of Jewish community members with Israeli government policy by politicians, media and institutions is experienced as one of the most persistent and damaging features of European Jewish life today.

Lastly, several interviewees describe the attack and its aftermath as having deepened, rather than weakened, their sense of Jewishness. Shai Doitsh in Berlin says: “After 7 October, I was not Israeli, Berliner, LGBT and Jewish. I was just Jewish.” Ariel Heller describes a move toward “radical presence” in spaces that would exclude him. Robert Walzl notes: “Before, I thought of myself as Slovenian-Jewish. Now I am more and more a Jew from Slovenia.” Roman Salyutov notes an attitudinal shift since 7 October: “Many Jews came to the conclusion that we need to be more present: in politics, in institutions, in public life.”

12.4. East and West: Two Histories, Two Sets of Challenges

Any serious analysis of Jewish life in Europe must begin with the recognition that “Europe” is not one place. The Jewish communities of Amsterdam and Belgrade, of Paris and Tallinn, of Budapest and Ljubljana, share a civilisational inheritance and face some common pressures, but they are not the same community and cannot be addressed with the same policy instruments.

In Western Europe — France, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom — Jewish communities tend to be larger, better institutionalised and more publicly visible. They also tend to face the most acute security pressures, the highest levels of street-level antisemitism and the greatest experience of self-censorship.

These communities benefit from long-established infrastructure: synagogues, schools, kosher facilities, welfare organisations, cultural institutions. But infrastructure does not equal safety. The interviewees from Paris, Brussels and Rome describe environments in which the ability to live openly as a Jew requires daily calculation.

In Central and Eastern Europe — Poland, Latvia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania — the picture is different in almost every dimension. Communities are generally smaller. Security concerns exist but are less physically acute. The greater challenges are demographic sustainability, financial fragility, the legacy of communist-era suppression of Jewish identity and the weight of Holocaust memory in societies that are still, in many cases, reckoning with what happened on their soil.

Several of these communities describe a rebuilding that contrasts with the more defensive posture of parts of Western Europe. Magda Dorosz in Warsaw describes

her work as “turning Poles with Jewish roots into Jews.” Anna Mezan in Sofia speaks of Jewish identity as requiring “conscious effort.” Eduard Kupferberg in Bucharest maintains nearly ninety synagogues and over a hundred cemeteries in a country that housed the third-largest Jewish population in Europe before the Holocaust, and where less than 1% now remain.

The communist legacy is specific and consequential. In many countries of the former Eastern Bloc, Jewish identity was suppressed for decades; the category of “Jewish” was dissolved into that of “Soviet citizen” and religious life was actively discouraged. The communities now rebuilding themselves are recovering both from the Holocaust and from this second suppression that followed it.

The restitution question adds a further layer of complexity. In Lithuania, the Jewish community received tens of millions of euros in compensation for property lost in the Holocaust and communist eras. Viktorija Juse describes a community with substantial financial resources and almost no active Jewish life to show for it. This is not the only such case. Several Eastern European communities present what might be called the resource-rich, life-poor paradox: the money is available, the leadership is not.

Germany occupies a position of its own. Berlin’s Jewish community has been substantially rebuilt since 1990 by immigration from the former Soviet Union and, increasingly, from Israel, creating a diverse, culturally hybrid community that sits uneasily within established European Jewish institutional frameworks. For Shai Doitsh, the challenge is mutual recognition between Israeli newcomers who bring a majority-culture Jewish identity and established diaspora communities with different customs and resources.

12.5. Demographics: The Slow Emergency

The demographic reality of European Jewish life is a crisis underway. Populations are aging. Young people leave for larger cities, for Israel, for countries with better economic prospects or larger communities. Inter-marriage rates are high across the continent. Birth rates are low. And the communities that were once large enough to sustain full institutional life now maintain infrastructure designed for memberships three or four times the current size.

In Thessaloniki, David Saltiel leads a community of 1,500 in a city of one and a half million — a city that was, before the war, one of the great centres of Sephardic Jewish civilisation, with a Jewish population of 50,000, 96% of whom were murdered in 1943. In Bratislava, Martin Kornfeld identifies his fundamental challenge not as security or antisemitism but simply as “bringing people to the community, everything else is management.” Andras Kovacs, from Budapest, foresees a large majority continuing along the path of assimilation, with a committed minority remaining connected. In Zagreb, Sanja Zoričić Tabaković is the only interviewee who explicitly does not believe in a Jewish future in her city.

Migration to Israel has been a consistent pressure on diaspora communities for decades and has intensified since 7 October, particularly from France, where a significant number of community members have made Aliyah. The communities most affected tend to be those already facing existential questions of scale.

Migration to larger European Jewish communities — from smaller cities to capitals, from Eastern Europe to Western Europe — has hollowed out communities in ways that are less visible than Aliyah but equally consequential. The Jewish communities of Kaunas, Klaipėda and Šiauliai in Lithuania, each with a hundred

members or fewer, are in the process of being absorbed into Vilnius, or disappearing altogether. Similar trends can be seen in Greece, Romania, Hungary, Belgium or in Nordic countries.

The influx of Israeli families to European cities is the demographic story that most surprised interviewees and the one that offers the clearest grounds for cautious optimism. Interviewees in Dublin, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Prague, Lisbon, Berlin and Izmir all noted independently that Israeli families have been arriving in significant numbers, particularly since 7 October. They come for quality of life, for professional opportunities, for climate, for the peace of smaller cities. And they represent, in principle, a substantial infusion of Jewish demographic energy into communities that are otherwise declining.

The problem is that they are not joining. Israelis who arrive in European cities typically seek out other Israelis, not diaspora Jewish communities. They do not join synagogues. They do not become members of community organisations. As Nadbornik in Helsinki puts it: they come from a majority Jewish society and do not initially identify diaspora life as “their” Jewish life.

But something shifts, over time. Maurice Cohen in Dublin recounts a secular Israeli woman who, after seven years in Ireland, found herself lighting Shabbat candles, then buying kosher food, without being able to explain why. The process of diasporisation — of learning what it means to be Jewish as a minority — tends to reconnect Israelis to dimensions of Jewish identity they had taken for granted.

ICE, where Shai Doitsh works, has started to build in Berlin and Athens frameworks to facilitate this reconnection. This is the exception, rather than the norm, but is certainly one of the most significant opportunities identified across these interviews.

The influx of Argentine Jews to Spain also deserves specific mention. Spain’s Jewish community has been shaped by this migration in ways that interviewees from Madrid and Barcelona both note: bringing Ashkenazi traditions to communities historically dominated by Sephardic ones and enriching the cultural and institutional life of communities that were, until recently, very small.

Ukrainian Jews have arrived in significant numbers in several Eastern European communities since the Russian invasion in 2022. Like the Israelis, Ukrainian youths also breathe new life into struggling communities.

12.6. Jewish Identity: Between Religion, Culture and Politics

One of the most consistent findings is that Jewish identity in Europe is pluralist, hybrid and evolving, and that the institutional structures designed to represent and serve Jewish communities have often not kept pace.

In Copenhagen, three-quarters of children at the Jewish day school come from mixed families. In Dublin, Israelis are not counted in formal membership rosters because they do not join the synagogue. In Prague, Petr Papoušek estimates there may be up to 14,000 people with Jewish identity in a country with only 3,000 registered community members. In Warsaw, Magda Dorosz works with young Poles who have Jewish roots but have never been part of a Jewish community and who are uncertain whether they belong.

Religious life under pressure. Several interviewees, including Rabbi Hofmeister in Vienna and Andras Kovacs in Budapest, flag a specific structural problem: EU funding for Jewish life flows disproportionately toward cultural and secular initiatives, because cultural initiatives are easier to frame within civil society grant frameworks. Religious communities, with their specific needs for

rabbis, mikvehs, kosher infrastructure and religious education, receive less support, despite religious life being, for many Jews, the core of Jewish continuity.

Representation and inclusion. The question of who speaks for the Jewish community and who is included in its life runs through many of these interviews. In Lisbon, Esther Mucznik challenges the Orthodox structure of her community and its limited role for women. In Paris, Marie-Sarah Seeberger notes the historic significance of an unprecedented number of female and under-40 candidates elected to the CRIF board. In Rome, Ariel Heller's work with Keshet Europe addresses the specific exclusion of LGBTQ+ Jews, not just from hostile outside spaces, but from their own communities. In Madrid, Angy Cohen speaks for Sephardi women who currently find themselves without meaningful options in their own tradition: "If you're traditional and a woman in a Sephardi community, your options are none."

The tension between Sephardic and Ashkenazi traditions, between secular and religious, between Israeli-born and diaspora-born, between established members and newcomers discovering their Jewish roots are the substance of what Jewish life in Europe actually consists of. Policy frameworks that do not account for this internal diversity will miss more than they capture.

12.7. Relations with Authorities: Local, National and European

The relationship between Jewish communities and their governments — local, national and European — is one of the most practically consequential themes across these interviews. It is also one of the most varied.

One positive example is Denmark, where the government funds the security apparatus around the Jewish community without

question or negotiation, across every party and every administration. The relationship between the community and the police and intelligence services is described by Tina Schwarz as "very close and very collaborative."

A negative example is Slovenia, where Robert Walzl leads the only Jewish institution in the country without any systematic government support. The Slovenian government publicly declares the House of Tolerance Festival to be the most important event in the country combating antisemitism — and provides no funding for it. The festival runs on contributions from foreign embassies, at sums Walzl finds too embarrassing to name. The country has adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism and established a Council for Fighting Antisemitism, of which Walzl is a member. Neither institution has produced a financial structure or action plan.

The pattern Walzl describes — governments that embrace the language of Jewish protection without the institutional commitment to implement it — is not unique to Slovenia. In Lithuania, Viktorija Juse calls for EU enforcement mechanisms that force national governments to act on incitement to hatred. In Spain, Michel Montreuil notes the absence of hate speech legislation that would illegalise certain forms of antisemitic expression that can even be heard on mainstream media. In Croatia, Sanja Zoričić Tabaković describes the country's year as chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, during which it did not involve the Jewish community in any meaningful activity.

The European level presents its own set of problems and opportunities. The EU is, for many of the communities represented here, a crucial source of both funding and legitimacy. Jacob Ceki Hazan in Izmir — in a country that is not even an EU member — describes EU grants as "probably the only vital lifeline"

for his work. Communities in Lithuania, Croatia, Malta and elsewhere describe EU frameworks as the primary mechanism through which anything gets done.

But interviewees are consistent and pointed in identifying the limitations of EU engagement. The most common criticism is the mismatch between reporting requirements and reality. EU grants are typically assessed on quantitative indicators (how many participants, how many events...). The transformations that actually constitute Jewish renewal — a secular Israeli woman who starts lighting Shabbat candles; a young Croat who discovers Jewish heritage and becomes an ally; a Slovenian schoolchild who learns for the first time that Jews lived and died in her city — are invisible to this kind of accounting. As Hazan asks: “Send actual experts to come and see what’s happening on the ground.”

Andras Kovacs adds a structural point that goes beyond funding: European institutions overwhelmingly engage with Jewish life through officially recognised religious communities and their elected leaders. But in many countries, the most vibrant Jewish life takes place in civil organisations: cultural centres, secular schools, youth groups, Hillel chapters, informal study circles, that may not be formally affiliated with the official community and are therefore invisible to institutional interlocutors. Engaging only with official religious structures means engaging with only a fraction of actual Jewish life.

12.8. Education and Transmission

If there is a single thread that runs through every vision of Jewish flourishing offered in these interviews, it is education. Ruth Ouazana-Barer stresses the need both to educate non-Jews about the Jewish community through openness and dialogue, and to help the Jewish community better understand the richness of its own Jewish life.

In Rome, Noemi Di Segni launched an online Ulpan that has grown beyond all expectations. In Warsaw, Magda Dorosz’s Hillel operates as a pathway for young people with Jewish roots who do not know what to do with them. In Sofia, Anna Mezan runs a Jewish school and kindergarten where, as she puts it, “Jewish values, identity and traditions are meaningfully integrated into everyday learning.”

Several interviewees note the specific challenge of Holocaust education. In Slovenia, Robert Walzl found that Stolpersteine — stumbling stones set into the pavements of Ljubljana and other cities, bearing the names of murdered Jews — made talking about the Holocaust with school groups easier to understand. In Thessaloniki, David Saltiel describes a decades-long process of moving Holocaust remembrance from the margins of Greek civic life into its mainstream — ceremonies now take place in towns where no Jewish community exists any more.

The Berlin case deserves specific attention. Roman Salyutov chairs the CDU’s Jewish Forum while performing the music of forgotten Jewish composers: “Music is a very special language — everybody understands it, regardless of their native tongue.” This approach — using cultural transmission as a form of education that does not feel like education — is echoed by Walzl in Ljubljana, who funds Jewish cultural programming through his theatre’s municipal grant because no other funding exists. The theatre becomes the Jewish cultural centre because the theatre has a budget.

The transmission challenge is generational as much as institutional. Marcell Kenesei in Budapest speaks of families celebrating Jewish holidays at home after two or three generations had abandoned the practice entirely: “The fact that it can come back after so many generations skipping it completely, I find that astonishing.”

12.9. Thriving or Reacting: The Central Strategic Question

Jewish life in Europe faces a dilemma: should the primary frame for Jewish life in Europe be defence against antisemitism or construction of Jewish vitality?

Jair Stranders in Amsterdam articulates it most clearly: “I really think there is potential, and real need, for a more positive Jewish life, where those threats don’t constantly define who we are.” David Saltiel in Thessaloniki expresses the same hope: that a public Hanukkah, a Sukkah in a square, or a school group visiting a synagogue will be “seen simply as normal, welcome parts of the city’s life, naturally protected and respected by everyone.” Nehama-Dina Uzan in Brussels offers the formulation that best captures what is at stake: “You don’t fight darkness with a stick, you fight darkness with a candle.”

Yaron Nadbornik in Helsinki states the policy argument directly: “The reason to combat antisemitism is not to protect Jews. It is to protect Europe. If a community this small cannot be protected and helped to prosper, there is no future for Europe.”

12.10. Conclusion

At the end of his most recent project — a series of photo portraits of the Jewish community of Slovenia — Robert Walzl chose a title. *We Are Still Here*.

It is the simplest possible statement. It is also, given what happened to the Jewish communities of Europe in the twentieth century and what is happening to them in some places in the twenty-first, not a simple thing to say.

The testimonies gathered in this report point to a challenging reality. Jewish life in Europe today exists under significant pressure: from security threats, demographic decline and organisational tensions. Yet

it also demonstrates capacity for renewal, driven by passion, resourcefulness and adaptation, as well as the arrival of new Jewish populations from Israel, Ukraine and Latin America. The picture that emerges is that of a community finding its place within an ever-changing Europe.

7 October, 2023, clearly marked a turning point for Jewish life in Europe, with far-reaching consequences. These have mostly been negative, with a surge in antisemitic incidents, but in some cases also positive, as it renewed awareness of the importance of Jewish identity, education and communal life.

Two central insights stand out. Firstly, the sustainability of Jewish life in Europe cannot be secured through protection alone. A future built solely on defensive measures risks reinforcing the perception of a precarious and vulnerable Jewish existence, which limits Jewish individuals’ ability to project themselves. The voices in this report consistently call for a shift in emphasis: from safeguarding Jewish life to enabling it to thrive. This requires investment not only in protection, but also in education, culture, religious practice, dialogue and community-building.

Secondly, any effective policy approach must embrace complexity rather than attempt to simplify it. Jewish communities across Europe differ in size, history, resources and challenges, shaped by diverse geographical and political contexts. They also encompass a wide spectrum of identities, practices and affiliations. One-size-fits-all approaches don’t work. Successful policies supporting Jewish initiatives will have to be flexible, context-sensitive and responsive to local realities.

Ultimately, the future of Jewish life in Europe is inseparable from the future of Europe itself — a measure of the strength of its democracy, pluralism and social cohesion. Many interviewees expressed a strong sense of pride in being European citizens, or citizens of their respective countries. As

several voices in this report suggest, the question is not only what Europe can do for its Jewish citizens, but what kind of Europe it aspires to be.

This document was prepared on the basis of interviews conducted by Alan Grabinsky, Eitan Bergman and Paul Sánchez Keighley. All interviewees reviewed and approved the representation of their testimony.

Quoted in this article (the full interviews, as well as those not quoted in this findings summary, are available in the online version of the handbook)



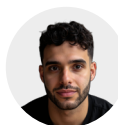
Andras Kovacs — Professor of Sociology & Head of Jewish Studies, Central European University — Budapest, Hungary



Angy Cohen — Researcher & co-founder of the Academic Network Against Antisemitism on Campus — Madrid, Spain



Anna Mezan — Head of Formal Jewish Education at the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria “Shalom” — Sofia, Bulgaria



Ariel Heller — Founder and Chair of the Board of Keshet Europe, the European network of Jewish LGBTQIA+ individuals and organisations — Rome, Italy



David Saltiel — President, Jewish Community of Thessaloniki — Thessaloniki, Greece



Eduard Kupferberg — Secretary General, Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania — Bucharest, Romania



Esther Mucznik — Historian and former Vice-president of the Lisbon Jewish Community — Lisbon, Portugal



Jacob Ceki Hazan — Education specialist, researcher & digital consultant — Izmir, Turkey



Jaïr Stranders — Artistic Director, Theater Na de Dam — Amsterdam, Netherlands



Magda Dorosz — Executive Director of Hillel Poland — Warsaw, Poland



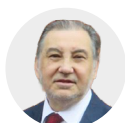
Marcell Kenesei — Director, Jewish Community Center (JCC) — Budapest, Hungary



Marie-Sarah Seeberger — Head of International Affairs at CRIF — Paris, France



Martin Kornfeld — Secretary General, Federation of Jewish Communities of Slovakia — Bratislava, Slovakia



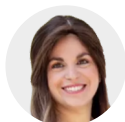
Maurice Cohen — Chairman, Jewish Representative Council of Ireland — Dublin, Ireland



Michel Montreuil — Lay leader, Mozaika & Consultant, JDC Europe — Barcelona, Spain



Mina Pašajlić — Education Director at Haver Srbija — Belgrade, Serbia and Global Jewish educator at Mem Global



Nehama-Dina Uzan — Program director in the European Jewish Community Center (EJCC) — Brussels, Belgium



Noemi Di Segni — President, Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI) — Rome, Italy



Petr Papoušek — President, Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic — Olomouc & Prague, Czechia



Robert Waltl — Actor, Theatre Director & Cultural Manager; Director, Jewish Cultural Center Ljubljana; Co-Founder, Liberal Jewish Community of Slovenia — Ljubljana, Slovenia



Roman Salyutov — Chairman, Jewish Forum of the CDU North Rhine-Westphalia & Musician — Bergisch Gladbach, Germany



Ruth Ouazana-Barer — Founder of Limoud France and of “Les Racines de Demain” — Lyon, France



Sanja Zoričić Tabaković — Representative of the Jewish National Minority of the City of Zagreb & Founder and Director, Shoah Academy — Zagreb, Croatia



Schlomo Hofmeister — Community Rabbi of Vienna — Vienna, Austria



Shai Doitsh — Director of communities development at ICE — Israeli Community Europe — Berlin, Germany



Tina Schwarz — Executive Director, The Jewish Community in Denmark (Det Jødiske Samfund i Danmark) — Copenhagen, Denmark



Viktorija Juse — Community Liaison Baltic, Nordic, Eastern European Countries — Vilnius, Lithuania



Yaron Nadbornik — President, Central Council of Jewish Communities of Finland & Vice President, World Jewish Congress — Helsinki, Finland

13 — Jews in Modern Europe

The long history of Jews in Europe forces a question that the present age tends to obscure: not merely what Europe did to the Jews — persecution, exclusion, extermination — but what the Jews did to Europe, and what they introduced into it that was constitutive. Answering it requires that the two not be separated. For it is precisely the exilic condition of the Jews since the first century of the common era — the *Galout*, in the full density of its theological and historical meaning — that made possible their structuring contribution to European modernity. It is not despite exile that Jews have nourished Europe intellectually, politically, culturally; it is through exile, and by means of it.

Galout — exile in the sense of rabbinic Judaism — is not simply the geographical dispersion of a people. It is an existential and normative structure, codified through the Talmud, or what the Jewish tradition calls the oral Torah, which governs how one inhabits a foreign world without dissolving into it. Through this canon, dispersion was transformed into a regulated form of life in which the absence of territory and sovereignty is, so to speak, compensated by the intensity of a law that holds through its constant invocation and the eschatological expectation it structures. The Torah becomes, in Heine's celebrated phrase, a "portable homeland": what Jews carry with them from place to place is above all a text, which directs them — under foreign domination — toward a redemption suspended on the will of God. It is a regime of interpretation, a way of binding the community across political borders, transnationally, under the sign of eschatological expectation.

This structure has a fundamental intellectual consequence. It produces a singular position of observation with respect to host societies: an intense presence, one that engages participation in the life of nations, yet from an irreducible distance. This is not the exteriority of the pure outsider; it is something more complex — an interiority that knows itself to be exilic, a belonging that is lived as provisional and yet real. Max Weber had theorized this in forging the concept of *Gastvolk* ("guest people"): a people that lives within nations without being coextensive with them, that does not aim to overturn them but to persist within them, and whose presence is never simply absorbed into that of the autochthonous populations, even where integration is most advanced.

This position is not a handicap. It is, historically, a condition of possibility for certain forms of critical and creative thought. To observe a society from within, without identifying with its deepest taken-for-granted certainties, is one of the most favorable conditions for questioning the justice and rationality of its norms. Not that Jews held a monopoly on this position — it has reproduced itself in other forms among other marginal groups. But they occupied it in a continuous, intensive manner, over several centuries, and in nearly every European nation simultaneously. It is this continuity and intensity that accounts for the density of the contribution.

Within this long history, the decisive variation in the Jewish condition in Europe begins with emancipation. Incubated within the German and French Enlightenments, it was set in motion in France by the Revolution, as a process of

civic and juridical equalization that extended across Europe throughout the nineteenth century. It should not be read as a simple liberation granted from the outside, after which Jews would merely have joined the common city. It was experienced by them as a profound upheaval in their exilic condition — not the end of the Galout, but a radical transformation of its form.

What emancipation introduces into Jewish experience is what may be called *a conversion to right* (conversion au droit): the entry of Jews into a regime where their presence is no longer governed by concessions, favors, and privileges granted or withdrawn at the discretion of sovereigns, but by a common law equally binding on all. It is no longer the vertical alliance with the prince that guarantees their security, at the cost of a structural dependence on the vicissitudes of power; it is the law of the state, to which Jews can appeal on the same footing as all other citizens. The change is of considerable consequence. It means that Jews become full subjects of right — not merely beneficiaries of right, but participants in its elaboration, as popular sovereignty establishes itself as the sole legitimate source of sovereign power.

It is from this unprecedented position that the return of Jews into European politics emerges in the nineteenth century. And that return does not take a single form: it takes shape through four orientations that define the political quadrilateral of modern Judaism. Some chose straightforward national integration — the Israelite citizen who brings to the host nation the totality of his civic engagement while maintaining a Jewish identity confined to the private and religious sphere. Others claimed cultural and national autonomy within the plurinational states of Central and Eastern Europe — the “nationalist” current. Still others committed themselves to socialist internationalism, seeing in it the path toward a universal emancipation that would transcend the borders between nations

and communities. And Zionism, finally, sought a distinctly Jewish political solution, by founding a national home that would be at once a refuge for the persecuted and a modern answer to the question of the collective autonomy of the Jewish people.

These four orientations are antagonistic on many points. But they share a common structure: they are all politics of right. All of them presuppose that Jews are subjects whose claims can be articulated in universally receivable juridical and political terms. This conversion to the language of right, in the nineteenth century, is itself a structuring contribution to European politics. It is largely in this crucible that the categories of international law, the protection of minorities, and the self-determination of peoples were elaborated — categories that constitute the normative architecture of contemporary Europe.

This quadrilateral collapsed with the Shoah. Not that the question of the forms of Jewish political life disappeared — it persists, in the radically transformed conditions of the post-war period. But the extermination introduced an irreparable fracture into Jewish historical consciousness and into European consciousness itself. The modern Galout, in its emancipated variation, had rested on an implicit pact: the host nations guaranteed to integrated Jews the reciprocity of common right. This pact — which can be read through the figure of a talmudic oath, the oath of the nations not to push persecution to the point of annihilation — was broken absolutely. The Shoah is the European betrayal of the oath that had allowed Jews to persist since the first century of the common era. For them, it is an event which, by its magnitude, causes their very existential ground to shift.

Yet one must also acknowledge that this rupture paradoxically produced one of the most decisive contributions of the Jewish condition to post-war Europe. For it is in the confrontation with this absolute non-

sense — extermination as convergence, under German leadership, within the policies of the very Europe that had enabled emancipation — that the normative refoundation of the continent after 1945 was elaborated. The international humanitarian law that emerges at Nuremberg and in the founding texts of 1948–1950 bears the mark of Jewish jurists: Hersch Lauterpacht had theorized crimes against humanity, Raphael Lemkin forged the concept of genocide. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention, the institutions of European construction: the entire edifice is inseparable from the recognition that antisemitism, with its exterminatory aim, is a consubstantial evil of Europe itself, against which an architectonic struggle must henceforth be waged.

But the post-war contribution is not reducible to institutional legacies. It runs also through philosophical and literary reflection on the catastrophe — a reflection that transformed the fundamental categories of European thought on politics, memory, and responsibility. From Hannah Arendt on the banality of evil and the foundations of totalitarianism, to Primo Levi on the gray zones of dehumanization, through the works of Paul Celan and Imre Kertész, it is a Jewish thought of the after-catastrophe that provided Europe with the conceptual tools for its self-understanding — and in so doing, redrew the contours of what it means to be an ethical and political subject in the contemporary world.

The present situation corresponds to what may be defined as a last variation of exile — a diptych in which two realities coexist: diaspora existence, which stakes its future on liberal democracy and its advances while remaining bound up with the struggle against antisemitism, and the State of Israel as possible refuge — not a restored messianic kingdom, but a democratic state destined to guarantee the survival of the people should that become necessary. This diptych is not the end of the Galout. It is its

most complex form, the most charged with internal tensions.

What characterizes the last variation is precisely that it compels one to hold together realities that resist synthesis: the legacy of emancipation and the memory of extermination, the universalist vocation of Jews within liberal democracies and the existence of a particular state conceived for their collective survival, engagement in the common right of nations and the maintenance of an identity irreducible to that right. These tensions are not contradictions to be resolved. They are the living form of Jewish presence in Europe today — and it is precisely in this living, strained, unresolved form that its generative force resides.

Fostering Jewish life in Europe cannot, in this light, be reduced to a defensive politics against antisemitism, as necessary as that politics is. It requires recognizing what Jewish presence structurally contributes to Europe: not one contribution among others, but a fertile tension between the particular and the universal, between memory and project, between belonging and critique — a tension without which Europe would be less capable of understanding itself.

Bruno Karsenti

Bruno Karsenti is a French philosopher and sociologist whose work explores the intersections between political thought, social sciences and modern European identity. Director of Studies at the EHESS in Paris and recipient of the CNRS Silver Medal, he has written extensively on Judaism, emancipation, citizenship and the place of Jewish experience in European political thought. He is also editor of the journal *K.*, dedicated to contemporary Jewish thought and culture.

14 — Making Meaning of Jewish Existence in Europe

As many Jews growing up in Europe at the end of the millennium, I always felt that a part of me was alienated from my Jewish heritage. Most of us did not grow up in a milieu where Jewish life was a self-evident and all-encompassing part of life. To many in my generation, this created an “impostor syndrome”, where we questioned if we were knowledgeable enough, traditional enough, or even Jewish enough to be counted in and have a seat at the table?

In the year 2001, I started studying in a newly opened educational institute in Stockholm, Paideia — The European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden, which was founded that same year with the mandate to strengthen Jewish life and culture in Europe. Little did I know that 25 years later I would be its director.

Furthermore, when meeting Jews from the US and Israel throughout the years, I realized that many viewed Europe as a cemetery where Jewish life could barely survive, let alone prosper. In the Jewish youth movement in Scandinavia, there were debate topics such as “will there be Jewish life in Scandinavia in 50 years from now?”, and the debate continues today. But as the Polish Jewish journalist Konstanty Gebert retells the old joke: “Each time the last Jew of Poland leaves Poland, a few hundred of his closest family and friends come to the station or airport to see him off.”¹ It seems that Jewish life in Europe keeps renewing itself, often in surprising and creative ways.

I have spent most of my adult life working with Jewish education and listening to this emerging Jewish narrative of Europe.

By being part of the Paideia community since its beginnings, I have had firsthand experience of hundreds of people thinking, strategizing and implementing new projects in the field of Jewish life and culture in Europe, be it education, community work, arts and culture, academia, or social action. People with an adamant determination to create a vibrant Jewish existence in Europe.

To name a few developments from different corners of Europe, here are a number of recent initiatives from the Paideia alumni community:

- Czech Republic: A Jewish festival that creates a meeting point between activists, visitors, and performers in a communal setting.
- France: A musical project that makes people gather to sing local *niggunim* and *piyyutim*.
- Hungary: A theatre and cultural centre that provides an open and inclusive space supporting alternative and independent artistic companies.
- Ukraine: A social action project addressing the physical, mental and social needs of Jewish children affected by the war.
- Former Yugoslavia: A training program for young adults that provides a space to hold conversations about the Israel-Palestine conflict and antisemitism.

There are of course countless more projects and people behind the projects, each and every one bringing life to Jewish culture in Europe in its own distinct way. But looking at the totality of these projects and people, throughout the years, I have noticed three

¹ Gebert, Konstanty; *Revival? Rebirth? Renaissance?, What has happened to Polish Jews over the last four decades?*; Nordisk judaistik, Scandinavian Jewish Studies, Vol. 31, No. 1; 2020; p. 66.

ideas that I find exceptionally powerful when it comes to engendering Jewish creativity in Europe:

Deep Textual Connection

Delving into Jewish texts and their interpretative tradition creates a deep bond with the Jewish sources and their potential for reshaping Jewish culture and thought. As Moshe Halbertal expresses it in a conversation with Barbara Lerner Spectre: “Modern, or you might say postmodern, Jewish identity [...] has to do with being anchored in literacy, text, and study, and in my understanding, that is the ultimate source of that form of identity, in its intimate exchange with our tradition. [...] There would not be ‘studying about’, but studying it in the form of a *Beit Midrash*. That calls for engagement, it calls for persons to add another layer to it.”²

Open Jewish Culture

Europe is a multitude of languages, narratives and cultural expressions, and Jewish stories are part of that diversity. By being anchored in local Jewish cultures, using personal experiences and telling the stories of people within their own communities, Jewish life becomes part of a larger European story and gains relevance for all of society. “Nothing Jewish is alien to me”³, Franz Rosenzweig writes, which in my understanding means that you bring all of yourself into your work, studies and life. Let Jewish and local perspectives enrich each other and speak to each other.

Meaning Through Encounter

Jewish life needs to create communities where people feel safe and at home, while at the same time remaining open to those who may never have experienced Jewish life before. Jewish culture can serve as a

meeting place where people with different opinions and backgrounds can meet face to face. This is the idea behind the Jewish method of *Hevrutah* — studying together with a partner. As Proverbs states it: “As iron sharpens iron, so does a person sharpen the face of a friend”.⁴ In today’s society that is increasingly torn apart by political polarization, creating meetings and community feels more challenging than ever, but also more necessary.

In between the more dominant Israeli and Jewish American narratives, the narrative of Jewish life in Europe has slowly but steadily been growing. Europe is fragmented geographically, culturally and linguistically. But what might initially look like an obstacle may also come with an advantage. The EU has as its motto “United in diversity” and the Council of Europe has adopted two conventions to protect and strengthen the continent’s historic minority cultures and languages. By being a minority in societies formed by diverse populations and identities, one gains a perspective on one’s own culture as well as the larger majority culture, which gives a sensitivity to understanding complexity and multiple narratives.

To me, Jewish life and culture in Europe plays a special role in empowering new generations to feel fully Jewish. Telling new Jewish stories and cultivating Jewish culture within the diverse societies is essential for the development of a vital Jewish life in Europe. With the formula of combining deep textual connection, an open Jewish culture and creating meaning through encounter, I am convinced that Jewish life holds the potential to grow ever stronger in Europe. By adding Jewish community backing, individual engagement and public support, I am confident that this potential will become a reality.

² Lerner Spectre, Barbara; *Paideia: The History of an Idea*; Stockholm 2025; p 158-159.

³ Rosenzweig, Franz; “Towards a Renaissance of Jewish Learning” (1920) in Glatzer, Nahum N. (ed.), *On Jewish Learning*, New York, 1955; p 65.

⁴ Proverbs 27:17

Noa Hermele

Noa Hermele is Director of Paideia — The European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden and founding Rector of Paideia Folkhögskola, the first Jewish folk high school in Scandinavia. Based in Stockholm, his work focuses on Jewish education, cultural renewal and minority policies in Europe, with extensive involvement in Swedish public institutions and initiatives fostering Jewish life.

15 — Heritage as a Living Responsibility

I have lived and worked within European Jewish life for more than thirty-three years. After an initial period with the European Association of Jewish Community Centers, I spent more than three decades in Poland, from where I write these reflections today. Over the course of this long journey, I have had the privilege of moving through very different experiences: I grew up in a small and close-knit Jewish town in the American Midwest, studied at Brandeis University, spent part of my adolescence in Israel, and later worked across multiple areas of Jewish education — as director of youth movements, Hillel, schools, and community institutions — eventually becoming director of the Taube Center for Jewish Life & Learning in Warsaw. Looking back at these experiences as a whole, it seems increasingly evident to me that the future of Jewish life in Europe depends on the capacity to sustain an active, conscious, and culturally profound relationship with European Jewish heritage.

Understanding who we are, where we come from, and which stories, practices, languages, and values have travelled across generations is not merely, as is often assumed, a question of identity. It means understanding the way Jews continue to inhabit contemporary European societies and the kind of relationship they wish to build with them. At a time marked by deep cultural tensions and growing fragilities in the sense of belonging, the transmission of Jewish heritage takes on a meaning that extends far beyond the preservation of memory. It concerns the possibility of keeping open a cultural and civic continuity capable of linking past, present, and future.

When I speak about Jewish heritage, I refer to the entire constellation of

traditions, practices, culture, history, and values that have accompanied Jewish life across centuries. The effort required for this transmission necessarily calls for a perspective capable of holding together tangible and intangible heritage, historical memory and lived experience, archives and everyday practices, places of remembrance and cultural continuity. Without this depth, without a genuine familiarity with the complexity of the European Jewish experience, it becomes far more difficult to counter the growing simplification of historical narratives, the politicisation of memory, the manipulation of historical truth, and the gradual weakening of the capacity to recognise Jewish presence as an integral part of European history.

Inheritance, Transmission, and Continuity

Within Jewish tradition, there are two concepts that help illuminate this responsibility: *yerusha* and *morasha*. Both refer to the idea of inheritance, yet they are not identical. *Yerusha* indicates what we receive, while *morasha* suggests an inheritance we are called upon to safeguard, interpret, enrich, and transmit. No generation ever truly owns the heritage it has received. It passes through it temporarily, inevitably reshaping it through its own experience before handing it over to those who come after. In this sense, Jewish heritage does not belong simply to the past; it becomes a space of intergenerational responsibility.

For this reason, within Jewish tradition, the commandment to remember — *zachor* — is never separated from the commandment to safeguard — *shamor*. Memory is not merely an act of passive commemoration,

but a responsibility toward what is being transmitted. To remember means to preserve with dignity, to protect without rigidifying, to value without trivialising, and to sustain continuity without turning the past into an immobile relic. This tension emerges with particular clarity in educational work connected to European Jewish heritage.

When training educators and cultural mediators, I often propose an exercise that appears deceptively simple. I present two possible introductions to the Nożyk Synagogue in Warsaw. The first says: “Before the war, this was one of the four hundred synagogues and shtetlach of Warsaw, later absorbed into the small ghetto.” The second says: “The Nożyk Synagogue, inaugurated in 1902, still serves the Jewish community of Warsaw today.”

The two sentences immediately produce very different effects. The first almost automatically directs attention toward the Shoah and destruction. The second instead introduces a sense of historical and symbolic continuity, suggesting that the site belongs not only to the past but remains part of a living Jewish present. Both statements are true. Yet for a long time, European Jewish heritage was narrated almost exclusively through what no longer exists, whereas today it is becoming increasingly necessary to restore space also to continuity, everyday life, and the cultural practices that still move through these places.

A synagogue, in fact, is not simply a historical building, but a space through which rituals, melodies, interpretations, architectures, religious practices, communal relationships, and cultural transmission can continue to speak and remain alive. Through that place, one can teach the meaning of the *Aron ha-Kodesh*, the *bimah*, the eternal light, or the *Sefer Torah*; one can show how similar elements connect different Jewish communities across time and space. A Jewish heritage site thus opens the possibility of teaching Jewish values

and practices within an authentically Jewish environment, transforming heritage into lived experience rather than merely an object of observation.

This approach also helps demystify stereotypes and misunderstandings. It allows people to understand that European Jewish heritage does not correspond to a single mode of belonging and that cultural continuity can be expressed through very different pathways: language, art, music, food, family stories, religious practices, local memory, and cultural traditions. Accepting this plurality means recognising that contemporary European Judaism is shaped by multiple forms of connection and participation, all part of the same cultural constellation.

Heritage, Complexity, and Democratic Culture

Within this framework, archives, museums, collections, memorials, and historical sites play an absolutely essential role. Taken together, and conceived together, these elements form a kind of narrative infrastructure capable of making the complexity of European Jewish history visible. Objects, documents, and physical spaces help construct a historical and cultural fabric, yet without interpretation, without education, and without narrative capacity, heritage can easily become little more than an accumulation of traces deprived of shared meaning.

In recent years, it has become increasingly evident how exposed historical narratives are to dynamics of polarisation and political manipulation. Simplification progressively replaces complexity, while public debate struggles more and more to sustain conversations about the past that involve ambiguity, nuance, and unresolved tensions. When the relationship with historical heritage weakens, it becomes easier to reduce memory to an ideological symbol or an instrument of identity politics.

As an educator, I see every day how flattened narratives prevent people from developing an authentic relationship both with cultural heritage and with the complexity of democratic coexistence itself. The loss of historical depth also produces a loss of critical capacity, making it more difficult to understand how different experiences, memories, and interpretations can coexist without cancelling one another out.

In Judaism, memory and action are never separated; together, they help give meaning to the future that remains possible. During the Passover *seder*, we are called upon to imagine ourselves as those who personally came out of Egypt. This exercise in historical imagination does not simply serve to symbolically reproduce the past, but to transform memory into present responsibility.

Jewish tradition continuously links remembrance to action: welcoming the stranger because we ourselves were once strangers; recognising the dignity of plurality because Jewish history itself has always been shaped by differences, debates, and multiple interpretations. For this reason, European Jewish heritage cannot be reduced to a simple object of preservation, collective pedagogy, or ritual commemoration. It must remain a space of transmission, experience, discussion, and participation, because a living culture continually reinterprets its own past without breaking the thread of continuity.

To preserve Jewish life in Europe therefore also means preserving a certain idea of historical and democratic responsibility. It means preserving the conditions through which plural memories and identities can continue to inhabit the same social space, contributing — precisely through their differences — to the construction of a shared future.

Helise Lieberman

Helise Lieberman has served as the Director of the Taube Center for Jewish Life & Learning since 2009. She was the founding principal of Lauder-Morasha Day School in Warsaw (1994–2006) and previously served as Hillel Program Director at SUNY Purchase, NYU, and Barnard-Columbia. Helise has consulted for the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe, the Westbury Group, and the POLIN Museum. In 2007–2008, she received a scholarship for the Senior Educators Program at the Hebrew University. She was awarded the Bene Merito medal by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015 for her contribution to Jewish life in Poland.

16 — Annex — Interviews



ANDRAS KOVACS

Professor of Sociology & Head of Jewish Studies, Central European University — Budapest, Hungary

András Kovács (born 1947 in Budapest) is a Hungarian sociologist and historian, and one of Europe's leading scholars of Jewish life and antisemitism in post-war Central Europe. Professor of Sociology and longtime head of the Jewish Studies programme at Central European University, he has conducted large-scale surveys on antisemitism across sixteen European countries and on Hungary's Jewish population. He has held visiting positions at New York University, the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, and the University of Vienna, and received Hungary's Széchenyi Prize in 2013. He defines his Jewish identity as secular and cultural.

How would you describe Jewish life in Budapest?

It is not difficult. Since the collapse of communism, religious practice is free, Jewish organisations are legal, kosher food is available. Antisemitic prejudice is quite widespread in the population — higher than in most Western European countries — but it is not a violent or politically active antisemitism. Walking the streets as a Jew, or showing connection to Israel, is not really risky in Hungary.

The greater difficulty is community life. The major religious communities — the Neolog movement, which is a moderate reform community with roots going back to the communist period, and the Chabad, which arrived in the 1990s — are not innovative. They maintain old structures that are no longer appropriate, and all of them depend heavily on state funding, which limits their freedom to manoeuvre

politically or socially. That dependence is the main structural problem.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

Since I have been researching Jewish subjects for fifty years, the question is not entirely relevant to my case — my professional life is oriented around Jewish issues. This is a different kind of Jewishness from that of the religiously observant, whose everyday life is shaped by religious rules. Mine is shaped by intellectual orientation. I became more aware of my Jewish identity when I began this research, but that was half a century ago.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

For affiliated Jews, finding the right organisation for their affiliation is not straightforward, given the fragmented and not always cooperative landscape of Jewish religious life. For secular or culturally identified Jews, it is somewhat easier.

The deeper challenge is historical. Hungarian Jews were already largely secular before the war. The Holocaust accelerated that process: the more assimilated Budapest Jews survived, while the more traditional provincial Jews were almost entirely deported and killed. Forty years of communism then further suppressed Jewish institutional life. The result, when communism fell in 1990, was a highly assimilated, urban, secular Jewish population. An Orthodox community arriving into that sociological reality faces structural limits regardless of its energy or resources.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

The level of intermarriage among young Hungarian Jews is extremely high, and in twenty years that will significantly affect Jewish identification. The proportion of Jews in the broader population will likely become much lower. My forecast is that a minority will be more connected to some form of Jewish life — not necessarily religious, but cultural and secular — while the large majority will continue along the path of assimilation. The tensions that will remain are those of any minority navigating between the pull of wider society and the desire to preserve something specific.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

The obvious example is the Lauder School in Budapest, a secular Jewish school, independent of any religious community, which now has around 1,000 students across kindergarten, elementary and high school. It began with the support of Ronald Lauder, and although the Lauder Foundation is withdrawing its support, the school has developed its own momentum. Nearly all of the younger leaders in Budapest's civil Jewish organisations came through that school. It has been a genuinely transformative institution — proof that secular, culturally-oriented Jewish education can attract families that would never affiliate with a religious community.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

Through my academic work, heading Jewish Studies at the CEU for many decades, and conducting the large-scale survey of the Hungarian Jewish population that was supported by all the major Jewish organisations in the country. I also give public lectures in communities when invited. Research and public engagement are my contribution.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

Policymakers should build connections not only with the officially recognised, state-supported religious communities, but with the non-profit Jewish civil organisations — cultural centres, secular schools, social organisations — that are not religiously oriented. In Hungary, that is the path along which Jewish life can actually grow. The Bálint Ház Cultural Centre, the Lauder School, and other civil organisations represent a living, expanding strand of Jewish identity. Whether the religious communities will find the capacity for renewal is an open question. But the civil organisations should not be overlooked simply because they fall outside the familiar institutional framework.



ANGY COHEN

Researcher & co-founder of the Academic Network Against Antisemitism on Campus — Madrid, Spain

Angy Cohen is a Ramón y Cajal research fellow at the Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Mediterranean and the Middle East at CSIC, with a PhD from the Autonomous University of Madrid and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her research focuses on Sephardi and Mizrahi communities, migration memories, women's religiosity, and Sephardi feminism. She leads the SSHRC-funded project *The Voice of the Mothers*, co-founded the Sephardi Modernities Seminar Series, and is part of the Executive Board of the Academic Network Against Antisemitism on Campus. She edits the Jewish Studies Collection at Lived Places Publishing. A traditional Sephardi Jew, she lives in Madrid.

How would you describe Jewish life in Madrid?

"In dire need of change, renewal and openness to Jewish education beyond the model of the rabbi as the teacher and ultimate expert. There's a good number of Jews and Israelis in Madrid, but the two tend to be split, and beyond the school and a few communities, you have to actively look for Jewish life. We do have kosher restaurants, including high-end ones that non-Jews go to, which is genuinely new and good. But intellectually and denominationally, Jewish life here is impoverished.

The main challenge is the conservatism of the established communities. If you're a traditional Sephardi woman, your options are essentially none: either an Orthodox setting where you are invisible or irrelevant, or a non-Sephardi more liberal service that has nothing to do with your Jewish culture, despite matching your social values. There is

very limited culture of learning outside the rabbis' shiurim — or the rabbaniot's shiurim for women —, no high-level educational opportunities, and a very clear institutional agenda controlling what is offered. Within the Sephardic communities specifically, there is a lack of diversity in terms of access to learning opportunities and spaces to develop one's Jewish practice and identity.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

"Most Jewish at home. Also, when I take my child to school; we're the only Jewish family, which is not always comfortable. I feel least Jewish, in a good way, when I'm with non-Jewish friends who share my values and lifestyle and my being Jewish simply isn't an issue. And I feel least Jewish, in a bad way, in a lot of communal spaces. I want to run away.

Since October 7th, I feel an alienation from the Orthodox communities that I hadn't felt before. At the same time, my sense of Jewish identity was intensified among my non-Jewish friends, as I had to re-evaluate their loyalties. Once I had, if they were still around for me, I went back to just being one of them.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

"Sephardi women would find ways of being integrated on their own terms — not necessarily the egalitarian model, but their own. There would be lay-led learning spaces that diversify ownership over texts and tradition, and a diversity of rabbinical leadership within the Sephardic world, not just someone sent from the Israeli rabanut.

There would be a real reconnection to Sephardic intellectual history and access to ritual knowledge. With women learning to read from the Torah in the Sephardic way.

The tensions that would remain — between liberal and conservative, between Ashkenazi and Sephardi, between generations — are healthy. They're inherent to the development of any living culture.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

“A few things. An Israeli family transformed the kosher food scene in Madrid: we now have two kosher restaurants loved by everyone, where average Spaniards and Jews meet to eat. That had never happened before.

The community also brought in an Italian Sephardic rabbi with modern references, someone who modelled a different way of being Jewish and Orthodox simultaneously. He was an intellectual and moral reference for many who, maybe for the first time, saw modernity, intellectual depth and a passion for Sephardi Jewish culture combined in the person of a very relatable rabbi. The politics of the community, however, led to the decision to let him go, which has impoverished everyone. There was a step forward and then two steps backwards.

And most recently: the Jewish school appointed an outsider -someone who isn't Moroccan nor Sephardi and who's new in Madrid- as secondary school coordinator. In a community that was historically very endogamous that is a significant sign of opening.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

“I'm a member of the Executive Board of the Academic Network Against Antisemitism on Campus. I speak publicly as a Spanish Jew, and I write in newspapers when I think things are going badly wrong. On a

more personal level, together with a good friend who teaches at the Jewish school, I'm planning a women's Megillah reading for next year — something that, to my knowledge, has not happened here or at least is not a widespread women's practice. What I try to do in my research and my life is reconnect Sephardi intellectual and religious history with the needs of contemporary Sephardi women. Sephardi men have their Jewish references and their models. Women largely don't.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

The central obstacle to change in Sephardic communities is that modernisation must happen in a Sephardic language with Sephardic references, not imported Ashkenazi or liberal frameworks, which will be met with antagonism and resistance here. The Halakhic traditions that could solve many contemporary problems already exist within the Sephardic world; people simply don't know them. The question is how to make that knowledge available, and how to cultivate a new kind of leadership that can bring this generation somewhere better.



ANNA MEZAN

*Head of Formal Jewish Education at the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria
“Shalom” — Sofia, Bulgaria*

Anna Mezan lives in Sofia, Bulgaria, with her husband and two daughters. She is originally from the small town of Vidin, home to a very small Jewish community. After finishing high school, she moved to Sofia. She currently works as Head of Formal Jewish Education at the Organisation of Jews in Bulgaria “Shalom,” where she, together with her team at the Jewish school and kindergarten, is committed to strengthening the quality of education while ensuring that Jewish values, identity, and tradition are meaningfully integrated into everyday learning.

How would you describe Jewish life in your city? Is it easy or difficult to live a Jewish life there?

Living as a Jew in Sofia today is both easier and more complex than people might expect. On one hand, we are a small but well-organized community, with a functioning synagogue, a Jewish school and kindergarten, as well as cultural institutions and social services. My children can grow up with Jewish holidays, Hebrew songs, and a sense of heritage, something previous generations did not always have. On the other hand, Jewish life here requires intention. It is not something you naturally fall into; maintaining traditions, engaging with the community, and raising children with a strong Jewish identity all require conscious effort.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday European life—and when least? Has this changed over time?

I feel most Jewish in the context of my daily work within a Jewish organisation, where identity becomes something lived and shared. Seeing children light

Shabbat candles, hearing Hebrew songs in the kindergarten, or having meaningful exchanges with community members makes Jewish identity tangible and alive. I feel less connected to this identity in broader professional settings outside the community, where it is simply not part of the conversation. Over time, my relationship to Jewish identity has evolved significantly. Growing up in a small town, I was not deeply connected to my heritage, but attending a Jewish summer camp in high school was a turning point. Today, my identity feels more complex and comes with responsibility: not only to feel Jewish, but to help sustain Jewish life for others.

What are the main challenges Jews face today in Sofia and Bulgaria?

The main challenge is continuity and long-term sustainability. As a small community, we must actively ensure that Jewish life remains vibrant and meaningful for future generations, especially in the face of intermarriage and assimilation. Encouraging young people to not only identify as Jewish but to consciously choose a Jewish life is essential. At the same time, there are broader dynamics in society, such as occasional nationalist rhetoric, which, while not dominant, remind us that stability and tolerance cannot be taken for granted.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would be different and what tensions would remain?

A flourishing Jewish life in Sofia in 25 years' time would be defined by a confident, active community with a strong sense of belonging. It would include more young families

choosing to stay or return, supported by vibrant institutions such as a well-attended Jewish school and kindergarten at the heart of community life. Jewish culture would be visible not only internally but also as part of the city's broader identity, with strong connections to other European communities and Israel. At the same time, certain tensions would likely remain, such as balancing integration into wider society with preserving a distinct identity, and navigating different ways of being Jewish: religious, cultural or otherwise. Being a small minority will also continue to require extra effort and commitment.

Can you share a story that shows a change for the better in your community's Jewish life?

One of the most meaningful changes has been the growth of our Jewish school, which has become more than just an educational institution. It is now a true community hub. Alongside it, the kindergarten plays a crucial role as a child's first encounter with Jewish life. A particularly powerful moment for me was a Hanukkah celebration in the synagogue, where I stood in a full hall surrounded by families watching children sing, participate, and contribute to the community. What stood out was not just the number of people, but the energy: it felt less like preserving something fragile and more like actively building something new. That sense of continuity and renewal gives me hope.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

Through my professional role, I contribute by developing community life through education, cultural programming, and communication. But my contribution is also personal. I ensure my children are part of Jewish education, we celebrate holidays at home and we actively participate in community life here in Sofia. In a small community, participation is essential: here, we are not just members, we are builders.

Is there anything important you would like to add?

Yes. I believe strongly in the role of memory and responsibility. Remembering history is important, but it must be active, it should guide how we build the future. For example, we recently opened a museum exhibition called "The Niche" at the Sofia Synagogue, dedicated to preserving and sharing Jewish heritage in Bulgaria. It transforms memory into something living and meaningful. Ultimately, Jewish life will endure not just because it is remembered, but because it is actively lived through the daily choices of individuals, families, and the community as a whole.



ARIEL HELLER

Founder and Chair of the Board of Keshet Europe, the European network of Jewish LGBTQIA+ individuals and organisations — Rome, Italy

Ariel Heller uses they/he pronouns and is from Rome, Italy. They are the chair of the board of Keshet Europe, a Jewish LGBTQIA+ organisation which is a network of both individuals and Jewish Queer organizations across the continent aimed at strengthening connections among LGBTQIA+ Jewish communities. Ariel identifies as a secular Jew.

In the past, Ariel worked in communications as a graphic designer for Roma Pride and Circolo di Cultura Omosessuale Mario Mieli, one of Italy's leading LGBTQIA+ organizations. They also served as European Supervisor and Board Member of the World Congress of LGBTQIA+ Jews. In addition, they have developed and moderated LGBTQIA+ themed sessions for Booking.com's Travel Proud Program.

How would you describe Jewish life in Rome? Is it easy or difficult to live as a Jew there?

I would describe the situation as difficult, even “dramatic.” Living as a Jew today is shaped by fear, inherited trauma, and a pervasive sense of antisemitism. From a young age, I associated my identity with security measures: armed police at school, evacuation drills - which creates the feeling that being Jewish makes you a target. This leads to internal conflicts, including the desire to hide my identity, and even sometimes shame. At times, I have considered changing my name (Ariel) to avoid being identified as Jewish. Socially, this has resulted in isolation; I have lost many long-term friendships, especially in recent years, and often feel a lack of empathy from those around me. Within both the broader society and the Jewish community itself, I find it

difficult to fully belong, particularly as a queer, secular Jew in a predominantly Orthodox environment that is not always open to dialogue or diversity.

When do you feel most or least Jewish? Has this changed over time?

I feel most Jewish when I insist on being present in spaces that tend to reject my identity, such as queer and activist environments. This act of “radical presence” becomes a form of resistance and empowerment, even when it is uncomfortable or accompanied by shame. At the same time, I feel least Jewish when I silence myself for safety or acceptance. Over time, my relationship to my identity has shifted, from something more private to something more political and “necessary”. Since October 7th in particular, this has intensified, as I experienced a deep sense of loneliness and rupture, including the loss of my social circle. My Jewish identity has become something I actively defend and assert.

What are the main challenges Jews face today in Rome and Italy?

One major challenge is the politicization of Jewish symbols, which are often reduced to associations with Israel, ignoring their cultural and historical meaning. Another is the lack of alliances: many Jews feel abandoned, even by communities and social movements they once supported. There is also what I perceive as “institutional gaslighting,” where non-Jewish actors define antisemitism for us, dismissing lived experiences and labeling concerns as exaggerated. Finally, there is a broader narrative portraying Jews as powerful or oppressive, which leads to dehumanization,

even within spaces that claim to fight discrimination. Together, these dynamics create a sense of isolation and vulnerability. These dynamics are violent and cause harm, by excluding us from spaces that supposedly celebrate intersectionality.

What would a flourishing Jewish life look like in 25 years, and what tensions would remain?

A flourishing future would be one where my name is not a trigger for political assumptions and where Jewish children can go to school without constant security presence. Jewish identity would be recognized for its cultural richness and not reduced only to the Holocaust or Middle Eastern politics. People would not have to “pass a political test” to be accepted or to receive empathy. However, I believe some tensions will remain, particularly fear and insecurity, as I have not seen significant improvement over time.

Can you share a story that shows a change for the better in your community?

A meaningful example comes from within our own community. After Jewish LGBTQ+ groups in Italy withdrew from Pride events due to safety concerns and political tensions, this absence sparked a national debate. It revealed both the visibility and the marginalisation of Jewish Queer voices. This moment led to the creation of Keshet Europe, a broader network to amplify our presence and even existence. In 2025, we organized a Jewish LGBTQAI+ float at Rome Pride. Although we faced hostility from other Queer organizations for being Jewish and even had to be evacuated for our own safety, the experience strengthened our collective will. Despite everything, participants continued to ask, “When are we doing it again?” This showed a shift from isolation and shame toward solidarity and resilience.

Another example is our involvement in a Queer youth network. After we expressed our discomfort with the language they were using regarding the ongoing conflict in Israel

and Gaza, our organisation was excluded from the network.

We then raised the issue with the European Commission, as the initiative was funded by them. Following this engagement, the situation shifted: the organisation reconsidered its position and we were re-invited to participate. This year, they also began working on an antisemitism task force with our support.

While this did not necessarily result in a change of underlying perspectives—which was not our primary objective—it did lead to a situation in which they are now required to actively engage with and address their internal biases.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

I contribute by refusing to disappear from spaces where I belong such as social movements and by helping to build inclusive structures like Keshet Europe. My goal is to create environments where LGBTQIA+ Jews do not have to choose between their identities. By organizing, advocating, and being visible, I aim to show that Jewish life can exist openly and proudly, not only in private but also in public spaces.

Is there anything important you would like to add?

It is essential to be careful with language when discussing conflicts involving Israel, as some associations are often made between Jewish identity and geopolitical events, which puts Jews here in Europe at risk. Speaking about antisemitism in Europe should not be seen as diminishing the suffering of others; it is not a competition of pain. We must be able to acknowledge multiple realities at once. Finally, reactions to global conflicts too often spill over into hostility toward Jewish communities in Europe. Addressing antisemitism requires recognising both its overt expressions and its more subtle, pervasive forms.



ARON VESTANDIG

President, Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities — Stockholm, Sweden

Aron Verstandig is President of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities (Judiska Centralrådet), the umbrella organization representing Jewish communal life in Sweden. Based in Stockholm, he is a prominent public voice on Jewish minority rights, religious freedom, Holocaust remembrance, and the fight against antisemitism, frequently representing Swedish Jewry in dialogue with government institutions, media, and international Jewish organizations. He defines his Jewish identity as encompassing religious, cultural and ethnic dimensions.

How would you describe Jewish life in Stockholm?

There are plenty of Jewish institutions: synagogues, a school, a preschool, cultural events... Stockholm is also a regional hub for the whole Nordic area, by far the largest Jewish community in the Nordics, which means we attract Jews from across the region who want to live a more Jewish life without leaving this part of the world. The majority of Swedish Jews wouldn't place themselves in a specific denomination — the largest synagogue in Stockholm belongs to the Masorti movement, but I wouldn't describe most Swedish Jews as Masorti. It's more a cultural identification.

The observant community is not large, which means there is only one kosher food store. And like communities across Western Europe, we have seen a sharp increase in antisemitism since October 7th, mostly cases at universities, workplaces and schools where people have felt threatened and begun hiding their Jewish identity.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

All the time. I am a public Jew — everyone knows I am Jewish, I can't hide it and wouldn't want to. I feel it when I eat differently from colleagues in the cafeteria, when I drop my children at the Jewish kindergarten. Sometimes in places that are very un-Jewish, I feel it even more strongly rather than less. Being Jewish has always been a core part of my identity, even as my level of observance has varied at different stages of life.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

Two challenges, very different in nature. One is antisemitism — since October 7th it has completely exploded in Sweden, as elsewhere. The other is assimilation, which is a voluntary process and has existed since the community was founded 250 years ago. They are not unconnected: rising antisemitism pushes in two directions simultaneously: it makes some people feel more Jewish and more connected, while pushing others to hide their identity and assimilate further.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

We would have more educational institutions, such as a Jewish high school, for a start. A slightly larger proportion of the Jewish population would be more observant in their practices, not Orthodox necessarily, but more engaged — which would generate more demand for kosher food, more people in synagogues, a positive spiral. As a

regional hub for the Nordics, Stockholm has real potential to grow in this direction.

The tensions that will remain have to do with antisemitism from parts of the Muslim community and the far left. That is not going to disappear quickly. Within the community, what matters is maintaining the unified model we currently have in Stockholm. What happened in Malmö, where the community divided into two, is something I consider very negative, and I want to ensure it doesn't happen here. Compromise between denominations is demanding, but the alternative is worse.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

One of the Orthodox synagogues in Stockholm, the Adat Jeschurun, had been without a permanent home for about ten years. Its furniture had survived the Holocaust, stored away while people couldn't agree on where the synagogue should be placed, with promises made and broken over years. A few years ago, a deal was finally reached: the synagogue was given a permanent place in the Jewish community centre and opened its doors. For many people this was a stone in the shoe, something that had been unresolved for a decade, and finally it was done.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

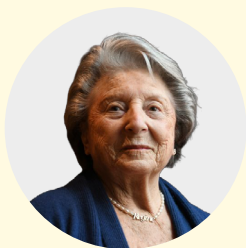
In my early twenties I decided that if I was going to stay in Sweden rather than make aliyah, I would do everything I could to improve Jewish life here. I was frustrated by people who complained and theorised without acting. So, I became active, and eventually president of both the Stockholm community and the national council.

My main focus has been building the conditions for Jewish life to continue: internal harmony across denominations, interreligious dialogue especially with

Muslim communities, and a constructive relationship with government. Last year the Swedish government adopted a national strategy for fostering Jewish life and combating antisemitism. That was the work of many people, but it reflects something I believe deeply: combating antisemitism is the government's task, not ours. And one can imagine a society with zero antisemitism but also zero Jews, which is why fostering Jewish life itself, not just fighting its enemies, needs to be understood as a public responsibility.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

Those who hate Jews will not become friendly if the Jews disappear. They will find someone else to hate. Combating antisemitism is a task for the whole of society. Beyond that, Jews have contributed to European societies for hundreds, in some cases thousands, of years, and that contribution needs to be valued and acknowledged by political leaders. And policy needs to be tailored: a country with a few hundred Jews has completely different needs from one with a large, established community. One-size-fits-all does not work.



BARONESS REGINA SLUSZNY-SUCHOWOLSKI

*Hidden child, survivor, President of the Forum der Joodse Organisaties (FJO)
— umbrella organisation of the Jews in Flanders — Antwerp, Belgium*

Regina Sluszný was born in September 1939 in Antwerp, Belgium, where she has lived all her life. She is a Holocaust survivor.

Although she comes from a very Orthodox family, her experiences during the war, when she lived for several years with non-Jewish people, shaped her identity and she now describes herself as a traditional Jew rather than strictly Orthodox.

For more than four decades, she has shared her testimony across Europe in schools, museums, organisations, and public forums, becoming a leading voice among “Hidden Children.” In recognition of her dedication to memory and civic responsibility, she was granted the title of Baroness by Royal Decree of King Philippe of the Belgians in 2023.

She serves as President of the Forum of Jewish Organisations (FJO), Chairwoman of the European Jewish Association (EJA), President of the Hidden Children Association and past President of WIZO Belgium, and has held numerous leadership roles in organisations dedicated to remembrance, restitution, and community welfare.

How would you describe Jewish life in your city today? Is it easy or difficult to live a Jewish life in Antwerp?

For me personally, it has never been a problem to live as a Jewish lady in Antwerp, and that has not changed over time. One important reason is that I speak Flemish fluently, like the non-Jewish population, which allows me to communicate easily with everyone. However, I recognize that for Orthodox Jews it can be more difficult,

even though they continue to live their lives without paying much attention to outside perceptions.

How would you describe Jewish life in Antwerp more broadly?

Jewish life in Antwerp is very visible and well-structured. Compared to Brussels, Jews here are less afraid and more openly identifiable. We have everything needed for Jewish life: many synagogues, kosher shops, and a wide range of schools adapted to different levels of religious observance. Anyone who wants to live a fully Jewish life can do so without difficulty.

When do you feel most or least Jewish in your everyday life? Has this changed over time?

I go to schools to share my story from the war and students sometimes ask me whether I am really Jewish because I was raised for a time by non-Jewish people. I always answer, “I was born as a Jewish woman and I will die as a Jewish woman.” At the same time, I never feel different from other Belgian people. I carry my identity with me, but it does not separate me from others. This feeling has never changed over time.

What are the main challenges Jews face today in Belgium, especially in Antwerp?

Today, there is more uncertainty and caution in daily life. When someone approaches me in the street, I prefer to understand who they are before revealing that I am Jewish. I am not afraid, but I am more careful. Children, in particular face difficulties, as some non-Jewish students can be rude

or hostile. Since the 7th of October, the situation has become more tense, especially for younger people. There is clearly a “before and after,” with a stronger impact on children than on adults.

What would a flourishing Jewish life look like in 25 years, and what tensions might remain?

I am concerned that Antwerp might become increasingly Orthodox, as that population is growing and tends to live very separately. Personally, I believe that Jewish identity should be lived more privately, especially in public spaces. In the past, even very Orthodox Jews dressed like everyone else in the street. Today, the growing visibility of religious dress may create distance with the broader society. I think a more discreet approach could help the community flourish and make relations with others easier. At the same time, I understand that tensions around identity and visibility may remain.

Can you share a positive change in your community?

One very positive development is the improved cooperation between the Jewish communities of Antwerp and Brussels. In the past, there was more competition and division, but now there is much better understanding and collaboration. As president of the Forum of Flemish Jewish Organizations, I see this as an important and long-awaited step forward.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

For the past 40 years, I have been going to schools across Belgium and sometimes abroad to share my story as a child during the war. I believe this work has a strong impact. I focus not only on suffering but also on the goodness of the people who helped me, showing that even in dark times there are both bad and good individuals. Many people remember my testimony years later,

which shows me that this work matters and contributes to awareness and understanding.

Is there anything important you would like to add?

We are currently working, together with CCOJB, to push for stronger action against antisemitism in Belgium, as it has increased significantly. We hope that the government will take further steps in this direction. Another important development in Antwerp is the creation of a memorial park where the names of Jews deported to Auschwitz will be displayed. This project has been awaited for over 20 years, and we are very happy that it is finally becoming a reality.



DANIEL PARIENTE

Member, Tayar Foundation for Jewish Heritage in Malta — Valletta, Malta

Daniel Pariente was born in Israel in 1953 to an Italian-Jewish family that had made Aliyah in the early 1950s. In 2005 he arrived in Malta and has lived there for the past 21 years. He is a member of the Tayar Foundation for Jewish Heritage in Malta and has participated in over a dozen conferences and events of the EJA, EJC, and the EU's strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life.

How would you describe Jewish life in Malta?

It is easy to live a Jewish life here. First of all, there is almost no antisemitism — nothing comparable to Belgium, France, or England. The community is small, about 200 registered Jews and perhaps 200 more unregistered, mostly Israelis. We have one synagogue, a rabbi — Chabad, Rabbi Chaim Segal — who has been here about 12 to 13 years, and through him we can access kosher food for the holidays. Meat is imported from abroad, which is a challenge. But beyond that, life is fine. The only concern is the rapid growth of the Muslim population. When I arrived in 2005 there were about 4,000 Muslims in Malta. Today there are over 25,000. This is the only thing that gives us pause.

When do you feel most Jewish?

I feel most Jewish during the Jewish holidays — Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Pesach. The synagogue is nearly full at Yom Kippur. What I find remarkable is that when I lived in Israel, I almost never went to synagogue on Saturdays. Here, I go every week — because they call me the day before to say they need someone for the minyan, to open

the Torah ark. So I came. I feel more Jewish here in Malta than I did in Israel, where everybody is Jewish.

What are the main challenges Jews face today in Malta?

The main project right now is constructing a new synagogue. The current one is an apartment purchased by the community. We have acquired an old three-storey building that will house a synagogue, a kosher restaurant, and a space for private celebrations — Bar Mitzvahs, Brit Milas, weddings. This doesn't exist today. Most of the funding comes from abroad, but we have also received donations from non-Jews here in Malta, which is very moving.

Another challenge: the Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration. For six or seven years it was held at the President's residence. After October 7th, the President decided to stop hosting it. We now hold it with the support of the German Embassy. These are the kinds of things we navigate.

If Jewish life were flourishing in Malta in 25 years, what would it look like?

The new building will be open and operating — a synagogue, a kosher restaurant for the Jewish tourists who already come here looking for community, and a proper space for all life-cycle events. The demographic will be stable. Israelis who are here — 67 families — will hopefully be more integrated into community life. Right now, most of them come only for children's events: Lag Ba'Omer, Purim, Bar Mitzvahs. The building will give them somewhere that feels like theirs.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

Four years ago, we brought the Anne Frank travelling exhibition to Malta — banners, a full installation. It cost quite a lot of money. More than two-thirds of the donations came from non-Jews. We had 97 school visits. I also put the exhibition on Gozo, the other island. This is something I never expected: that non-Jewish Maltese would give with such generosity to a Jewish cultural project.

And there is something more personal. I came to Malta in 2005 to build a wastewater treatment plant — by chance. When I arrived, my mother mentioned that my grandmother had been born here in 1903, on a ship that stopped in port. I found her birth registration. Then my uncle mentioned that an ancestor on my father's side, Joseph Pariente, had lived here — I found his grave in the Jewish cemetery. He died in 1850. An ancestor of my mother's side was head of the Jewish community here between the two World Wars.

I arrived by accident. It turns out I came back.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

My main contribution is representing the community at the EJA, EJC, and EU conferences on antisemitism and Jewish life — and then reporting back to Ruben Ohayon and the community here. I am the link between this small community and the larger European Jewish world.

Within the Tayar Foundation, I work on education and outreach. And at the Holocaust Memorial commemorations, we always bring two or three survivors or children of survivors to tell their stories. Every year, it is overbooked. People come — Catholics, Maltese, people with no direct connection to this history — and they listen. That is something.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

The EU is helping us, and it matters. We have at least two meetings per year, and the local Office for Minorities in Malta has become more active — this is recent and important. School work is essential too, especially after October 7th, when many people are confused by what they read.

I will end with this. I work for the Diocese of Gozo — at the heart of the Christian institutions here. And I feel genuinely accepted and appreciated as a Jew. Last year, the Bishop invited me to open a celebration. He said: 'I want you to be the first to speak. Read the Shema Yisrael, in Hebrew — because this is the most important prayer for you.' I read it. That is Malta.



DANIELA GREIBER

Leader of the Jewish Communal Life programme at the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe — London, the United Kingdom

Daniela Greiber is originally from Chile. She made Aliyah to Israel as a young adult and earned an MBA from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she met her British husband. Over the past two decades, she has built an international career in the Jewish non-profit sector, living and working in Israel, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

Since 2013, she has worked at Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe, where she leads the Jewish Communal Life programme. She is also the initiator of Kaleidoscope, a project that collects first-person stories from young Jews across Europe to document the diversity and complexity of contemporary Jewish life and create a historical record for future generations. She is based in London, United Kingdom, and describes herself as a traditional Jew.

How would you describe Jewish life in your city?

London is a large and very diverse city, and the Jewish community reflects that diversity. Personally, I live in a very Jewish area and experience a very easy and comfortable Jewish life. I feel secure, and I have access to a wide range of Jewish opportunities, through my synagogue, my work, my friends, etc. At the same time, I am aware that others living very close to me experience things differently and may feel that life is “terrible and dangerous.” For me, both realities exist simultaneously, and it often depends on what people choose to focus on.

When do you feel most or least Jewish in your everyday life? Has this changed over time?

I lead a very Jewish life: most of my friends are Jewish, I work in a Jewish environment, and the Jewish calendar structures my life. At the same time, when I move through central London, I do not stand out and I feel like anyone else. I do not feel different or unsafe. So I can be fully part of broader society while still feeling Jewish internally. This balance has not really changed over time.

What are the main challenges Jews face today in the United Kingdom?

One major issue is demographic change. Parts of the community are shrinking, while the Haredi community is growing rapidly, and these groups often live in parallel with limited interaction. This creates a fragmentation within the community. I think we need to do more to bring different parts of the community together, and that responsibility belongs to everyone.

What would a flourishing Jewish future look like in 25 years, and what tensions might remain?

I see challenges both externally and internally. On university campuses, for example, there has been a shift in what is considered acceptable, and there is more visible hostility toward Jewish students, even if many still have positive experiences. While the UK is relatively advanced in how institutions like the police recognize and address antisemitism, it is still problematic that a minority community requires such a high level of protection. Looking ahead, I

am concerned about increasing polarization within the Jewish community itself, with fewer people able to bridge differences and maintain a sense of shared identity.

Can you share a positive change in your community?

One of the most significant positive changes I have seen is the growing inclusion of LGBTQ individuals. Over the past 20 years, attitudes have shifted dramatically, even within more traditional parts of the community. While not all religious positions have changed, there is now a much stronger emphasis on inclusion, recognition, and respect. There is a clear understanding that LGBTQ individuals are part of the community and should not be excluded.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

In my work, I try to shift the focus away from narratives centered only on antisemitism and the Holocaust, and instead highlight the richness and meaning of Jewish life : what we do, how we celebrate, and why being part of the community matters. I believe it is essential to amplify positive Jewish experiences and engagement, especially in smaller European communities where this can be more challenging.

Is there anything important you would like to add?

I think that European institutions often focus too much on explaining or justifying Jewish presence in Europe, rather than supporting Jewish life itself. Jews have been part of Europe for thousands of years and do not need to justify their place. What is really needed is support for grassroots initiatives: youth movements, camps, student organizations, and community spaces, which often struggle with basic resources and security costs. In my view, it is not about fostering Jewish life from the outside; it is about directly supporting the Jewish life that already exists.

**DAVID SALTIEL***President, Jewish Community of Thessaloniki — Thessaloniki, Greece*

David Saltiel has been President of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki since 2001, leading one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world, whose 50,000 members were nearly annihilated in the 1943 deportations and which today numbers around 1,500. He also serves as President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece and President of the Holocaust Museum of Greece, currently under construction. A former Vice-President of the World Jewish Congress, he has secured Holocaust survivor compensation, established Greece's Remembrance Day for Jewish Martyrs, and significantly expanded the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki. Born in Athens in 1947, he has received numerous international honours.

How would you describe Jewish life in Thessaloniki?

Jewish life is organised around a complete network of institutions, including synagogues with daily and Shabbat services, the Joseph Nissim school from nursery through primary level, a community centre, youth programmes and a summer camp bringing together young people from all Jewish communities in Greece, as well as from Israel and abroad. We have a rabbi, kosher food, and a kosher butcher. Commemorative days, such as the National Remembrance Day of the Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust, the March of Remembrance for the deported Jews, Yom HaShoah and Yom HaZikaron, are central to our calendar and increasingly organised with municipal and state institutions.

On a day-to-day basis, Jews here can practise their religion without particular difficulty. After October 7th we saw hostile slogans and vandalism, but thanks to close

cooperation with the government and the Hellenic Police, these did not disrupt communal life.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

Most Jewish — and most fully European — when my community's history is recognised as an integral part of the story of Thessaloniki and of Europe. When an event presents the centuries-long Jewish contribution to this city, I feel part of the rich mosaic that is European civilisation.

The opposite happens when my Jewishness is used to question my place in society, through antisemitism disguised as criticism of Israel, or through the casual assumption that attachment to Jewish tradition doesn't quite belong here. These moments reflect a simple ignorance: that religion does not cancel citizenship, and that one can be Jewish, Greek and connected to Israel simultaneously. Over time, my response has evolved from hurt to conviction: everything depends on knowledge, understanding and genuine respect.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

Two challenges, closely linked: antisemitism and demography. Antisemitic stereotypes persist in Greek public opinion, spiking whenever tensions rise in the Middle East. For a small community, constant vigilance is simply the condition of existence.

Demographically, the brain-drain affecting all of Greece hits small communities disproportionately. Every family that stays abroad has an outsized impact. Mixed marriages are common, and while many

children of mixed families are raised Jewish today, this requires sustained effort. We subsidise school fees, the summer camp, and offer support, to the extent possible, to students and young couples. But the challenge of offering young Jews a future in Thessaloniki is inseparable from the wider challenge facing young Greeks: stable jobs, realistic prospects, a society that values their contribution.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

A community cannot flourish if the shadow of antisemitism still makes us hesitate before appearing visibly as Jews. Today we would be cautious about placing a large Hanukkah in a central public square for eight nights. In 25 years, I want that hesitation to be gone.

The Holocaust Museum of Greece will by then be a lighthouse for the living, a hub where young people come to explore Sephardic culture and shared history. Ladino will have moved from the archives back into songs and celebrations. Jewish voices will be present in public debates on democracy and human rights as an integral part of the national conversation.

The tensions that will remain are real: the balance between memory and life; between security and openness... I want our synagogues to be open doors, but the world requires protection; and between tradition and change, as our youth become more global while we work to preserve the unique Greek-Jewish soul that defines us.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

Not a single event, but a gradual shift: from silence to honest public engagement with Jewish history. Over two decades we have worked to bring Jewish history from the margins into civic life — National Holocaust Remembrance Day, Greece's membership of the IHRA, the March of Remembrance with the Municipality, the reactivation of

the Chair of Jewish Studies at Aristotle University, a monument honouring the historic Jewish cemetery destroyed by the Nazis, and many more initiatives in Thessaloniki and other Greek cities. Today, remembrance ceremonies take place in towns where no Jewish community exists any more, organised by local schools and municipalities as part of their own history. That shift from silence towards shared acknowledgement is the deepest foundation for everything else.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

Almost everything the community does is about fostering Jewish life. Our governance model distributes responsibility across elected volunteer committees for synagogues, school, welfare, youth, and culture, working alongside professional staff. The Joseph Nissim school, the summer camp, the Jewish Museum, and the Josephus digital archive — which brings together over two million documents on Greek Jewish history with an e-learning platform and an app dedicated to Greek Jewish music — all form an ecosystem in which Jewish identity can be lived and shared with wider society.

If I may add a personal note: the community is, above all, a family. What moves us is not administration but the lived experience of shared values and shared effort. Our community is still here after centuries because it has been sustained by that. Everything we do in relation to memory is an attempt to add a small drop of humanity to the world. Our only real reward is the quiet satisfaction of knowing we have placed another small stone, so that this community can function for those who need it today and those who will need it in the future.



DÉBORA DAHAN

Director of the Youth Department at the United Welfare Jewish Fund — Paris, France

Débora Dahan lives in Paris, France, where she grew up and is the mother of three children. She identifies as a secular and traditional Jew.

Alongside her studies in journalism in France, she joined the Taglit team in Paris, supported at this time by the FSJU, one of the largest Jewish institutions in France. In 2020, she joined the Youth Action department of FSJU, and since October 2024, she has served as Director of the Youth Department, bringing together around 30 youth movements under the NOÉ Label, representing approximately 22,000 young people aged 8 to 25 who participate in Jewish summer camps. In parallel, the department also develops leadership programs for young adults, with the aim of building the next generation of the French Jewish community.

How would you describe Jewish life in Paris? Is it easy or difficult to live a Jewish life there?

Living a Jewish life in Paris today really depends on where I am. This is something that has changed over the past decade. If I live in the 16th or 17th arrondissement, or more generally in the western parts of the city, it is easier. Many Jewish families have moved there and there is strong communal infrastructure with kosher restaurants, shops, schools and institutions. But if I live in other areas like 93rd, it becomes more difficult. These neighborhoods are poorer and the level of antisemitism is higher. There is now a clear divide between communities who can afford to move to more secure areas and those who remain in more challenging environments.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday European life? And when do you feel it the least? And has this feeling changed over time?

I feel Jewish all the time, both in my personal life and in my professional one. Being Jewish is part of everything I do. I don't hide it, no matter where I am. If I am in a place where there are no Jewish people, I say openly that I am Jewish or that I have family in Israel. It is not something I hide. At the same time, I can see how things have changed. When I was a child living in the 19th arrondissement, I wore a Star of David openly without any issue. Today, I don't think it would be the same. Wearing visible Jewish symbols including kippah in certain areas has become more complicated because of antisemitism.

What do you think are the main challenges Jews face today in France and especially in Paris?

One of the biggest challenges today is ensuring the long-term sustainability of Jewish life in France. Jews have lived in France since Antiquity and preserving that continuity is essential. Yet with the rise of antisemitism, more and more people feel insecure and choose to leave, moving to Israel, the United States or elsewhere. The government is actively working against antisemitism but the problem often comes from societal tensions and attitudes on the ground. Anti-Zionism has become a socially accepted way for some people to express hostility that often extends beyond politics into antisemitism.

There is also a growing polarization in French society, particularly between the far-left and the far-right, both of which can pose different kinds of risks for Jewish communities. As Jews, we often find ourselves caught in between these forces, which creates uncertainty about the future.

If Jewish life was to look truly flourishing in 25 years, what would be different from now and what tension do you think will remain?

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, it would mean being able to live openly our Judaism without fear. I would be able to go to synagogue, send my children to school and practice Judaism freely without thinking about security or threats. It would also mean a more open-minded community, where fear does not create distance between Jews and the rest of society. At the same time, I believe that antisemitism will never fully disappear. It has existed for thousands of years and will likely remain in some form.

Could you please tell me a story that shows a change for the better in your community's Jewish life?

One example that gives me hope is the Corrin Prize. Since the 1990s, it has recognised teachers and students who work on projects related to Holocaust memory. Seeing educators and young people from across the country invest time and effort into understanding and transmitting this history is deeply meaningful. It shows that there are still strong allies committed to education, memory, and the fight against antisemitism.

When we see solidarity from other communities, it is also meaningful. I remember an encounter with Iranian women who expressed strong support after October 7th, standing alongside Jewish women and participating in demonstrations. Seeing different communities unite in moments like this shows that dialogue and solidarity are still possible.

Can you please tell me how you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

In my work, I contribute mainly through youth engagement. In summer camps and programmes, I help to give young people the tools to understand their identity, to face antisemitism and to take on leadership roles in the future. I also encourage them to engage with broader French society, to meet people from different communities and to see themselves as both fully Jewish and fully part of French civic life. At the same time, I help them understand that there are many ways of being Jewish: secular, religious, or otherwise and that everyone has a place within the community.

Is there anything you would like to say that we didn't discuss?

What is important to me is the diversity of the Jewish community in France. It is one of its greatest strengths. This plurality allows everyone to find their place and I believe it is something we must preserve. Despite the challenges, I am convinced that there is still a future for Jewish life in France and that institutions like the FSJU, together with the support of the French government, play a key role in ensuring that Jews can continue to live their identity freely in this country.



EDUARD KUPFERBERG

*Secretary General, Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania —
Bucharest, Romania*

Eduard Kupferberg is Secretary General of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania (FEDROM), the umbrella organisation coordinating and funding Jewish life across the country and the Romanian affiliate of the World Jewish Congress. Based in Bucharest, he oversees institutional coordination, heritage preservation, Holocaust remembrance, and international relations, representing Romanian Jewry in European Jewish forums. Having grown up in the Jewish community during communist times, he has worked in Jewish education and community programming since the 1990s. He has championed educational projects such as the first Romanian Jewish Chumash, emphasizing the importance of keeping “the Jewish flame alive” for future generations.

How would you describe Jewish life in Bucharest?

To be a Jew in Romania is generally not complicated. It is safe. Even visibly religious Jews, including Haredi tourists, have no problems on the street. We receive good support from local authorities and the government, and security compares very favourably with other European countries. Online antisemitism has risen significantly, but physical incidents remain rare.

The difficulty is practical. We are a small community — around 7,000 registered members, plus roughly 5,000 Israelis and unaffiliated Jews. There is a Jewish kindergarten in Bucharest but no Jewish school or high school. Kosher products are hard to find. For those who want to live a fully religious life, it requires real effort.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

As Secretary General of the Federation, Jewish life is my daily reality — it’s hard to identify moments when I’m not thinking about it. I grew up in the community, became a volunteer after 1990, then a Jewish educator and programme manager. This has been my trajectory. Perhaps during university I drifted slightly but otherwise it has always been a constant.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

For individuals in Bucharest and the larger cities, Jewish life is accessible and active. The real difficulty is the small communities — cities with 100 or 200 members, mostly elderly, sometimes unable even to form a *minyan*. We address this through a non-formal Jewish education system for all ages, bringing people from small communities together for long weekends and summer programmes. For them, it is a breath of fresh air.

Institutionally, the biggest challenge is our legacy infrastructure. Before the war, Romania had the fourth largest Jewish community in the world — over 850,000 people. Today we are less than one percent of that. Yet we still maintain nearly 90 synagogues and over 100 cemeteries, many in towns where no Jew has lived for 30 or 40 years. That is an enormous burden. In the last 28 years, we have renovated more than 30 synagogues with support from Romanian authorities, but sustaining it all remains very difficult.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

slowly expanded to all ages. That, I think, is my contribution.

The community right now is thriving, and I hope it will be no less than it is today. The main challenge will be demographics: about half our community is elderly, and birth rates are low. On the other hand, Israelis and Jews from elsewhere are settling in Romania, and some are joining the community.

What will change is geography. We currently have communities in 39 cities. I think between half and two-thirds of those will no longer exist in 25 years, as young people — Jewish and non-Jewish alike — move to larger cities. But in five to ten cities, there will be living, active Jewish communities.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

In the 1990s, Jewish life here was essentially limited to synagogue and elderly welfare. From around 2000, we began building an informal Jewish education system open to all ages, not requiring religious observance, offering many different ways to connect to Jewish identity and culture. That has had an enormous impact. Many people who wouldn't otherwise have come near the community found their way in through it. I think it is the best thing that has happened to this community in a very long time.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

In the early 1990s, I went to the community leadership and told them: the only thing you offer young people is a Jewish choir that meets once or twice a week. The society has changed — democracy has changed everything — and young people aren't coming. They said, fine, do something. Together with two colleagues, I created an educational centre that became the core of the new informal education system. It started with children and teenagers, then



Emile Schrijver

General Director, Jewish Culture Quarter (Jewish History Museum, Portuguese Synagogue, National Holocaust Museum & National Holocaust Memorial) — Amsterdam, Netherlands

Prof. Emile G.L. Schrijver (1962) is General Director of Amsterdam's Jewish Cultural Quarter, encompassing the Jewish Museum, Jewish Museum junior, Portuguese Synagogue, Hollandsche Schouwburg, and the National Holocaust Museum. He holds a professorship in the History of the Jewish Book at the University of Amsterdam and curates the Braginsky Collection of Hebrew Manuscripts in Zurich. He is executive editor of the *Encyclopedia of Jewish Book Cultures*, forthcoming from Brill. Schrijver has published two literary thrillers, *De Hillel Codex* (2021) and *De Firkovich-bende* (2023), and co-authored *Ooggetuigen van het Antisemitisme* (2025), a study of European antisemitism.

How would you describe Jewish life in Amsterdam?

It used to be relatively easy, but the last two or three years have been increasingly difficult. As director of the Jewish Museum, I'm a public figure and can't hide my Jewish identity even if I wanted to. More broadly, many Jewish university students in their 20s feel they have to hide who they are, constantly being asked to distance themselves from Israeli politics simply because they're Jewish.

Access to kosher food isn't a problem, although there are constant security concerns. But if you want to go to shul, there are armed police outside. Children going to Jewish schools have armed guards at the gate. We are the only minority group that has to deal with this. Official support from the mayor and police is in place. That makes a real difference, but people are frightened. They take down their mezuzah.

My daughter was advised by a police officer not to wear her Magen David in public. There is a proud Jewish community that steps forward but the anxiety is palpable.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

Fifteen years ago, I defined myself as Jewish only on a cultural level. Since October 7th, and because of the negativity now surrounding our identity, I identify more strongly and more openly. When the Maccabi riots happened here, I said on television: if they're going on a Jew hunt — those are the words they literally used — they're trying to hunt me. My identification with the group has deepened as a result.

I feel it least when I'm cycling or swimming, in the anonymity of ordinary private life. But that space has shrunk since October 7th.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

In one word: normality. The normality of Jewish presence in Amsterdam has come under pressure. That is what has changed.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

Amsterdam's mayor recently apologised for the treatment of Jews during the Second World War and established a €25 million fund for the future of Jewish life here. The report that followed concentrated heavily on the diversity of Jewish identity — rightly so. But for me, the word 'religion' was not used enough. The risk of investing only in cultural expression is a dilution of the core.

Religious identity remains central to Jewish continuity across generations.

We must invest in youth and modernise leadership. There is an angry, older male dominance in Jewish institutions that doesn't serve us. I'm over 60, so I can say that.

The tension that will remain is antisemitism and the anxiety it creates. One rabbi asked me whether, by talking so much about insecurity, we make ourselves feel more unsafe than we are. Then two weeks later there were explosions in Rotterdam and Amsterdam. The threat is real. But we cannot let it define us.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

Maccabi Netherlands launched something called the Maccabi Women's Circle, a group of women of all ages and all religious orientations, with a strong cultural programme that actively embraces the diversity of Jewish identity. Mothers and 80-year-old grandmothers including non-Jewish women who feel connected. It is genuinely empowering, and it models what Jewish community life should look like.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

We care for the Portuguese Synagogue, the Ashkenazi synagogue complex, the Holocaust Memorial and Museum. I publish on antisemitism, write op-eds, and recently filmed nine short films for Jewish public television, visiting places like the only matzah factory in Holland, taking objects from our collection as a starting point. For me that is about the normality of Jewish life. My family has lived here since the 17th century. Why should I suddenly feel a stranger? There is a tendency in parts of the Jewish community to lean into the misery. My role is to counter that.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

Non-Jews talk about Jews constantly, but they don't talk with Jews. The broader public believes it already knows what we are supposed to think and do — that is a form of passive aggression we must resist. I face it in my own museum: pressure to distance ourselves from Israeli politics. But I run a Jewish museum in Amsterdam. Being Jewish here does not mean you represent the Israeli government and you cannot be expected to prove otherwise on demand. Making people understand that is, for me, the core of where we are right now.



ESTHER MUCZNIK

*Historian and former Vice-president of the Lisbon Jewish Community —
Lisbon, Portugal*

Esther Mucznik is a columnist for the Portuguese newspaper Público and has published various articles in different magazines. She is also an editor of the Journal of Jewish Studies, a publication of the Portuguese Association of Jewish Studies and is active in several Portuguese Jewish organisations. She belongs to the Israelite Community of Lisbon, which is over one hundred years old and predates the creation of the State of Israel. She has always lived in Lisbon, although she has also spent time in Israel and lived in Paris for eight years, where she studied Hebrew Language and Culture and Sociology at the Sorbonne, respectively. She served as vice-president of the Jewish Community of Lisbon from 2002 to 2016 and remains a member of its board. She is the founder and current president of the Association for Holocaust Memory and Education and coordinator of the founding committee of the Jewish Museum. She identifies as deeply Jewish, though not religious and describes herself as traditional or cultural. She comes from a family with strong religious traditions: her grandfather was a rabbi and her father was religious, while her mother, who came from Warsaw, was less observant but still traditional.

How would you describe Jewish life in your city, Lisbon? Is it easy to live a Jewish life there?

I would say that it is quite easy to live a Jewish life in Lisbon. Even during the dictatorship under Salazar, we had freedom of worship, and I remember going to the synagogue without any difficulty. Although we were seen as different, this difference was not accompanied by violence. After the democratic transition on 25 April,

things improved further and today living as a Jew in Portugal is generally normal and peaceful. People are often curious, but there is no inherent hostility. However, since 7 October, something has shifted. While Portugal remains a non-violent country, there have been tensions linked to the situation in Israel. For instance, Israeli-owned businesses, such as restaurants, have faced repeated acts of vandalism. There are also people who strongly criticise Israel and sometimes conflate Jews with Israeli policies. Despite this, Jewish life continues as usual, compared to countries like France, the situation remains relatively calm.

Are there moments in your daily life when you feel more Jewish than at others, as a European and particularly Portuguese Jew?

I would say that my sense of being Jewish is not tied to specific moments in daily life, but rather intensifies in response to external events, particularly those concerning Israel. When Israel is under attack or heavily criticised, I feel more strongly identified as Jewish, not by choice but because of how we are perceived and treated. This dynamic is common across the diaspora. My identity has not fundamentally changed, but it evolves depending on the broader context. Being Jewish is constant, yet the way it is experienced can shift according to what is happening in the world.

What do you see as the main challenges facing Jews in Portugal and in Lisbon?

One of the challenges lies within the community itself, particularly regarding the role of women. The community follows

an Orthodox tradition, where women have a more limited role in synagogue life. Having served as vice-president for many years, I have questioned this structure and believe that greater inclusion is necessary. Beyond that, there is also the challenge of maintaining a balance between preserving Jewish identity and engaging with wider Portuguese society. While there is no widespread hostility, it remains important to ensure to highlight Jewish contributions to Portugal throughout history.

Looking to the future, what would the community look like in 25 years if it were thriving?

In 25 years, I would hope to see a community that is more inclusive, particularly in terms of women's participation in leadership and religious life. I would also like to see stronger connections with broader society. While there has already been progress, such as inviting public figures and fostering dialogue, this should continue to develop. A thriving community would be one in which Jewish identity is maintained while also being fully integrated into Portuguese civic life, including representation in public institutions and government. Being Jewish and Portuguese should not be seen as contradictory, but as complementary.

From the perspective of the Jewish community in Portugal, is the arrival of Israelis seen only as an asset, or also as a potential challenge?

I see the arrival of Israelis as a positive development. They come to Portugal to work and build their lives independently, without relying on external support. Their presence contributes to the economy and to the vibrancy of Jewish life, for example through businesses such as restaurants. Overall, they bring energy and initiative, which benefits both the community and the country.

Can you share a story that, in your view, has positively changed the community and Jewish life in Portugal?

One interesting development is the growing attraction of alternative forms of Jewish engagement, such as Chabad, alongside the historic community. While I personally remain deeply attached to the synagogue of the traditional community, I see it as positive that people seek to connect to Jewish life.

How do you personally contribute to fostering Jewish life in your country?

I have dedicated much of my work to education and memory. In 2009, I founded an organisation named Memo Shoah, focused on teaching about the Shoah, as I realised that this subject was largely absent from Portuguese school curricula. Today, we work with schools across the country and have built a strong network of educators. I am particularly proud that this work has continued despite current political tensions. In addition, I am developing a Jewish museum, the Tikva Jewish Museum, which will highlight the long history and contributions of Jews in Portugal. Through these projects, as well as my writing, I aim to ensure that Jewish history and identity are recognised as an integral part of Portuguese society.

Is there anything important we have not discussed that you would like to add?

One important issue is the internal division within the Jewish community regarding Israel. There are very different opinions and this creates tension. Personally, I have defended Israel publicly, but with increasing difficulty, as I strongly disagree with the current government. This situation causes me great pain, especially as I have close personal ties to Israel.



GENNADI GRAMBERG

Head of the Estonian Jewish Museum & Teacher of Jewish History — Tallinn, Estonia

Gennadi Gramberg was born in Ukraine in 1956 and moved to Estonia in 1979. He served as Chairman of the Jewish Community of Estonia from 1990 to 1995, during the period of community rebuilding after the Soviet era, and was a founding contributor to the Tallinn Jewish School, the community newspaper Hashachar, and other communal institutions. Since 2020 he has been Head of the Estonian Jewish Museum and a teacher of Jewish history at the Tallinn Jewish School.

How would you describe Jewish life in Tallinn?

When I moved from Ukraine to Estonia in 1978-79, I was very surprised that local Jews felt very free — not oppressed, like in Ukraine at that time. Now I have lived here for more than 45 years. To be a Jew in Estonia is very easy. Nobody cares whether you are Jewish or not. People who follow Chabad tradition walk freely on the streets in traditional dress, and nobody cares. Even after October 7th, the level of antisemitism here rose a little bit, but not so much.

The only thing we are very concerned about is our neighbour Russia. If our country were attacked by Russia, we see what happened in Ukraine. This is the biggest concern for us now.

When do you feel most Jewish?

Because I work in a Jewish institution, and all my working day is connected with Jews, I feel Jewish the whole time. I don't have a switch that I can turn from Jewish to non-Jewish. 24/7, I'm Jewish.

Even when I go to vote in elections, I make my decision based in part on candidates' attitudes towards Israel and Jews. Fortunately, here we have only a few who express anti-Israeli positions — and fortunately they are not in my district.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

The big challenge for communities is youth — the new generation. We need younger people in leadership. Six years ago I was still a member of the community council, and I stepped back and said: we need more young people here, not only retired ones.

For the museum specifically, the challenge is space and money. I have many items I want to exhibit, many projects in my head, but very small resources. And within a small community, the museum is competitive with the community, with the synagogue — we are all asking from the same people. Sometimes people don't want to give money to the past. They want to give money to the future. And the museum is the past.

If Jewish life in Estonia were flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

In the last four years, the Jewish community population in Estonia has actually increased — people have moved here from European countries, from Israel, from the US. They are looking for a very peaceful life. Estonia has very advanced IT infrastructure; you can sit in Tallinn and work in Australia remotely.

I know for sure that in 25 years, the Jewish nation will still be here — we survived even when the Second Temple was destroyed. But

life will be very different. Even Orthodox tradition may change. Our rabbi is Chabad, very conservative — and yet he uses AI every day and is one of the most modern, advanced people I know. If you didn't know his background, you would not guess it.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

When Rabbi Kot came to Tallinn 25 years ago, he found there was no kosher food, no families truly following Shabbat tradition. He started from zero.

What we have now — families who strictly observe Shabbat, kosher food available in the city, a mikveh in the synagogue — all of this he helped build, because he found people who had been waiting for someone like him. He knew how to teach people, how to encourage them. And everything changed.

I travel a lot and visit many synagogues. In every synagogue I see the same picture: at Shabbat services, some people come just for the kiddush — Americans call it 'JFK,' *just for kiddush*. When I see that we have the same in our synagogue as in Amsterdam, in Zurich, in America, I'm very happy. It means we are a real community.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

My contribution is that I talk to people — mostly non-Jews — about Jewish life in our country. I am absolutely sure that if the people around us, the non-Jews, understand Jewish life and respect it, that will help foster Jewish life here. I am invited as an expert to tell others about Jewish history and culture. That is my contribution.

Within the community, there are others who deal with the internal work. My role is to be a bridge to the outside.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

Even at the European level, we Jews should be very proud to show our Jewish identity, our Jewish culture, our contribution to European history and to European identity. We have nothing to be ashamed of. We have only to be proud that we are Europeans and we are Jewish Europeans. We can make European identity more interesting, more diverse. And we should be very proud of it.



JACOB CEKI HAZAN

Education specialist, researcher & digital consultant — Izmir, Turkey

Jacob Ceci Hazan was born and raised in Izmir, Turkey, within a community that has existed there for centuries. He works at the intersection of Jewish studies, community heritage, and civil society, and is currently pursuing an MA in Religious Studies and Theology at Lund University. He has led EU-funded projects on Jewish heritage and education, manages the Izmir Jewish Community Center website, and recently launched avierto.net, a Turkish-language platform dedicated to Jewish studies.

How would you describe Jewish life in Izmir?

Izmir has about 1,200 Jews in a city of 4.5 million. It's easy because we are mostly secular Jews — we're not very visible. But the difficulty is that it's a shrinking, aging community. The Jewish school I attended is no longer open. I was born at a Jewish hospital — it's no longer a Jewish hospital. What my mom's community in Ankara experienced fifty years ago, that's what we're experiencing now in Izmir.

When do you feel most Jewish?

I probably feel most Jewish when I'm explaining Judaism to non-Jews, because then you become a kind of authority — and the more I explain it, the more I realise how little I knew. I feel least Jewish in the political arena, when people start questioning your Jewishness because you won't take a side. I just want to be on the side of no innocent person dying.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

The first challenge is security — we never know what might happen. Since the Iran war started, all programmes in Izmir were cancelled. The other challenge is internal: we don't have a resident rabbi. The Turkish Jewish community is officially Orthodox, even though most people aren't. I'm more comfortable with egalitarian services — and that's simply not possible in Izmir.

What would a flourishing Jewish Izmir look like in 25 years?

I don't see us reopening what we've already shut down. But I do hope we might have something for seniors, perhaps kosher food produced locally, and maybe a space for Jewish studies — not just heritage as something about the past, but real text study. Like what Casa Adret is in Barcelona. Something like that in Izmir is my dream.

Tell us a story of change for the better.

I applied for an EU grant to connect the community with local civil society. What I discovered is that non-Jews in Izmir were actually the ones most motivated to get involved — they wanted to channel their energy into something good, and for them the Jewish community is one of the last remaining minority communities. Using their interest as leverage to bring Jews in too: that really works.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

I try to build two kinds of bridges: one with diaspora Jews and European networks, so we don't feel so alone; and one with non-Jewish Izmirians who care about the city's minority heritage. That combination — outside support and local allies — is what actually keeps things moving.

What message would you leave for a European policymaker?

EU grants are probably the only vital lifeline for what I do in Turkey. But I'd ask for more than financial reporting — send experts who actually come and see what's happening on the ground. And think about programmes for seniors too, not just youth. Sometimes a senior exchange changes more perspectives than ten youth conferences.



JAÏR STRANDERS

Artistic Director, Theater Na de Dam — Amsterdam, Netherlands

Jaïr Stranders serves as Artistic Director of Theater Na de Dam and is chair of Oy Vey, as well as a board member of the Liberal Jewish Community (LJG) in Amsterdam. He has worked extensively in theatre creation and taught philosophy for many years, focusing on memory, Jewish identity, and contemporary social dialogue. Stranders describes his Jewish identity as religious without belief—observing traditions, holidays, and communal life while not holding conventional religious metaphysical beliefs.

How would you describe Jewish life in Amsterdam?

I would say it's relatively easy, though it's under pressure since October 7th. There is a large, diverse Jewish community here; more than half of Dutch Jews live in Amsterdam or the surrounding area. There's Jewish programming, different congregations, a variety of services. But a lot has become restricted by security. If you want to organise something openly Jewish, the location is often only shared the day before. That limits the freedom and openness of Jewish life considerably.

It's also worth keeping things in perspective. Of the 45,000 to 50,000 Jews in the Netherlands, only around 8,000 are members of a congregation. Compared to New York, Jewish life here is not that visible and many non-Jews simply don't know much about it.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

Most Jewish on Friday evening, doing Shabbat with my family. Since October 7th, Jewish life

has become part of my daily work: dealing with community tensions, antisemitism, the difficulty of getting more progressive voices into the discourse around Israel. But Shabbat is when I feel it most deeply.

I feel it least in the theater world, where for many years my Jewish identity simply wasn't part of the work. That has changed significantly in recent years.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

Security is a real challenge — and there's a contradiction in it. We need security, for good reasons. But the long-term goal has to be Jewish life that doesn't require it. The tendency, whenever something happens, is to call for more security. How to hold a longer-term vision alongside that immediate instinct is a real challenge.

The other challenge is that for a significant part of Dutch Jews bound to a congregation, their Jewish identity is built almost entirely around antisemitism, the Holocaust, and Israel. Usually some combination of all three. That's understandable, but I think there is real potential, and real need, for a more positive Jewish life, where those threats don't constantly define who we are.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

Much more visible, much more organic. Not 'claiming space' in a defensive way, but simply being present: holidays, traditions, community life, just part of the fabric of the city. Jewish identity shaped by culture and tradition rather than by threat.

I see it happening already in pockets. Our rabbi at the progressive community is focused on exactly this: positive Jewish life, full stop. Oy Vey does it too: gatherings, learning sessions, holidays, none of it organised around antisemitism or Israel or the Holocaust. Those things can come up, but they're not the point. The geopolitical situation makes it harder right now. But it's possible.

Antisemitism will remain. I don't know what form it will take in 25 years, but it won't disappear. The question is whether it still shapes us from the inside.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

Two stories. The first: my daughter attends Talmud Torah on Sunday mornings at our shul. There are around 150 children every week, parents chatting or working on laptops while the kids learn. Recently there was a presentation of a new book, a beautiful modern retelling of Torah stories for children, written by an older member who has told the weekly parashah story for years. Watching that being passed to a new generation was genuinely moving.

The second: Oy Vey recently held a four-day Jewish film festival at a left-wing student cinema in Amsterdam. On Friday evening, they held a kiddush in the cinema café, among other people there for other films. No security. That is what Jewish life can look like.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

Through Oy Vey and LJG, yes — but also through being a visible Jewish voice in media and in communities that aren't Jewish: the theater world, cultural circles. I try to show that there is a nuanced way of looking at what's happening in Israel, and at what antisemitism actually is. Giving Jewish identity a face for people who wouldn't

otherwise encounter it. I know some Jews disagree with how I do it — but many others tell me it matters. I think it does.



LAURENT MOYSE

*Retired journalist & President, Shoah Foundation Luxembourg —
Luxembourg City, Luxembourg*

Laurent Moyse, a graduate in Economics from Université Louis Pasteur in Strasbourg and in Journalism and Communication from the Université libre de Bruxelles, is a retired journalist and former editor-in-chief who continues to contribute editorials and radio news analysis as a freelancer. He has authored historical essays, including a book on the Jews of Luxembourg, works of fiction, and a documentary on the 2008 financial crisis. A long-standing member of Luxembourg's Jewish community, he chairs the Fondation luxembourgeoise pour la mémoire de la Shoah and is actively involved in remembrance work and several organisations concerned with memory and Jewish life.

How would you describe Jewish life in Luxembourg?

Jews are a small minority here, with limited resources, but Judaism is recognised as an official religion, which brings modest financial support, and relations with both national and local authorities are generally good. We have a diverse Jewish population due to immigration, and three central places of worship. Jews are widely accepted and integrated in Luxembourg society.

Antisemitism here is more moderate than in neighbouring countries. Physical assaults, which are common in France, Germany and Belgium, are very rare. It's mainly a social media phenomenon. But it is rising, like everywhere else. Kosher food is available in limited quantities, and those who keep strictly kosher often need to shop across the border.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

I feel most Jewish during the festivals, especially when we gather with family and friends. The Seder for Pesach is a wonderful way to share common values in a warm atmosphere. Outside of that, as a Jew you always have to justify yourself, your roots, your customs, your position towards Israel. That's not new, but it's getting stronger.

On a personal level, my feelings have evolved. My Jewishness has become very individual. I'm sometimes disappointed by Jewish institutions and religious authorities, who in my view have failed to make Jews more comfortable with their identity. When I'm writing or lecturing on non-Jewish subjects — journalism, European identity — my Jewishness isn't the first preoccupation. Those are the moments when I feel it least.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

For a small community like ours, survival is the overriding challenge. The historical families who shaped Luxembourg's Jewish life for generations have mostly gone. What remains faces three challenges: sufficient financial resources to sustain an active community; adequate security in the face of growing external threats; and wise leadership capable of navigating internal divisions about how to live one's Judaism.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

Thriving communities will be larger ones, with a broader offer of activities:

concentrations of Jewish life where people can practise their Judaism with some degree of security. Smaller communities will mostly disappear. That's the direction already underway.

The tensions will remain. Jews will continue to be pushed between two extremes — assimilation on one side, zealous isolation on the other — while most find themselves somewhere in between, searching for an adequate spiritual shelter. The constant reduction of Jewish identity to a position on the State of Israel will also remain. These are not new problems, but I don't see them resolving.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

The Jewish scouts here decided a few years ago to join their counterparts in France for joint activities. It's a small example, but an important one: transnational Jewish life, being stronger together. When I was a student, participation in the European Union of Jewish Students was enormously motivating. For small communities especially, expanding your radius beyond your own borders is essential.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

Together with members of Jewish communities from Luxembourg and the surrounding region — including Arlon, just across the Belgian border — we started organising an annual study day, a Limmud. Now in its third year, it brings together experts from Luxembourg, France and Germany for open discussions on Jewish identity, history, religion and culture. It is a place to confront ideas and different ways of living Jewish life.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

The future of Jewish communities in Europe is fragile, and it should be of great concern. Smaller communities that are deeply rooted in their local landscapes need help to survive. But European Jewry should not be seen solely as a minority under threat requiring protection. Jews are part of the cultural heritage of their countries: they have contributed to European society for centuries. Highlighting that positive contribution, rather than only the threats, is essential to clearing away the clichés and biases that still circulate today.



MAGDA DOROSZ

Executive Director of Hillel Poland — Warsaw, Poland

Magda Dorosz lives in Warsaw, Poland. She holds an M.A. in Public Administration from the University of Wrocław and is currently enrolled in the MSOLI program at the Zelikow School of Jewish Nonprofit Management, Hebrew Union College.

She is the Executive Director of Hillel Poland, working with Jewish students and young adults as they explore and strengthen their Jewish identity while building a community of engaged leaders and changemakers. She defines her Jewish identity as traditional and cultural, situated on the edge of religion and encompassing everything in between.

How would you describe Jewish life in Warsaw and more broadly in Poland? Is it easy or difficult to live a Jewish life there?

Living in Warsaw as a Jew is, in my experience, very easy. I do recognise that it may be easier for me as a woman who does not wear visible Jewish symbols, unlike men who wear a kippah. But even taking that into account, we are not really experiencing direct antisemitism in everyday life. It is easy to live a Jewish life here and to be part of the community. There are many organisations that support different aspects of Jewish life, and it is quite straightforward to meet religious and cultural needs. One aspect of this is e.g. availability of kosher food in Poland - which is widely available in regular supermarkets.

Since October 7th, we have not seen physical attacks, which is something that distinguishes Poland from other parts of Europe or even the USA. However, antisemitism does exist, mostly online and

occasionally through verbal incidents in public spaces. Still, in major cities across Poland, Jewish life remains open and relatively safe. The situation may differ in smaller towns, which can be more influenced by the Catholic Church.

When do you feel the most Jewish in your everyday European life and when do you feel it the least? And has this feeling changed over time for you?

Over time, my feelings have definitely evolved. The more I have grown into my Jewish identity, the more comfortable I have become expressing it openly in different environments. Because I work in a Jewish institution, Jewish life is present in everything I do. It is part of my daily routine, day and night. I don't really have moments where I feel "less Jewish," because it is constantly integrated into my life.

What are the main challenges Jews face today in Poland and Warsaw?

One of the biggest challenges is sustainability, especially financial sustainability. Interestingly, it is not about a lack of people. Since October 7th, people are not leaving the community, in fact, many are moving closer to it, sometimes because they feel excluded from other social spaces. The real issue is funding. Poland does not have a strong culture of philanthropy or donations and there is limited governmental support for Jewish organisations. Since October 7th, some organisations or individuals who might otherwise support Jewish causes hesitate to do so publicly, out of fear of backlash or being associated with the negative political narratives about Israel.

At the same time, international funding, especially from the United States, has become more limited, as many donors focus on Israel or domestic issues.

If Jewish life was looking flourishing in 25 years, what would be different from now and what tension do you think would still remain in your local reality?

In 25 years, I would hope for a Jewish community where people can freely choose how to engage, without unnecessary barriers or divisions between organisations. Ideally, organisations would cooperate rather than compete and there would be strong systems in place to develop future leaders from within the community. I would hope for better educational pathways for those who want to dedicate themselves to Jewish communal work, so that leadership is not only driven by passion but also supported by proper training. At the same time, I would want to see stronger local leadership, with more Polish-born rabbis and educators. More broadly, I would hope to live in a world where people do not attribute the actions of a government to an entire people or religion and where education plays a central role in building understanding. I hope that people will feel proudly Jewish without hesitation.

Could you please tell me a story that shows a change for the better in your community's Jewish life?

When we started Hillel in Poland about ten years ago, there was skepticism within the community. Some people questioned why a new organisation was needed when others already existed. Despite that, we continued building it, and today Hillel has become an essential part of Jewish life. Other organisations now collaborate with us and many young people who engage with Hillel go on to become active members and future leaders within the broader community. Hillel has become an entry point into Jewish life and a foundation for the next generation.

Could you please tell me how you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

I often describe my role as “turning Poles with Jewish roots into Jews.” Because of the impact of the Second World War and the communist period, many people in Poland grew up disconnected from Jewish life, mostly not even knowing about their Jewish background. Through Hillel, we create opportunities for young adults to discover their identity, experience Jewish life and understand what it means to be Jewish today. Over the past ten years, we have worked with more than 1,300 young Jewish adults, including Ukrainian Jews, who found a sense of belonging through our programmes.

Is there anything important that we have not discussed and you would like to mention?

Tensions within the Jewish community will likely always exist. They are part of both Jewish and Polish cultural dynamics. Sometimes people bring their own insecurities about identity into communal life. One important issue is the feeling of “not being Jewish enough.” Many people hesitate to join Jewish spaces because they feel they lack the right background or experiences. At the same time, there are those who have been in the community for a long time and may question the legitimacy of newcomers. This creates a tension around belonging that we actively try to address and fight against to create an inclusive environment.

Another point is that the Polish government still did not officially implement the national strategy to combat antisemitism, even though such a document has been prepared.



MARCELL KENESEI

Director, Jewish Community Center (JCC) — Budapest, Hungary

Marcell Kenesei is Director of the JCC Budapest – Bálint Ház, having discovered his Jewish identity at 13 and dedicated his professional life to the revival of Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe. A graduate in political science from ELTE University and a former fellow at Paideia in Stockholm, he previously served as director of Centropa Hungary and helped establish the Israeli Cultural Institute in Budapest. He is president of the “Kibic” Jewish Community Forum Association and serves on the boards of Centropa, the Charity Taxi Foundation, and the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund. He defines his Jewish identity as cultural and secular.

How would you describe Jewish life in Budapest?

Today it’s one of the easiest places in Europe to live a Jewish life. Hungary has the third largest Jewish community in the EU and has seen an incredible revival in the past 30 years driven by summer camps, community centres, and Jewish schools built after the fall of the Iron Curtain. In the early 1990s, around 2,000 people identified as Jewish. Today it’s around 20,000, out of roughly 120,000 with Jewish ancestry. Enrolment in Jewish schools is growing, more families are celebrating Jewish holidays at home, and international Jewish groups visit in increasing numbers. Compared to many other European countries, it is also relatively safe — antisemitism of the kind you see elsewhere is less visible here.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

I feel most Jewish when I’m embodying the values I associate with Judaism: lifelong learning, critical thinking, respectful debate, mindfulness, philanthropy. These are deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, but they make sense for secular people too. Judaism treats debate not as something to win but as a way of understanding other viewpoints and your own better. That, for me, is when I feel most connected.

What troubles me — and this is when I feel most conflicted — is when some Jews fall into exactly the stereotyping and labelling we have historically suffered from. I understand the fear behind it; the existential threat is real. But Jewish historical experience, I think, calls us to resist that instinct even in difficult times.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

Two challenges, both existential. The first is identity: how to reach the many people with Jewish ancestry who don’t currently identify, and how to make Jewish identity compelling in the 21st century without it being purely religion-based. The second is antisemitism — rising across Europe, forcing families to hide their identity, leading people to think about plan Bs. These two challenges are connected: fear discourages people from engaging with Jewish life just as communities are trying to grow. That tension is very hard to manage.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

More people actively involved, perhaps double today's numbers. Communities more self-sustaining, less dependent on American fundraising. Jews with a stronger, more articulate sense of what their identity means and what values it carries.

What will never fully go away is existential fear; it has accompanied Jewish people for centuries and in some ways has shaped our creativity and resilience. In a better world, that fear sits in the background rather than defining daily life. The imminent threats — bomb scares, physical attacks — become less frequent. But the underlying anxiety never disappears entirely, and perhaps it shouldn't.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

Families celebrating Jewish holidays at home after two or three generations had abandoned the practice entirely. In my own family it's the same. The fact that something so foundational can return after skipping so many generations... that tells you something important about the durability of these values and traditions. The real things in life are the ones that pass through generations. Even after enormous hardship, they find a way back.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

Professionally, I run the JCC Budapest — developing programming, building financial sustainability, reducing dependence on state funding. We now cover 50% of our budget through American fundraising and the rest through grants, Hungarian donors, and our own income. I'm proud of that. Changing the mindset around giving — from charity to joining a cause you believe in — is something I work on constantly.

On a personal level, I bring friends into Jewish holidays, particularly Seder. For many of them it's one of their only Jewish experiences. And I encourage people in my network with children to consider Jewish education not only for its individual value, but because a larger, more engaged community is better for everyone.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

Creating opportunities for human dialogue should be a priority for the EU, for civil society and for individuals. Antisemitism cannot be fought with poster campaigns or social media. It can only be addressed through in-person encounters between people who wouldn't normally meet. Small gatherings work better than large ones: the fewer people in a room, the better the chance they actually listen to each other. Once groups get large, they go tribal. Focus on micro-communities and individual connections. That's how democratic societies recover from polarisation and it matters far beyond the Jewish question.



MARIE-SARAH SEEBERGER

Head of International Affairs at CRIF — Paris, France

Marie-Sarah Seeberger lives in Paris, France and serves as Head of International Affairs at the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF). She is 34 years old and identifies as traditional, belonging to the Masorti movement in Paris. She is a member of the World Jewish Congress Executive Committee.

How would you describe Jewish life in Paris and is it easy or difficult to live a Jewish life there?

In my view, it is relatively easy to live a Jewish life in Paris. The community is vibrant, well organised and constantly evolving. In recent months, I have noticed many new initiatives, particularly for individuals who felt disconnected from their religious identity. Among younger generations, there is a renewed interest in belonging to a religious community, sometimes even in engaging with formal Jewish institutions such as CRIF.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday European life and when do you feel it the least? Have these feelings changed over time?

As a French person, I tend to experience religion as something belonging to the private sphere, which makes this question complex. My professional life is closely linked to my Judaism, yet I feel most Jewish in my private life: at home, in the synagogue and in the way I choose to practise religion. At work, I feel more Jewish in a cultural and communal sense. I would not say that I ever feel less Jewish. However, my relationship to Judaism has evolved over time. It is both a personal journey and one shaped by external events, including the broader political and social context.

What are the main challenges Jews face today in Paris and in France generally?

The main challenge I see today is what I would call invisibilisation. Historically, French Jews have been comfortable with assimilation but not with invisibility. Today, however, there is a growing tendency to become less visible, not because it is imposed externally but because it has been internalised as a necessity. This self-imposed discretion is deeply concerning, particularly as it risks being transmitted to future generations. Outside Paris, the situation is even worse. Smaller communities are weakening due to a lack of infrastructure such as schools, kosher facilities, or even synagogues, leading many people to relocate to larger cities.

If Jewish life was to look truly flourishing in 25 years, what would be different from now and what tension do you think would still remain?

In an ideal scenario, being visibly Jewish would not entail any fear. One could openly express religious identity in public without concern and security measures such as armed guards in front of schools and synagogues would no longer be necessary. That said, Jewish life itself is already quite strong, with numerous initiatives and high demand for schools and kosher restaurants. The enduring tension, however, would likely remain the balance between being Jewish and being French. This dual identity is increasingly complex and may continue to be shaped by the political climate.

Could you please tell me a change for the better in your community's Jewish life?

A recent positive development at CRIF has been the effort to include more women and younger people in leadership roles. The most

recent board elections saw an unprecedented number of candidates, many of whom were women and under the age of 40. This reflects a growing desire among Jews in France to engage actively in communal life and demonstrates the vitality of the community. It is a step towards better representation of contemporary French Jewry.

And how do you explain that now?

I believe this development is the result of both institutional efforts and broader societal changes. The leadership of Yonathan Arfi has made CRIF more accessible and representative. At the same time, following the events of 7th October, many individuals who previously felt disconnected from existing structures tried to find or create their place within the community. Now, they increasingly recognise the importance of engaging with established organisations. There is also a bigger sense of urgency and responsibility, with many fearing for the future and wanting to act before it is too late.

If I understand well, you are quite active in feminist groups. Could you tell me about this experience since 7th October?

This period has been particularly difficult. In France, as elsewhere, there was a denial of the gender-based violence that occurred on 7th October, which was deeply painful, especially for Jewish women involved in feminist movements. I perceived a troubling double standard regarding Israeli women. At the same time, this moment revealed that many Jewish women were not engaged in feminist activism and were unfamiliar with broader societal issues such as domestic violence. This highlighted a gap between the Jewish community and civil society. I believe it is essential to build bridges, to engage in dialogue, and to show genuine interest in the concerns of others. This is something we are now trying to address more actively.

What do you think of the French government's response to the rise of antisemitism?

The events of 7th October have led to a politicisation of Jewish identity, which

I find deeply problematic. Jews and the fight against antisemitism have been instrumentalised in political discourse. Nevertheless, I believe that the French government, and President Emmanuel Macron, responded appropriately in many respects. The condemnation of the attacks was immediate and clear and symbolic actions, such as the national ceremony for victims, were significant. While some diplomatic positions may have appeared ambiguous, I recognise that this is part of the nature of political and diplomatic processes. Overall, I do not feel resentment towards the government's handling of the situation.

Tell me how you believe you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

I have consciously chosen to dedicate my professional life to the Jewish community. Through my work at CRIF and my involvement in organisations such as the American Jewish Committee and the World Jewish Congress, I aim to contribute to Jewish life. Beyond institutional roles, I organise and participate in initiatives such as Shabbat dinners, interfaith events and discussions connecting Jewish and feminist perspectives. I also volunteer within my synagogue. For me, fostering Jewish life is about community-building and engagement at a grassroots level, rather than political advocacy. It is an area I would like to focus on even more in the future.

Is there anything important that we have not discussed?

I find it striking that I have spoken relatively little about antisemitism and security. Like many professionals in this field, I feel a certain fatigue around these topics. I believe we are entering a new phase in which Jewish communities must refocus on their core missions: representing themselves, strengthening communal life, and embracing the joy of being Jewish. At the same time, I remain concerned about the upcoming presidential election, which may intensify the politicisation of Jewish identity. For now, however, I hope we can take advantage of a brief period of relative calm.



MARTA SIMÓ

Researcher, Autonomous University of Barcelona — Barcelona, Spain

Marta Simó is a researcher and Associated Lecturer of Sociology and Global Politics and Religion at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, and of Intercultural Education and Immigration, and Conflicts and Mediation at the University of Barcelona. She holds a doctorate in Sociology with a thesis on the memory of the Holocaust in Spain. Her work focuses on Holocaust memory, antisemitism, intercultural dialogue, and the fight against discrimination, and she consults for governmental organizations on Holocaust and human rights education. Though not Jewish herself, she works closely on questions of Jewish visibility and minority rights in Catalan society.

How would you describe Jewish life in Barcelona?

For everyday life, it's probably not a difficult place to be Jewish. Religious expression is generally accepted — Barcelona tolerates religious diversity. But if your Jewish identity goes beyond the religious into something cultural or ethnic, it becomes a problem. Many people here cannot understand that Jewishness is a diverse identity. The moment it touches on anything connected to Zionism or Israel, that is when it starts to be contested, largely due to the current political climate.

What is the most notable Jewish imprint on your city? And where is their absence most felt?

There is a significant gap between the medieval Jewish heritage — which is well documented and celebrated in many places — and the total near-absence

of contemporary Jewish life in public consciousness. In terms of music, literature, cinema, everyday tradition: people don't know where to find Jewishness today in Barcelona, even though it exists. It is absent from the press, from cultural programming, from education, from political life. You don't see young Jewish people engaged publicly. The imaginary of Jewishness here is either medieval or invisible.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

The fundamental challenge is ignorance, a lack of understanding, across wider society, of what it actually means to be Jewish and how diverse Jewishness is. That ignorance is what makes it so difficult for people to simply accept Jewish life as a normal part of the city.

What does Jewish life in your city mean to you?

What I would like it to mean is simple: that being Jewish is just another identity, one that a person can show or not show freely, without having to explain themselves every time. Right now, being visibly Jewish is something outside the norm in Catalan society. You are constantly required to justify your existence. Every person has the right to express every part of their identity without it being treated as exceptional or suspicious. We are not there.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

The public Hanukkah celebrations in Barcelona — seeing Jewish life in a public

space, visible to the whole city, with people genuinely discovering that it exists. Just before October 7th, that moment had really begun to put Jewishness into public life. It's a shame that the political polarisation since then has made that harder. But the possibility of simply being present in public without apology was a genuine step forward.

What could be done to further foster Jewish life in your city?

The effort currently falls almost entirely on the Jewish community itself, and that is not fair. The majority society needs to do more to learn, to understand, to accept that Jewish identity is simply one more minority identity that deserves care and visibility. I would like to see public institutions, museums, schools and cultural organisations take active responsibility for this, not leave it to a small minority to fight for its own presence.

I would also ask young Jews, with proper guarantees of safety, to be more publicly present because their visibility is what changes perceptions. People need to encounter what a real Jew looks like today, rather than relying on the stereotypes that dominate here.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

In Spain, being Jewish is still seen as something foreign. And there is a damaging assumption — rooted in stereotypes about Jewish power and wealth — that Jews are not a vulnerable minority and therefore don't require the same protection as other minorities. I think that is profoundly wrong. Any minority is vulnerable by definition. The fact that this vulnerability is not recognised, even within progressive and democratic circles in Catalonia, is something I find genuinely troubling and something I try to challenge in my work.



MARTIN KORNFELD

*Secretary General, Federation of Jewish Communities of Slovakia —
Bratislava, Slovakia*

Martin Kornfeld has been Secretary General of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Slovakia (ÚŽŽNO) for seventeen years, overseeing the umbrella body for twelve Jewish communities across the country. His work spans institutional coordination, heritage preservation, advocacy around Jewish cemeteries, Holocaust remembrance, and combating antisemitism, and he frequently represents Slovak Jewry in European and global forums, including the World Jewish Congress and its Jewish Diplomatic Corps. Growing up partly under communism, his family maintained Jewish life despite the restrictions of the era. He speaks publicly on historical memory, contemporary extremism, and democratic values, and identifies as strongly cultural rather than religious.

How would you describe Jewish life in Bratislava?

It depends what you're looking for. For Orthodox Jewish life, the community is simply too small. In total, there are around 500 registered members in communities, but perhaps 2,000 Jews in total if you count everyone with at least one Jewish grandparent. There is no kosher shop, though many people travel to Vienna, Budapest or Prague to stock up. We have a minyan every Friday, Saturday and holiday. For a brit milah, you call someone from Vienna or Budapest. It's manageable, but it requires connections and planning.

The community is not very Orthodox in daily life, partly because of the high rate of mixed marriages in this region, and partly because of the communist legacy. What has changed significantly in the last fifteen

years is the presence of a liberal rabbi from Ukraine who has settled here permanently and is genuinely popular. He works with communities across Slovakia, not only Bratislava, and for many of the smaller regional communities, he is enough.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

Every day, from the first moment of the morning, because my entire working life is Jewish life. I have worked with Jewish communities or Israeli businesses since I left school; seventeen years in my current role, five before that with Israeli developers. I cannot really identify moments when I feel less Jewish. It is simply a constant.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

The main challenge is bringing people to the community. Everything else — managing 800 cemeteries, running welfare services, organising programming — is manageable. But without people, none of it means anything. If you don't reach someone in childhood or youth, it becomes harder later. And when adults do come, they often lack even basic knowledge, which creates its own difficulties. But that is a positive problem to have — it means they came.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

After the Velvet Revolution, there was a real boom: people who had kept Jewish life hidden during communism came out, and youth seminars drew two or three hundred young people from across Czechoslovakia. Today

we are happy to gather thirty or forty. Part of that is demography — Slovakia's general population is also declining and emigrating — and part of it is that the world has changed. For my generation, a Jewish summer camp abroad was an extraordinary opportunity. For today's children, who holiday in Bali, it needs to offer something more.

What I hope for in 25 years is more of the same, continued — more families, more young people, more presence in the community. Antisemitism here is growing but slowly, less urgently than in the West, and it is possible that Western Jews will begin moving eastward as conditions there worsen. That is already happening to a small degree. The tensions that will remain are demographic and political. We never know what the political situation will bring.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

Since the war in Ukraine, a number of Ukrainian and Israeli Jewish families have settled in Slovakia. Our regular youth weekends — we call them Moadon, and we hold four to six a year — used to draw thirty to forty young people. Now we can count on ten more, from these new arrivals. It is a small number, but it is growth, and it has brought new energy.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

I cannot really separate my personal contribution from my professional one. They are the same thing. Seventeen years of running the Federation is my contribution. If I am honest, sometimes I am more present in Jewish life professionally than privately, because after two months of preparing an event, I occasionally need not to attend it as well. But I know everything that is happening, minute by minute, because I helped build it.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

We are Slovaks, not only Jews. We are part of this society and we are not planning to leave — unless the majority pushes us out, which is something our community has painful historical experience of. We watch for the signs. Here, thankfully, the signs are mostly good; the majority society is generally glad to have a local Jewish community as part of its life. That matters enormously. We are grateful for it, and we are afraid whenever it seems under threat.



MAURICE COHEN

Chairman, Jewish Representative Council of Ireland — Dublin, Ireland

Maurice Cohen was born and raised in Dublin, where his family has been part of the Irish Jewish community for generations. He is Chairman of the Jewish Representative Council of Ireland — the country's umbrella Jewish body, affiliated with the World Jewish Congress. He serves on a voluntary basis. He describes himself as an Irish citizen first, born and raised in Dublin, and as a Jew from a small, long-established community.

How would you describe Jewish life in Dublin?

It's a question that needs to be answered carefully. By and large, it is easy to live a Jewish life here. There are no restrictions. However, since October 7th, there is an atmosphere that pervades across the whole of Ireland which affects the community. We are more cautious about showing our outward signs of being Jewish. We did a survey recently — the first time anybody has ever recorded antisemitic incidents systematically — and we found something like 143 incidents reported to us in the last six months of last year. For the size of the Jewish population, that is a huge number.

The community is small. The last census showed about 2,300 declared themselves Jewish, and we have had an influx of Israelis who are part of that count. There are two synagogues in Dublin — Orthodox and Reform — with approximately 200 members each. But Israelis typically don't join synagogues, so they're extra to the approximately 500 we would know about through formal membership.

When do you feel most Jewish, and when the least?

The troubles Israel has gone through certainly make not just me, but the community feel more connected to our Jewishness. It's not just connected to Israel — everybody has family there. But there is a greater spiritual connection, and that doesn't matter whether you are even secular. It is the only government in the world, whoever is in government, that is fully committed to protecting Jewish citizens. Everybody else says they will, but it is different.

When do I feel least Jewish? The answer is circular — sometimes it is at the actions of a particular Israeli government.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

Ireland has a major challenge where the left and the far left have shut down debate. Today in Ireland, it is impossible to have a debate on most subjects if it disagrees with the far left. The rhetoric on any subject — and especially on Israel-Palestine — ramps straight up to the highest level of hyperbole, and there is nowhere else to go. That is very disturbing for us. But in reality, it is happening in any debate the left disagrees with. And then demographically: the community is slowly dying off. There are very few young people, and very few new children being born, except among the Israelis. That is our existential challenge — not just security, but continuity.

If Jewish life were flourishing in Ireland in 25 years, what would it look like?

It would be a community larger in size, and one where people could freely walk around with the signs of their heritage — a Magen David, a kippah — without worry. People do it now, and usually nothing happens. But others feel uncomfortable because they are worried. I think that freedom — to visibly, comfortably be Jewish in public — is the measure.

As for tensions: there will always be tension among Jews. Without tension between Jews, I am not sure we would have survived three and a half thousand years.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

The big story is the Israelis. Up until eight or nine years ago, we were asking: how do we stop the Jewish community dying out in Ireland? We were thinking of advertising in South Africa to attract Litvak families. That didn't yield results.

But then we rediscovered the Israelis who had been here quietly — some of them for a decade or more — and began to understand that we could encompass each other. They are beginning to participate. We had a Yom HaShoah event recently with the Minister for European Affairs as our guest, and we got some Israelis to take part — even to speak on a panel.

And I can tell you something else. A senior executive, a very secular Israeli woman, had lived here for about seven or eight years. She told me that she found herself starting to light Shabbat candles — once a month, then twice. Then buying kosher food occasionally. She couldn't explain it. In leaving Israel, something in her traditions came back. She didn't become fully observant, but she was drawn closer. I think that is the story that is happening quietly all over Europe.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

The Irish government has actually put fostering Jewish life in their programme for government. That imperative came from Europe — from the European Council's strategy. So my role is to be connected with parliamentarians and to help translate that commitment into actual policy and action. I spent three days in the last week in the Irish Parliament speaking to various members and ministers about exactly this. And I am trying to create an environment where all traditions are included — not just the traditional Halachic community, but Israelis, secular Jews, people of Jewish heritage who might not formally identify. We can't expect the Israelis to integrate into us. We have to find a way to incorporate all traditions together.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

There are too many NGOs doing bits of the same thing, and that needs to be organised better. We need more specialisation among the organisations advocating for Jews in various countries, and we need to pool resources. What works in one country against antisemitism or for Jewish life — can that work somewhere else? These discussions do go on, but they need to go further.

And I would say this: it is time that globally, especially in Europe, we look seriously at how we best serve Jewish communities. The infrastructure exists. But it needs to be clarified, streamlined, and made more effective. The political will is there. The tools need to catch up.



MICHEL MONTREUIL

Lay leader, Mozaika & Consultant, JDC Europe — Barcelona, Spain

Michel Montreuil is a Barcelona-based consultant, facilitator, and leadership developer working across organisational development and Jewish communal life. Born in Tel Aviv to a French father and Israeli mother, raised across cultures, he has worked with Jewish organisations throughout Europe for over three decades, previously serving as Director of JDC programmes in the Baltic States, Founding Director of Leatid, and Executive Director of the European Council of Jewish Communities. He is a lay leader at Mozaika, Barcelona's Jewish cultural centre, and consults for JDC Europe on Jewish communal strategy in France. He describes his Jewish identity as traditional and a work in progress.

How would you describe Jewish life in Barcelona?

A mixed bag. Barcelona is cosmopolitan and welcoming, so it's easy to declare oneself Jewish here, and there is an existing ecosystem of institutions: more than one synagogue, multiple denominations, various non-religious initiatives. On the other hand, Spain has no recent history with Jews. Many people have never met one. In Catalonia especially, there is a strong reflex of solidarity with whoever is perceived as occupied, which maps directly onto the actions of Israel, and by extension onto Jews. And there are no laws prohibiting hate speech, which shows. The antisemitic comments I read under mainstream newspaper articles here are simply shameless.

Jewish life itself is fragmented. There is no single community, nor should there be —

people affiliate according to their own needs, religious, cultural, political. Many islands, which is fine. But they don't communicate enough.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

Every time I eat outside. The restrictions I give myself — no forbidden meats, no shellfish, no mixing dairy and meat — are a constant reminder that I don't eat like everyone else. In Barcelona that's not a small thing.

I feel it least when I don't have to think about it. But living in the district of Gracia, where there is a Palestinian flag on every third building, I am frequently thrown back to my Jewish identity through expressions of anti-Israel sentiments. Even though one should be able to distinguish between Jewish identity, Israeli identity and Zionist identity, in practice, that distinction collapses quickly.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

Barcelona is in a middle zone: not so small that it risks disappearing through assimilation or emigration, and with enough incoming migration to sustain itself demographically. That's reassuring. The main challenge for me is the lack of coordination across the archipelago. We have many islands of Jewish life, but they don't share information, don't respond to offers of collaboration or even simple coordination. That limits everyone. Whatever your mission, you can only fulfil it well if the ecosystem around you is functioning.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

Real power-sharing with younger generations, not just symbolic inclusion. Vibrant spaces, synagogues and community centres representing the full denominational palette: strong Masorti, Reform and modern Orthodox options, so everyone can find their place. A Jewish school with excellent academic results. And something like Mozaika fully realised: a Jewish cultural centre open to the public every day, presenting the intellectual and cultural richness of Jewish heritage to Jews and non-Jews alike. Perhaps the pressures we face will force us to be more creative and more collaborative. I hope so.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

The translation of *La Revue K* — a publication I consider one of the best in Europe — into Spanish. Content that is serious, critical, complex, and stands in solidarity with Jewish life. Once properly promoted, it should give Jews here genuine food for thought. For a city where that kind of intellectual resource didn't previously exist in the local language, it matters.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

Mainly through making connections between interesting people in Barcelona and initiatives developed elsewhere that could be adapted here. I travel a lot and work with larger Jewish communities, so I can identify things worth recycling. Right now, I'm trying to build a pan-European coalition to address new forms of antisemitism: developing training modules, connecting people working on this from very different political starting points, and bringing that work into Spain: to teachers, journalists, Wikipedia contributors... Connecting is what I can offer.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

Israel is the elephant in the room. The reality there is complex, some parts are very dark and depressing, others are genuinely bright and inspiring. It takes time to explain that to people unfamiliar with the context. Social media algorithms actively work against that complexity, promoting polarising messages that trigger emotion rather than thought. What I find hardest is the disappearance of spaces for serious, rigorous intellectual discussion, where people acknowledge they don't hold the whole truth. Too quickly, people decide which side you're on and stop listening. That is corrosive, and it costs all of us.



MINA PAŠAJLIĆ

Education Director at Haver Srbija – Belgrade, Serbia and Global Jewish educator at Mem Global

Mina Pašajlić is based in Belgrade, Serbia, and serves as Education Director for Haver Srbija organisation, while also working as a Global Jewish Educator for Mem Global. She describes her Jewish identity simply as Jewish, with a leaning toward cultural and traditional aspects that she continues to practice.

Previously, she worked with international organisations, including the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), where she served as Program Director of the International Jewish Summer Camp Szarvas, and with the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS) as an external collaborator on the Summer University project.

She completed a one-year Jewish Studies program at Paideia – The European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden, as well as the Experiential Educators program at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, and the Senior Educators Cohort program of the M² Institute for Experiential Jewish Education.

How would you describe Jewish life in Belgrade? Is it easy or difficult to live a Jewish life there?

Living in Belgrade, I would describe Jewish life as mostly cultural and traditional. While the rabbi is Orthodox and there are some observant members, the majority of Jews are not religious in a strict sense. Jewish life is centred around holidays, traditions, and community gatherings. It feels very family-oriented, with people coming together for celebrations because that is what we grew up with. After the fall of communism in former Yugoslavia, Jewish community life

became more visible and meaningful again. Institutions gained importance and people began reconnecting with their identity. At the same time, the wars in the 1990s played a major role. During that period, Jewish communities became safe spaces, offering support and solidarity across the region. That created a strong sense of belonging and mutual responsibility that still shapes community life today. Alongside that, there remains a strong cultural dimension. Even people who do not consider themselves religious still attend major holidays like Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur because that is where their community is.

For me, being Jewish has generally felt easy. Most people do not interfere with my Jewish identity. However, things have shifted a bit since October 7th. Some people have become more cautious and less visible, choosing not to wear Jewish symbols or speak openly about their identity. At the same time, others have gone in the opposite direction and embraced their identity more openly. So, while it has become slightly more challenging, it is still not as difficult as in some Western European countries.

From a religious perspective, being observant is more complicated. There are no kosher stores, so keeping kashrut requires effort and adaptation.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday European life and when do you feel it the least? Did it change over time?

I don't really experience moments where I feel more or less Jewish. Being Jewish is simply part of who I am and it is constant. It has always been that way. From a young

age, I was curious and wanted to explore my identity. Over time, I tried different ways of engaging with Judaism, which helped me shape and deepen my understanding of it. My identity has evolved, but it has always been present.

However, things have changed since October 7th. There is a greater sense of awareness of my surroundings. I feel more alert. There was even a moment when I chose not to wear a hat with Hebrew letters after our office was vandalised. But that feeling did not last. I quickly realized that hiding my identity was not something I wanted to do. There is also a disconnect between how the community experiences antisemitism and how it is acknowledged publicly. Authorities often claim it is not a real issue, even though members of the community do feel it.

What do you think are the main challenges that Jews face today in Serbia?

Antisemitism is definitely one of the challenges, though its impact depends on one's social environment. In my own circles, I have not personally experienced it, but I know people who have had to distance themselves from friends or social groups because of reactions and attitudes after October 7th.

Another important challenge lies within the community itself. Internal dynamics, especially around leadership, can create tensions. Different visions for the community do not always align and sometimes it feels like personal interests or ego take precedence over the actual needs of the community. Beyond that, there are also smaller issues, things that could be improved over time to better support and develop Jewish life.

If you could imagine the community to be truly flourishing in 25 years, how would you see it? What would be different? But also, what tension do you think would still remain?

I imagine a future with many more opportunities for Jewish cultural and educational life. I would like to see more learning spaces where people can engage with Judaism beyond just social gatherings. For example, helping people understand how to lead a Pesach Seder at home or practice traditions independently, without relying entirely on a rabbi. A flourishing community would offer regular opportunities for learning, culture, and connection, allowing people to actively engage with their identity in different ways.

Could you tell me a story that shows a change for the better in your community's Jewish life?

One important positive change has been the election of a younger president and a younger board. After many years of leadership by older generations, bringing in people in their 30s to 50s has introduced new perspectives and energy. This generational shift has been significant because these are individuals who grew up within the community and understand its current needs.

Tell me how you contribute in fostering Jewish life.

On a local level, through Haver, I help organize programmes and learning opportunities for community members. These are often informal and educational settings where people can explore Judaism in accessible ways. On a regional level, we work across the former Yugoslavia to support community professionals, leaders and youth workers focusing on strengthening education, leadership and long-term development. On a broader European level, through organisations like Mem Global and EUJS, I contribute to empowering young adults to build and sustain Jewish communities. The goal is to help people create the kind of Jewish spaces they need, not just rely on existing institutional structures, but actively shape their own communal life.



MORRIS SAPORTA

Assistant to the President & Director of Special Projects, Jewish Community of Thessaloniki — Thessaloniki, Greece

Morris Saporta serves as Assistant to the President and Director of Special Projects at the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, one of Europe's most historically significant Jewish communities, with deep roots in Sephardic heritage. He has worked for the community for forty years, the last twenty-five as a paid employee, leading institutional coordination, community initiatives, and projects connected to cultural memory, heritage preservation, and international partnerships. He directs the community's summer camp and has been involved in security improvements and numerous communal initiatives. Though the community itself is Orthodox, he defines his Jewish identity as secular-traditional.

How would you describe Jewish life in Thessaloniki?

Excellent. Ours is one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world — around 3,000 years old. The community today organises around its school, synagogue, community centre and summer camp. We have a rabbi, a kosher butcher, kosher food at the community centre. We are around 1,500 people in a city of a million and a half.

Since October 2023 we have seen a significant wave of antisemitism — graffiti, some vandalism — though thankfully no physical attacks. The Greek government has been very supportive, providing substantial security measures. In March we held our annual silent march from the central square to the old train station — the route along which our community members were deported to Auschwitz. Despite pressure to cancel it this year, we proceeded, and it was peaceful and well received.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

It is not something that goes up and down. I am proud to be a Jew of Thessaloniki, and I do not feel I have to hide. The current situation — the war, the tensions with Iran — makes things more sensitive, but it does not disturb my Jewish way of life. I feel Jewish all the time.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

Assimilation and intermarriage are the main internal challenges — inevitable when you are 1,500 people living among a million and a half. The recent rise in antisemitic incidents is manageable, and we have strong support from the authorities. The deeper issue is demographic: maintaining a living community at our scale requires constant effort.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

I am honest: I am sceptical about the word flourishing. What I hope for is continuity — maintaining what we have. We work hard through informal education, our club, our summer camp to keep Jewish life alive for the next generation. Our elementary school enrolls non-Jewish children too, who become, in a way, ambassadors of our way of life in the wider city. A layer of antisemitism will always exist beneath the surface in Greece, which is a conservative Orthodox Christian society. That will not disappear.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

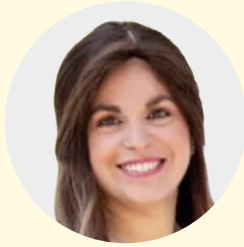
In the last three years we have begun participating in European Commission projects, and this has been transformative — giving us resources to improve community life here and also to support smaller Jewish communities nearby, in Larissa, Volos, Ioannina, Corfu and Rhodes. The most significant project is the new Holocaust Museum of Greece, currently under construction in Thessaloniki, with support from the German federal government, the Greek government, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and major private donors including Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla. For a community of our size, these are enormous undertakings, and the European framework has made them possible.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

Forty years of volunteering, the last twenty-five as an employee. Leading the summer camp, improving security, managing special projects. This has become my way of life. The small things that might seem minor to others — keeping the community centre running, making sure the camp happens every year — are what keep a community like ours alive.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

The European Commission must create more projects supporting and protecting Jewish communities across Europe. Communities vary enormously in size and resources, but the EU framework gives even the smallest ones the tools to sustain themselves, to preserve their heritage, and to connect with others. We only discovered some of these programmes recently — awareness and accessibility matter as much as the funding itself. I would ask policymakers to do more to ensure that communities like ours know what is available and can participate. It is genuinely vital for our survival.



NEHAMA-DINA UZAN

*Program director in the European Jewish Community Center (EJCC) —
Brussels, Belgium*

Nehama Dina Uzan was born in the United States to French parents, her father of Tunisian origin and her mother of Moroccan origin, who both grew up in France. She considers herself French, having grown up there.

She studied in Montreal, met her husband from Argentina, married in Buenos Aires and later returned to France, where she gave birth. She works as Program Director at the European Jewish Community Center in Brussels (EJCC), a role she initially took on for two years and has now held for over two decades.

She describes her Jewish identity as deeply rooted, preferring not to define herself using the term “religious,” though others might perceive her that way.

How do you describe your Jewish life in the city you live in? Is it easy or difficult?

It is not easy to live as a Jew in Brussels. It's not dramatically difficult, but it is clearly not easy, especially for families. The environment often pushes you to hide visible signs of your Jewish identity. Even if I personally do not hide, I remain constantly aware that being openly Jewish can make others uncomfortable. I experienced this recently when a friend asked me to hide a Jewish magazine in my bag so people wouldn't see it. I did it, but I find that situation deeply problematic, even pathetic. Beyond that, there are structural challenges: limited Jewish spaces, few restaurants, few Jewish school and youth options. My own children have been unhappy living here and have chosen to leave as soon as they could.

When do you feel most or least Jewish? Has this changed over time?

Over time, I have become more and more vocal about my Jewish identity. I often introduce myself directly by saying, “Hi, I'm Nechama, I'm Jewish.” While many people try to hide their identity, I do the opposite. In my professional life, I feel very Jewish as I act as an ambassador, building community and promoting Jewish culture and dialogue. At the same time, I feel a deep, intimate connection to my Jewish identity in private moments, especially when I light Shabbat candles. That act connects me to thousands of years of Jewish tradition and gives me a profound sense of continuity.

What are the main challenges Jews face today in your city and country?

The biggest challenge is fear for safety, which has become so central that it risks defining Jewish identity itself. Being Jewish is increasingly associated with risk, hiding and security concerns. This is extremely damaging because it affects how people raise their children and whether they feel comfortable expressing their Jewish identity. However, I believe the deeper issue is internal: many Jews struggle with their own identity and do not feel fully comfortable with it. If you asked most Jews whether their lives would be easier if they were not Jewish, many would say yes. This internal discomfort is, to me, even more dangerous than external threats. We should not respond to antisemitism by hiding, but by strengthening identity and creating a society where people understand who we are.

What would a flourishing Jewish life look like in 25 years, and what tensions would remain?

A flourishing Jewish life would be one where security is no longer omnipresent: where you can enter a synagogue, a school, or a kosher restaurant freely, without barriers or fear. It would be a society where wearing Jewish symbols is completely normal and where Jews are fully integrated into public life without suspicion or accusations of dual loyalty. There should also be a clear distinction between Jewish identity and Israeli politics, without expecting Jews to justify the actions of a government they do not vote for. However, even in such a future, trauma will remain. The Holocaust and October 7th (2023) are events that will continue to shape behaviors and reflexes, especially around security, and it will take a long time to move beyond that.

Can you share a positive change in your community?

I see a growing desire among Jews to learn more about their own identity. There is a real thirst for knowledge and engagement. For example, the strong participation in Jewish programmes or the increasing demand from schools and Jewish media for Jewish education shows that people want to reconnect and deepen their understanding. This gives me hope that we are moving in the right direction.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

For me, fostering Jewish life is not about fighting antisemitism directly. I believe “you don’t fight darkness with a stick, you fight darkness with a candle.” My work for the past 22 years has focused on strengthening Jewish life itself through culture, education, dialogue, and acts of solidarity. Acting Jewish means living according to values, helping others regardless of their background, and being present where

needed. What concerns me most is not antisemitism, but whether Jews feel aligned with their own values and identity. That is what drives my work and my personal commitment, which often goes beyond my professional role.

Is there anything important you would like to add?

I believe the European Commission has an important role to play, but its impact is not always well understood by Jewish communities. Given the security dimension of Jewish life, there is an opportunity for greater involvement. More resources and support should be directed toward strengthening Jewish life across Europe, as this is essential for the future of these communities.



NOEMI DI SEGNI

President, Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI) — Rome, Italy

Noemi Di Segni, born in Jerusalem in 1969 and based in Rome, is the elected President of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI), serving from 2016 to 2020 and again from 2021 to 2025. She also heads the President's Office and International Affairs at Italy's national body for chartered accountants. She sits on the executive committees of the World Jewish Congress and European Jewish Congress, chairs several Jewish foundations, and leads initiatives on interreligious dialogue, Shoah memory, heritage preservation, and the fight against antisemitism. She identifies as religious.

How would you describe Jewish life in Rome?

The answer splits into layers. In a large city like Rome you have the full range of services — kosher food, synagogues, all the religious necessities — but the city itself makes it hard to access them. Shabbat and holidays require planning around where you live. In smaller communities across Italy the opposite problem applies: services simply don't exist locally, and everything — the mohel, the rabbi, the kosher food — must be brought in from outside.

Then there is the political layer. It has become increasingly dangerous to show externally that you are Jewish. People don't wear kippot, don't display mezuzot, keep their Jewish life as invisible as possible. This is the opposite of religious freedom. If you see someone walking with a kippah, you admire them — but you also think they're a little crazy to take the risk. That compression of basic constitutional freedoms is the defining challenge of recent years.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

Most Jewish during Shabbat and the holidays: that sense of living in a cloud, of a moment that is deeply special even when everyone around you is indifferent to it. Particularly when it is shared: the Hanukkah lighting on Piazza Barberini, where community members and public figures gather together in an open square in the centre of Rome, is one of those moments.

Least Jewish when I have to conceal it. Though you are right that there is also a kind of pride in that — you are doing it because it matters, even if you have to be careful about how. Being Jewish is never not part of my life. It is not only religion. It is belonging to a people, to a historical chain of generations, to something that others cannot easily understand, and sometimes it is better simply to live it than to explain it.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

Security and freedom, first. Then the question of what a community actually is. Is it only a religious infrastructure — synagogue, rabbi, religious rites — or is it also a home for the full range of human difficulty? Adolescents navigating drugs and alcohol; elderly people facing loneliness; young people struggling to find their footing. Should the Jewish community be there for all of that? I think yes, but it is a real challenge to organise and resource. And then Jewish education: what we teach, what we include, how we build a school that is academically excellent and genuinely Jewish.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

Communities more networked with each other, less isolated, so that a young person moving between cities, or between countries, finds a community that can receive them. In 25 years people will not spend their whole lives in one place. Communities need to adapt to that reality. The national and European dimensions matter more than they did.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

Two things. A group of young people has begun travelling on Shabbat to the smallest Jewish communities across Italy — places with five or ten people — bringing them together and building a network between communities that would otherwise never meet. The project is called *Nos'ei Or* — roughly, ‘carrier of light.’ It has been running for about two years and the enthusiasm is remarkable.

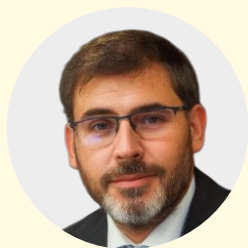
And our online Ulpan, where Hebrew is taught as an identity and not just a language; it has grown beyond anything we expected, drawing people from across Italy into what has become its own small community of learners.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

Something I care about deeply: visiting elderly people regularly, in person. Not once a year — every month. Helping with basic administration, sitting with them, talking. It costs nothing and it means everything to them. We have a serious shortage of organised voluntary service in Jewish communities, people who want to give but don't want institutional roles, elections, competition. Building that culture of giving without the institutional overhead is something I think about a lot.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

Italian Jewry is not Ashkenazi, not Sephardi... it is its own thing, with its own history, liturgy, and culture, and it is worth understanding in its specificity. More broadly: Jewish communities have something to offer the wider society — not just as a minority to be protected, but as a source of knowledge, values, pedagogy, and art that others can genuinely learn from. Finding the balance between living Jewish life for ourselves and sharing it outward with the world around us — that is the work.



PETR PAPOUŠEK

*President, Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic —
Olomouc & Prague*

Petr Papoušek was born in Olomouc in 1977. He studied macroeconomics and spent an academic year at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, later pursuing Jewish studies at the Paideia European Institute for Jewish Studies in Stockholm. Since 2004 he has served as President of the Jewish Community of Olomouc. Since 2012 he has been President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic, re-elected in 2016, 2020, and 2024. On the international stage, he serves as Vice President of the World Jewish Congress Executive Board and Treasurer of the European Jewish Congress Executive Board.

How would you describe Jewish life in your city?

I'm in a dual role — I lead a small community in Olomouc and also represent Jewish communities at the national level. In Olomouc, we have around 150 members. Daily religious life is limited, but the community is stable and active. We meet regularly every two weeks, with around 40 people on Friday evenings and 25 on Saturdays. Larger events, such as Passover, bring significantly higher attendance. Next week we have a Bar Mitzvah.

In Prague, Jewish life is more developed, with several congregations, institutions, and a Jewish school. Access to kosher food and services is also easier there.

Overall, Jews in the Czech Republic still feel relatively comfortable and safe in their daily lives. The environment remains generally supportive, and Jewish life can

be practiced openly. Prague is also a major destination for Israeli visitors, and Hebrew is commonly heard in the streets, especially in central areas.

At the same time, we are observing certain changes. Antisemitic rhetoric online is becoming increasingly visible in the public space, and tensions linked to developments in the Middle East are more noticeable than before. This often reflects a newer form of antisemitism, more associated with parts of the political left, which in many cases is replacing previously more common far-right and conspiracy-driven narratives. This form of antisemitism is also becoming more aggressive. Jewish cemeteries have been vandalized with my name and accusations, and “Free Palestine” slogans have appeared in front of or on synagogues — and not to mention a serious terrorist attack, when a group of left activists set fire to a factory they believed was cooperating with Israel, although its production was in fact destined for Ukraine — incidents that were not present before October 7th. While the scale remains relatively limited compared to Western Europe, this is a trend we monitor closely. We see it as a serious risk for the future, and it is important to address it clearly and actively.

When do you feel most and least Jewish?

My whole life revolves around Jewish life — in a way, I am a professional Jew. So it's not something I consciously reflect on. But if I had to answer: I feel most connected to my Jewish identity on Shabbat, in the synagogue or at the Shabbat table. I feel it least when I'm playing cards with my non-Jewish friends.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

The main challenge in the Czech Republic is demographic. The Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic records around 3,000 registered members within its organizations, while the broader circle of people identifying as Jewish could be estimated at approximately 10,000. Long-term sustainability depends on maintaining and strengthening this identity across generations.

Assimilation remains a factor, and Jewish immigration to Czechia is relatively low. At the same time, there is an Israeli community in Prague, along with a modest increase in Israelis relocating to the Czech Republic since October 2023. This brings both opportunities and a need to ensure cooperation and potential integration into existing community structures. There are also many unaffiliated Jews whom we need to reach.

On a global level, key challenges include security concerns and the rapid rise of antisemitism.

If Jewish life were flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

It is realistic to expect smaller communities in terms of size. The key indicator of success will be the level of engagement. A smaller but active and well-connected community can remain sustainable.

An equally important factor will be how effectively different groups — including newcomers — are integrated into a shared communal framework.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

Olomouc is a good example. During the communist period, the community was very small and met only occasionally. After 1989,

it gradually rebuilt its infrastructure and activities. Today, it has regular gatherings, functioning facilities, and a growing level of participation, including life-cycle events that were previously rare. There is a Bar Mitzvah next week — something that had not taken place there for decades.

I myself did not know I was Jewish until the age of 13. My grandparents, both Auschwitz survivors, did not speak about it until after 1989. This reflects a broader shift from silence during communist regime to a more open and active Jewish identity.

At the national level, initiatives such as Limud — a multi-day educational and community event for families with children — as well as children's camps show strong demand. Participation capacity is reached almost immediately after registration opens, which indicates clear interest in community life.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

Support mechanisms exist, but they are often difficult to access in practice. Simplifying funding procedures and making them more flexible would significantly improve their impact, especially for smaller communities.

At the same time, addressing antisemitism requires not only policy frameworks but also timely and practical implementation. In situations where risks are increasing, real action is essential.

Fostering Jewish life should be seen as an integral part of these efforts. At the same time, many of these policies are not implemented at the national level, so it is important that the European Union actively encourages and pushes member states to take responsibility and act in a consistent and effective way.



ROBERT WALTL

Actor, Theatre Director & Cultural Manager; Director, Jewish Cultural Center Ljubljana; Co-Founder, Liberal Jewish Community of Slovenia — Ljubljana, Slovenia

Robert Walzl (born 1965) is a Slovenian actor, theatre director, and cultural manager. In 2013 he founded the Jewish Cultural Center in Ljubljana, the only Jewish cultural institution in Slovenia, serving as a hub for Jewish life, education, and interfaith dialogue. He initiated the Stolpersteine project in Slovenia and serves on the Slovenian delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). He came to Jewish life as an adult after discovering his grandmother was Jewish, and later underwent conversion in Frankfurt.

How would you describe Jewish life in Ljubljana?

In one word: very difficult. Especially after October 7th, we became a target of antisemitism. The narrative in media and public life is very negative — and because we are so small, perhaps 150 to 200 people in all of Slovenia, people cannot see the difference between Israeli, Jewish, Israeli politics, and the local Jewish community. There is no Israeli embassy in Slovenia. So all projections from what is happening in Israel go directly to us. We represent, in one moment, Israel. We represent all the bad that is happening in the Middle East.

And it is very difficult also because we have no systematic support from the government — no financial support, not for the Jewish community, not for the Jewish Culture Center. We live from donations and enthusiasm.

When do you feel most Jewish, and when the least?

Because of antisemitism, I feel more and more Jewish. Before, I thought of myself

as Slovenian-Jewish. Now I am more and more a Jew from Slovenia. At one point I was not sure whether to continue the work at the Jewish Center — we had protests in front of the building, swastikas on the door, boycotts on social media. It was really hardcore. It still is. But after a few months I realised: this is what it is. I will take this situation and do my best. October 7th changed everything. Before it I felt more Slovenian. After it I feel more Jewish.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

The conflation of Jewish identity with Israeli politics is the central problem. Last July, on the same Shabbat, two demonstrations converged on Ljubljana — neo-Nazis from one street, pro-Palestinian demonstrators from the other. Far-right and far-left antisemitism arrived simultaneously, at the synagogue door.

On paper, Slovenia looks fine. We have the IHRA definition. We have a Council for Fighting Antisemitism — I am a member. But behind the paper there is no financial structure, no action plan, no consistent implementation. The government says our House of Tolerance Festival is the most important event in Slovenia fighting antisemitism — and gives us no money for it. Many schools that used to come to us no longer come. We are going backwards.

If Jewish life were flourishing in Slovenia in 25 years, what would it look like?

When school groups visit, my first question is: do you know any Jews? The answer is always no — you are the first one. That is the floor we start from.

What I hope for in 25 years: that people will know their own Jewish history. A first-ever core exhibition about Jewish life in Slovenia — more than a thousand years of presence. A financially sustainable centre, with two or three staff, able to keep its doors open when I am not here. Right now, if I am away, no one can give a tour. What I fear is that at some point I will not be able to continue, and there will simply be no Jewish life in Slovenia. That possibility is real.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

Ten years ago, if you asked anyone in Ljubljana about Jewish life, the answer was: there are no Jews in Slovenia. Today that has changed — through the Stolpersteine, through the Festival of Tolerance, through the schools that began coming to the synagogue.

And something I did not expect: after October 7th, even with the protests and the vandalism, more young people came to the community, not fewer — discovering Jewish ancestry they had not known about. Even in this climate, there is curiosity, there is hunger. I recently completed a photo portrait project of the Jewish community of Slovenia. The title: we are still here. That is the story.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

There are good ideas and good paperwork. But if behind them there is no real pressure on national governments, nothing will change. How is it possible that antisemitism exists in Arab countries where there are no Jews? Antisemitism does not need Jews. It needs ignorance and politics.

The EU must move beyond declarations — real action plans, real financial structures, real consequences for governments that do nothing. Communities like ours, with one center and a few people, try to do the work of communities ten times our size. For the

smallest communities, the gap between what is written in Brussels and what exists on the ground is enormous. And for us, that gap is existential.



ROMAN SALYUTOV

*Chairman, Jewish Forum of the CDU North Rhine-Westphalia & Musician
— Bergisch Gladbach, Germany*

Born in Leningrad in 1984, Roman Salyutov came to Germany as part of the post-1990 Russian-Jewish immigration. Trained at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and Cologne's Hochschule für Musik und Tanz, with a PhD from the University of Paderborn, he has been Chief Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of Bergisch Gladbach since 2013 and founded the German-Israeli Yachad Chamber Orchestra in 2018. He chairs the Jewish Forum of the CDU in North Rhine-Westphalia, focusing on combating antisemitism, and co-founded a solidarity partnership with Kibbutz Nir Oz. He identifies as religious and observant, rooted in religion, culture, and history.

How would you describe Jewish life in Bergisch Gladbach?

We have a small community here, mostly immigrants from the former Soviet Union, like me, not very religious, not visibly Jewish on the street. Everybody is scared. I try not to take unnecessary risks myself: one of our most important commandments is not to endanger your life without reason. I'm active enough in public life through politics and culture, so I don't need to add to that by being visibly Jewish on the street.

Kosher food requires a trip to Cologne or Frankfurt, but it's manageable. The deeper issue is the fear. We don't experience antisemitism here the way you do in Berlin or Paris, partly because there is so little visible Jewish life to target. That is not a comfort. You can have no Jewish population at all and still be deeply antisemitic, as many countries demonstrate.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

Since becoming more observant, it's constant. Home is a sacred place: Jewish life flows through it entirely. Outside the home, my level of activity varies depending on what is happening around me, but the underlying identity doesn't waver. I don't have periods of feeling more or less Jewish. What changes is how actively I am called to respond to events.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

Antisemitism. It is the defining problem, and it will determine the future of Jewish life here — not only in my city, but across Germany and Europe. We call ourselves a free society, but a free society is one where Jews can wear a kippah or a Magen David anywhere without fear. We are not there. Many Jews I know, religious and secular alike, are now seriously considering leaving Europe for Israel. Not because Israel is without danger, but because in Israel you can be Jewish 24 hours a day without constantly monitoring yourself, checking what you show, what you reveal. That constant self-control is not freedom.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

I won't pretend to be optimistic about predicting the future. The day after October 7th, there were celebrations in Berlin. I didn't think that was possible in Europe after 1945. Everything can change from one day to the next. I try to project a possible better future, but I don't have many reasons right now for confidence about what 25 years looks like.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

Since October 7th, something has shifted. Many Jews who had spent years trying to be invisible, to not be perceived as Jewish, understood that this was no longer a viable strategy. Not everyone, but many. They came to the conclusion that we need to be more present: in politics, in institutions, in public life. In the Jewish Forum, we actively encourage this. Come to us, get involved... staying unseen is not a path to a flourishing Jewish future. That new activism, born out of tragedy, is one of the genuinely positive things to have emerged from recent years.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

Through politics, through the Jewish Forum, by pushing Jewish concerns into the mainstream of a major party, engaging with antisemitism at every level from schools to the street. And through music. I research and perform works by Jewish composers who were murdered or forced into exile in the 20th century: entirely forgotten names, pianists, violinists, conductors, composers. We bring their work back to public audiences, in Germany and across Eastern Europe. Music is a language that crosses every barrier. If I speak no French and you speak no German, we can still share Beethoven. That is the medium through which I try to build bridges between Jewish and European culture, not as separate things, but as the single, inseparable history they actually are.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

Antisemitism is not a Jewish problem. It begins with Jews but it never ends with Jews. Combating it is a common task for Jews and non-Jews alike, a question of whether we can call ourselves a human civilisation or a barbaric one. I try to make this clear to non-Jews first of all: this is not

a minority issue. It is a question about the nature of a free, open, democratic society. If we cannot protect Jews, we cannot protect anyone.



RUTH OUAZANA BARER

Founder of Limoud France and of “Les Racines de Demain” — Lyon, France

Ruth Ouazana Barer works as a freelancer and is primarily active in an NGO she co-founded with her husband Michaël, Les Racines de Demain (“The Roots of Tomorrow”), which aims to break down barriers, ignorance and prejudice while fostering understanding and coexistence amongst different religions and communities in France. She is also Head of the training center “Dialogos France,” teaches Judaism at the Catholic University of Lyon, and serves as vice-president of the Christian-Jewish Friendship of Lyon and its region.

In 2005, she founded Limoud France and represented Jewish Scouts worldwide for 14 years, first as International Commissioner of the French Jewish Scouts (EEIF) and later as General Secretary of the International Forum of Jewish Scouts (IFJS).

She has lived in the United Kingdom, Mexico, and Israel and since 2016 has been based in Lyon, France, where she lives with her husband and his four children. From a traditional orthodox background, she identifies as conservative/modern Orthodox while embracing a broad and inclusive vision of community.

How would you describe Jewish life in Lyon? Is it easy or difficult to live a Jewish life there?

I would say that it is quite easy to live a Jewish life in Lyon. When considering the wider Lyon area, including Villeurbanne, there is a significant Jewish population of around 30,000 people. In Villeurbanne in particular, Jews represent nearly 15% of the population against 0.6% for France as a whole), which contributes to a strong and visible community. There are several synagogues of different denominations, including Orthodox, Reform and Lubavitch and overall Jewish life is thriving. In daily

life, we can express our identity quite openly. For example, during the High Holidays, my family and I walk to synagogue dressed traditionally and we do not feel the need to hide. However, this feeling is still accompanied by vigilance. There are still incidents that remind us of tensions and antisemitism, so while life is good, we remain aware of potential risks.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday European life? And when do you feel it the least? Has this feeling changed over time?

I feel most Jewish in several contexts, all of which are connected to learning, sharing and transmission. When I am in the synagogue, I deepen my own understanding through prayer and study. When I am involved in gatherings such as Limoud, I help other Jews explore their identity and knowledge. In my interfaith work, I also feel strongly Jewish because I am explaining Judaism to non-Jews and creating opportunities for dialogue. For me, being Jewish is closely linked to this continuous process of learning and transmitting. I believe that in order to give, I must first nourish myself, both spiritually and intellectually. This has always been part of who I am. From a young age, I felt proud to be Jewish and eager to share that identity. Over time, this sense of responsibility has grown, especially through my international and interfaith engagements. I came to understand that in order to speak confidently about Judaism, we all needed a deeper understanding of our own identity, which led me to create Limoud in France.

What do you think are the main challenges Jews face today in Lyon and more broadly in France?

One of the main challenges is assimilation, which can lead to a loss of identity and a

weakening of connection to Jewish life. While recent events have led some people to reconnect with their Jewish identity, it is unfortunate that this often happens in reaction to external events rather than through an appreciation of the richness of Judaism itself. Another significant challenge is what I would call “communitarism”, or the tendency to isolate ourselves. This creates a form of separation that prevents mutual understanding and weakens social cohesion. I believe it is essential for Jews to remain fully engaged within French society. In addition, antisemitism remains an issue and is often expressed through anti-Zionism. The current political climate, including the rise of the far-left reinforces the need to fight prejudices through bringing knowledge and dialogue.

If Jewish life was to look truly flourishing in 25 years, what would be different from now? And what tension do you think would remain?

For Jewish life to truly flourish, I believe it is essential that Jews have a strong and confident understanding of their multiple identity. This would help address both assimilation and isolation. A flourishing future would include more initiatives that allow Jews to learn about themselves and embrace the diversity of their own community, such as the expansion of programmes like Limmud across France and Europe. It would also require greater inclusivity within Jewish institutions and recognition of diverse forms of Jewish identity. In my eyes, the Jewish identity includes a strong sense of belonging to the country where we live and being active as an engaged citizen, in our country and in Europe.

Could you tell me a story that shows a change for the better in your community’s Jewish life?

For me, Limoud represents a powerful example of positive change. Each year, I see new people joining, discovering the experience and engaging themselves. During our most recent event, I felt deeply moved seeing hundreds of people gathered

together, singing and learning, regardless of their background or level of observance. The atmosphere was one of unity and joy. Over the years, thousands of people have participated and many carry this experience back into their own communities. Limoud has created a space where diversity is embraced and where individuals are empowered to become active contributors both to Jewish life and active as citizens.

Can you tell me how you contribute to fostering Jewish life in Lyon and France?

I contribute in several ways, both within the Jewish community and beyond it. Through Limoud, I created opportunities for Jews to learn about themselves and strengthen. In parallel, through my organisation Les Racines de Demain, I work with non-Jews to foster understanding of Judaism and reduce fear or misconceptions. This includes opening the Great Synagogue of Lyon to visitors and engaging with thousands of students each year. I believe it is also essential to build bridges with the society as a whole and other cultures. I do it by highlighting connections between religions, cultures and State, and by enhancing a shared narrative, in the respect of our differences. I finish all my interventions by this simple sentence. “If you have one thing to keep in mind from all what I said : the Other is a chance. A chance to grow, to discover who is the other, and also to better understand yourself. So go and speak with the one you don’t know. The Other is a chance.

Is there anything important that we have not discussed, you would like to say?

I would conclude with a principle that guides my actions, drawn from Pirkei Avot: “If I am not for myself, who is for me? If only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?.



SABINA GRACE

CEO and a board member of the Jewish community of Latvia — Riga, Latvia

Sabina Grace lives in Riga, Latvia, where she works within the Riga Jewish community as Acting CEO and a board member. She describes herself as secular, while maintaining a strong connection to Jewish traditions and the Jewish calendar.

She has long been actively involved in the local Jewish community, first as a participant and later as a youth leader and volunteer. This sustained engagement has shaped her strong sense of belonging and deep commitment to community life.

Her professional career in the Jewish world began in 2017, when she joined the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) as Program Manager for the Baltics, supporting and overseeing Jewish community programs across the region.

In 2020, she joined the Riga Jewish Community team as Chief Development Officer, focusing on outreach, programming, and fundraising, and later led the community's Welfare Center. Today, as CEO of the Riga Jewish Community, she oversees its key areas, working across teams to support long-term development, strengthen intergenerational connections, and create opportunities for broader community engagement and participation.

How would you describe Jewish life in Riga? Is it difficult or easy to live a Jewish life there?

I would say that it is quite comfortable to live a Jewish life in Riga, because we have all the necessary structures in place. There are Jewish kindergartens, schools with different educational approaches and synagogues, which makes it possible to organise one's life around Jewish traditions and the Jewish calendar. The community itself plays a central role in connecting these elements and creating programmes for all

age groups, from young children to older generations. What I value most is the strong sense of belonging that exists. For example, during community weekends, people from all generations come together to learn, share experiences, and build meaningful connections. We also have a social centre that provides support during difficult times, ensuring that no one feels alone. In addition, museum work contributes to preserving Jewish identity and raising awareness beyond the community. Altogether, this creates not just a set of institutions, but a complete environment in which Jewish life can be experienced at every stage.

Could you remind me how many Jews live in Riga and in the whole country and whether the war in Ukraine has had an impact in terms of Jewish migration to Latvia?

In Latvia, the Jewish population is estimated to be between 8,000 and 12,000 people, with the majority living in Riga. It is difficult to determine an exact number, as not everyone formally identifies or appears in official statistics. During the war in Ukraine, Latvia mainly served as a transit country. Many Ukrainian Jews stayed only briefly before moving on to other European countries, often for economic reasons. As a result, there has not been a significant long-term increase in the Jewish population in Latvia.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday European life and when do you feel it the least? Has this feeling changed over time?

I feel most connected to my Jewish identity through my work, as I am involved in the community on a daily basis. This connection, however, began much earlier, through my participation in youth programmes and later as a youth leader. These experiences gave me a strong sense of belonging and shaped my

commitment to remain involved. Growing up as a Soviet Jew, I did not receive much Jewish education at home, but I always knew I was Jewish. Over time, particularly through community engagement, this identity became stronger and more meaningful. I also feel a strong sense of Jewish identity when participating in international conferences, where Jewish professionals and leaders from different countries come together. Interestingly, I sometimes feel less Jewish when I am in Israel. Although I have a deep emotional connection to the country, being there does not always create the same sense of belonging as in the diaspora. In the diaspora, Jewish identity is often built through conscious effort and engagement, whereas in Israel it is more naturally embedded in everyday life. This has shown me that Jewish identity is complex and not solely defined by geography.

What are, according to you, the main challenges Jews face today in Riga and Latvia as a whole?

One of the challenges is related to antisemitism and security, although the situation in Latvia remains relatively stable compared to other parts of Europe. We benefit from good cooperation with the authorities and public recognition, which is very important. There have been some isolated incidents, such as vandalism at community or memorial sites, but no direct harm to individuals. Nevertheless, we remain vigilant and aware that the situation can evolve. Another major challenge is demographic. Many young people leave Latvia for studies or economic opportunities abroad, which affects the long-term sustainability and engagement of the community.

If Jewish life was truly flourishing in 25 years, what do you think would be different from now? And what tension would still remain?

For me, a flourishing Jewish community is one in which every individual can find their place. It is not about numbers, but about meaningful engagement and a genuine sense of belonging. The key element is continuity—ensuring that people remain connected throughout all stages of life, from childhood to adulthood. If this continuity is

achieved, the community can remain vibrant and sustainable. At the same time, diversity of perspectives will always exist, and I see this as something positive rather than a tension. Ideally, security would no longer be a central concern, allowing the community to focus more on growth and development.

Could you please tell me a story that shows a change for the better in your community's Jewish life?

One of the most meaningful developments has been the growth of our youth movement. In a relatively short time, we have created a strong group of young people who truly feel that the community is their home. They do not simply attend programmes; they come to be together and to belong. They take ownership of their space and activities, and we support them through education, leadership development, and training. Over time, they pass on this experience to younger children, creating a natural sense of continuity. What is particularly powerful is how naturally they describe the community as a place where they feel safe and connected. Even when they leave Latvia to study abroad, they continue their Jewish journey, which shows that a strong foundation remains with them wherever they go.

Could you tell me how you personally contribute to fostering Jewish life?

In my role, I contribute to supporting and developing different aspects of community life, from early childhood to youth, families, and older generations. The aim is to ensure continuity and create opportunities for people to become actively involved. This is very much a collective effort, involving professionals, volunteers, and community leaders. For me, it is essential that individuals feel that this is their space, a place where they truly belong. When people feel connected and empowered, they are more likely to remain engaged and contribute over time. What makes a real difference is this shared responsibility across all levels of the community, which ultimately strengthens and sustains Jewish life.



SANJA ZORIČIĆ TABAKOVIĆ

Representative of the Jewish National Minority of the City of Zagreb & Founder and Director, Shoah Academy — Zagreb, Croatia

Sanja Zoričić Tabaković was born on 31 March 1950 in Zagreb, the daughter of Ivo Zoričić, of Croatian descent, and Vera Zoričić, born Schwabenitz, who was Jewish and raised in a traditional Jewish family. Her mother's wartime experiences profoundly shaped her. She studied law at the Faculty of Law in Zagreb, and worked throughout her professional career as a judge, ultimately at the High Misdemeanor Court of the Republic of Croatia. Her great-grandfather, Rabbi Simon Hessel, was a prominent rabbi in Koprivnica in the early 20th century. Since 2003, she has been repeatedly re-elected as Representative of the Jewish National Minority of the City of Zagreb. She is the founder and leader of the Shoah Academy, established by the Jewish Community Zagreb in 2012, through whose programmes over 30,000 students from Croatia have participated in Holocaust and human rights education.

How would you describe Jewish life in Zagreb?

Most Jewish people after the Second World War lost their religious practice — there are so many mixed marriages, and very few today are religious. We don't have a synagogue as such; we have a temple inside the Jewish community, we have a minyan, we celebrate all the holidays together, and we have a rabbi. But we don't have a mikveh.

In Zagreb before the war there were 12,000 Jews — about seven percent of the city's citizens. Today we have perhaps 1,500 to 2,000 in all of Croatia, if we are optimistic. Eighty percent of Croatian Jews were killed in the Holocaust. That emptiness is still here.

When do you feel most Jewish?

I have felt Jewish all my life. I went to a Jewish kindergarten. I spent every summer at Jewish camps in Yugoslavia. My friends

were Jewish, my parents' friends were Jews. The feeling is the same today as it was then — it has not changed.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

The numbers. That is the main challenge. And the state tolerates us — but tolerating is not supporting. There are no stimulants, no encouragement.

When Croatia chaired the IHRA in 2023, they did not involve the Jewish community in any way, in any event. We proposed that the government and parliament host a Shoah Academy seminar — they did not answer. Yom HaShoah passed. Still nothing.

There is also something deeper. In Croatia today, there is no museum in the entire country that addresses the twentieth century. None. No information, no exhibition, no institution that shows what happened here between 1939 and 1945 — the Independent State of Croatia, the Jasenovac camp, the Holocaust. The atmosphere and the Ministry of Culture, I think, decide this. I organised a conference about it — with experts from Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia and Auschwitz. A historian at Zagreb University discovered the gap almost by accident, while doing research. It is extraordinary that this is where we are.

This is the reason I run the Shoah Academy. I don't believe there is a Jewish future here — the numbers are too small. But I believe the Croatian people must know about the Jewish people who once lived here.

If Jewish life were flourishing in Zagreb in 25 years, what would it look like?

I don't know what to say, really. I think we will continue doing what we do — we are

very active in culture, we publish books, we hold exhibitions, we organise panels. But it is not enough to survive as a community. We have very little. The more there is, the better. But right now there is a vacuum.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

I can't say things are better. But we continue. We organise seminars, we publish, we bring experts from abroad, we build connections with NGOs — although some of those NGO friendships have become complicated since October 7th. People who were our friends are now in a different place. We don't know what to do with that.

What I can say: our events are for both Jews and non-Jews. We have a literary and cultural association — Freiburger — open to the public. The conference about the museums was held in a hotel, open to everyone. This matters. People come. Non-Jews come to hear, to learn. That is something worth continuing.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

Come to Zagreb. We have a small museum of Judaica and a very good exhibition about Jewish life before the war, during the war, and after — in English and in Croatian. It is panels, easy to transport. Maybe the European Commission would like to see it, or host it.

And I would say this: the situation in Croatia is difficult not because the state is against us, but because indifference is its own problem. Being tolerated is not the same as being supported. When the Holocaust disappears from the museums, when the government does not answer, when you are not consulted for the construction of a Holocaust memorial in your own city — these things accumulate. Europe can help by insisting that its member states do more than tolerate.



SCHLOMO HOFMEISTER

Community Rabbi of Vienna — Vienna, Austria

Schlomo Hofmeister (born 1975, Munich) has been the Community Rabbi of Vienna since 2008. He is a board member of the Conference of European Rabbis, the European Council of Religious Leaders, and the Muslim-Jewish Leadership Council.

How would you describe Jewish life in Vienna?

Compared to any other community in Europe — and I know also North America — to live a religious Jewish life in Vienna is comparably easy. We have a small but very active community with a huge infrastructure. We have kosher butcher shops, supermarkets, five mikvehs for men alone, five different Jewish schools covering the entire spectrum from secular to religious, kosher food in hospitals, hotels that can cater kosher meals for tourists. There is no aspect of religious Jewish life which cannot be practiced in Vienna with complete ease. Vienna is also very diverse. If you consider yourself Hasidic or not Hasidic, Sephardi or Ashkenazi, everyone can find exactly what they need. We have a community of around 8,000 members — and 23 synagogues.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

The most Jewish I feel when I'm in synagogue — every day, in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening. The least I feel it when I'm standing at the ticket counter to buy a train fare or at the municipality office to get some paper.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

The main challenge is to remain honest towards Jewish identity and yet not fall into the trap of debates on the Middle

East conflict, which is being imported into Europe on a very wide social level. Discussions about Israeli politics make it very difficult sometimes — it's big challenge. But there is also a structural challenge which is widely underestimated: most Jewish communities in Europe are represented at the political and institutional level by secular Jews who themselves don't practice Judaism — and who in that sense misrepresent what Jewish life is about. There is no bad will on either side. It's simply that secular community leaders over-emphasize their own definition of Jewish identity and neglect what Jews as a religious community need. For any other religious community, their representatives will represent the religious part. With Jewish communities it's different — and state institutions as well as the media do therefore often draw the wrong conclusions and don't fully understand the reality of Jewish religious life.

If Jewish life were truly flourishing in 25 years, what would it look like?

Certain tensions regarding religious practice will always remain — we have had those tensions for 2,300 years, ever since the Greeks came to the Holy Land. That won't change.

But the hope is that society will realize that religious practice is not a threat — that it is much more compatible with Western values than most secular people assume - gentiles as well as Jews! Compared to other European countries, we are in a very good place in Austria already. The respect, the appreciation, and the legal guarantees for religious practice couldn't be much better. But this is not representing Europe. When I think about Scandinavian countries, about debates currently underway in the UK, about the ongoing tensions around religious practice

in France — for Jewish life to flourish all over Europe, it would not harm to adopt the Austrian model, let's put it that way.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

When I came to Vienna 18 years ago, in 95% of weddings within the Jewish community, the couple moved to wherever the outside spouse came from — Antwerp, London, New York, Jerusalem. Today about 80% of newlywed couples settle in Vienna, even if the spouse comes from Jerusalem or New York. That started changing about 10 years ago.

And it's also getting harder and harder to get a space in the Jewish kindergarten. Even as they open more groups, we have so many children that it's a challenge to have enough spaces. Demographically, the community is growing.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

My daily work consists of making sure that Jews from the entire spectrum — from secular to religious — know, experience and feel that the Jewish community is there for them in whatever situation they face. For secular Jews, Jewish identity still exists; it's different from other religions where a secular person may simply drift away. Jews can be very secular and still be very Jewish in their identity. It's our responsibility to be there for all of them.

The second part of my work is external — building bridges with other religious communities and state institutions, because the perception of the Jewish community by the outside world is crucial. A Jewish community can never function properly if the rabbis only take care of internal issues and the lay leadership are the only ones known to the outside world. I could name communities across Europe where that's the case — and in those places, religious Jewish life ceases to exist.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

It's important to strengthen the understanding that Jewish life in Europe is an indigenous part of European culture. It must not simply be identified with Israeli politics or even confused with Israeli identity. That distinction is critical but also very difficult — for many Jews in Europe, and for non-Jewish institutions when they look at Jews as well. It happens constantly to me, even at the political level, that I am addressed in small talk settings as if Netanyahu was my prime minister. I am not representing Israelis. I am representing the Jewish community of Vienna. As much as we all feel connected to Israel and Israeli society —that's all very clear — when I am spoken to as if I represent a foreign government, that is symptomatic of a basic misunderstanding of what the role and position of Jews in Europe actually is.



SHAI DOITSH

*Director of communities development at ICE — Israeli Community Europe
— Berlin, Germany*

Shai Doitsh is the Director of Community Development at the Israeli Community Europe (ICE). His work focuses on connecting Israeli and Jewish communities across Europe. He has been living in Berlin for nine years. He defines his Jewish identity depending on context. In Israel, he would be considered secular, whereas in Europe he might be seen as Masorti, though not in the formal religious sense. It is more the Israeli understanding of being Masorti, rooted in tradition, culture and practice rather than strict religious observance. Shai Doitsh served as chairperson of The Agudah: Israel's National LGBT Task Force. In addition to his position, Shai Doitsh works as a tourist guide in Berlin. Shai was born in Israel in 1979 and graduated with a BA in government, diplomacy and strategy and a master's degree in business administration.

How would you describe Jewish life in Berlin? Is it easy or difficult to live a Jewish life there?

It is a complex question because the situation has changed significantly. Before 7 October, it was quite easy, especially as part of the Israeli community. We lived a very active Jewish life, celebrating holidays, hosting Friday dinners and engaging socially without major concerns about security. Our way of practising Judaism is often more cultural and less institutional, which was not always fully understood by established Jewish organisations, but it worked well for us. After 7 October, however, everything changed. In a way, we were externally redefined, from being primarily an Israeli community to being perceived as a Jewish community. This shift brought new challenges, particularly regarding security and antisemitism. We now have to be much more careful about where and how we organise events. On a personal level, my Jewish life has become more inward-looking;

for instance, I now celebrate holidays mainly with Israeli friends, whereas before I often included German friends as well.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday European life, and when do you feel it the least? Has this feeling changed over time?

I feel Jewish every day, as it is deeply rooted in my identity. I grew up connected to Jewish traditions, prayers, and values and they remain part of my daily life. I feel particularly Jewish during holidays such as Passover or Rosh Hashanah and also on significant Israeli national or communal days, such as Israel's Memorial Day (Yom Hazikaron). However, there were specific moments that intensified this feeling dramatically, especially 7 October and the days that followed. For example, on 13 October (on Hamas Rage Day), when there were demonstrations across Europe, I received requests from authorities advising our community to stay at home. In those moments, all my other identities seemed to disappear and I felt defined primarily Jew. Since then, experiences such as antisemitic incidents, vandalism and threats have reinforced this sense of Jewishness.

What do you think are the main challenges for Jews today in Berlin and more broadly in Germany?

There are both internal and external challenges. Internally, one of the main issues is the difficulty in embracing the diversity within Judaism. Many groups feel excluded from established Jewish institutions because they practise differently or come from different cultural backgrounds. Israelis, for instance, bring a distinct way of living Jewish life that is not always recognised by traditional European Jewish communities. Externally, the main challenges are security

and antisemitism, as well as the complexity of engaging with other communities. Another issue is the allocation of resources, as a significant portion of funding is often directed towards security rather than towards building and enriching Jewish life. From our (the Israeli) perspective, an additional challenge is helping Europeans understand that Israeli communities have specific needs, often more cultural than religious, and that Jewish life can take many different forms beyond the synagogue.

Looking forward in 25 years, how do you see a flourishing Jewish community? What would be different and what tension would still remain?

In 25 years, Jewish communities in Europe will look different. Just as Jewish life changed after the Second World War and with the arrival of Russian Jews, it is now being reshaped by Israelis and Latin American Jews. I believe a flourishing community would function as an umbrella, connecting diverse groups while allowing each to preserve its own traditions, language and identity. I am optimistic that Jewish life will continue to exist and even thrive, though in new forms. The key will be maintaining unity while respecting diversity, which will likely remain an ongoing tension.

Could you please tell me a story that shows a change for the better in your community's Jewish life?

One positive change I have observed is the increased engagement of Israelis in Jewish communal life since 7 October. Many people who had lived in Europe for years without participating in Jewish activities have begun attending events, celebrating holidays and seeking ways to connect their children to Jewish identity. At the same time, established Jewish communities have become more open to Israelis, recognising that Israelis might not just temporary « tourists » but part of the broader Jewish landscape. This openness has led to greater collaboration and understanding, which is a very encouraging development.

Could you please tell me how you believe you contribute to fostering Jewish life in Berlin?

I contribute by creating spaces where Israelis can connect to their Jewish identity in an welcoming environment. These spaces are open to everyone, regardless of background, level of observance or personal circumstances. Through cultural and communal activities, we enable people to celebrate their identity without feeling constrained by traditional expectations. This approach has not only strengthened Israeli engagement but has also influenced Jewish communities. For example, in Athens, where we began organising activities, local Jewish institutions were initially not very active. Over time, our initiatives helped revitalise these spaces, leading to increased participation and new programmes. In this way, I see my contribution as helping to build bridges and energise Jewish life more broadly.

Is there anything important that we have not discussed that you would like to say?

One important point is the need for mutual understanding between different Jewish groups in Europe. Israelis and local Jewish communities often have preconceived ideas about each other, which can create distance. I believe it is essential for newcomers to learn about the history and traditions of the communities they join, while established communities should also make an effort to understand the perspectives and practices that Israelis bring with them. If both sides engage in this process, it will lead to stronger, more cohesive communities across Europe.



TINA SCHWARZ

Executive Director, The Jewish Community in Denmark (Det Jødiske Samfund i Danmark) — Copenhagen, Denmark

Tina Schwarz has led the Jewish Community in Denmark as Executive Director since 2018, bringing a background in the arts and digital innovation to a 400-year-old institution. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Master of Science. A third-generation Danish Jew with roots in Eastern Europe, she grew up at the Jewish school in Copenhagen and represents, by her own description, the secular-traditional majority of Danish Jewry: deeply connected to Jewish culture and holidays, married to a non-Jewish partner, and committed to an inclusive, pluralist vision of Jewish life.

How would you describe Jewish life in Copenhagen?

It's easy. We have a beautiful synagogue, a young open-minded rabbi who is fourth generation, a kosher shop, a Jewish day school and a kindergarten. Many people who observe the holidays can walk to synagogue. In that sense, yes, it's easy.

But. Since the 2015 terror attack — when one of our young security guards was killed by an Islamist terrorist — we have had 24/7 police presence in our building. There are soldiers in full military uniform with big guns in front of the synagogue. Every single event, from a football match with small Jewish kids to a Shavuot picnic in the park, is attended by police. It cannot go on without police because there are credible threats. All the Scandinavian countries have been at threat level four, out of five, for years. It's not a joke.

We are very fortunate that the government funds all of this without question. The model of collaboration between the community and the authorities here is very strong — it should be a model for other governments.

When do you feel most Jewish, and when the least?

Maybe if I go back to the last big Jewish event — our Seder, 35 people at my house, half of them not Jewish. When we are singing the songs that Jews have sung for thousands of years and the whole room sings with me, I feel very Jewish. And at the same time, that's when I feel least Jewish. Because we are so few. If people hear the singing from the street, they have no idea what it is. So in the same evening, it can do both.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

Antisemitism, clearly. But what makes it harder now is that it doesn't come from one direction anymore. It's Islamist, it's far-right, it's far-left — and these tend to blend into strange hybrids online. We thought Islamist was the worst threat, then it was far-left, then mass demonstrations after October 7th, and now there's a very powerful American right-wing wave — the manosphere, Tucker Carlson, Charlie Kirk — normalizing antisemitism globally and it's reaching here. These megatrends are beyond our ability to fight directly.

Internally, the biggest challenge is demography. Our membership is aging, and young people are not attracted to old organizations. That's not a Danish trend — it's global. Before the recent Israeli influx, around three-quarters of children at our Jewish school came from mixed families. We've normalized that, we've adapted. But the numbers at the organizational level are not growing.

If Jewish life were flourishing in Denmark in 25 years, what would it look like?

The organization is already in the process of redefining who it accepts as members, or as a kind of associated members. Traditionally, being Jewish means having a Jewish mother. In the future, the organization will try - some way or another - to broaden the scope to contain people who define themselves as Jewish. That shift is happening, but slowly. There will still be religious life — it's been there for thousands of years, I don't see why that stops. But it will look different. It will be smaller. Around it, there will be many other forms of Jewish belonging. The Israelis who are arriving now are often not interested in the religious aspects, but they want to meet in other contexts. That's an opportunity if we build the right frameworks.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

Nordic youth work. With support from the Rothschild Foundation, we hired a coordinator across the five Nordic countries — Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland. Because the communities are so small, when you grow up here you know everyone. You need something bigger, something exciting to understand you are part of a bigger Jewish world.

Bringing these kids together, from teenagers to young adults, has changed how they see themselves — as part of something larger than their small community. We train the young leaders to lead the younger kids. The oldest are now around 18 and are very impressive. They run Shabbaton, camps and activities. It's our own youth movement, built inside the community rather than as an external organization. I think that is a very good story — and we still remain to see what it will become.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

My job is to lead the office and to make the transition from one type of organization into another. When I joined eight years ago,

we had a local community. Now we have a professional secretariat that works with antisemitism analysis, reporting, educating surrounding society — school kids, young people — about Jewish life, as well as a large culture festival and extensive external funding from government and municipality.

My role is to keep it all together so it doesn't fall apart in fragments. And to extend — we are now reaching beyond Copenhagen to Aarhus. The whole economy looks different when you have external funding. You have more freedom to develop things. It's our duty to make sure to make sure that both members and non-member Jews benefit from that.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

There is a constant dilemma between defending ourselves against antisemitism and actually fostering Jewish life. The Commission talks about fostering Jewish life — and the focus should genuinely be more on that, not only on protection.

Security is like hot water from a tap. It's hygiene. It has to be there, or we are unsafe. It needs to be settled, not debated. What Denmark has built — across all parties, with no questioning — is a model that other governments should follow. We have full support from left and right. It's not a political football here.

But once security is settled, the real work is fostering life. And I think that message sometimes gets lost when everyone is focused on the threat.



VESNA TERŠELIČ

Director, Documenta — Center for Dealing with the Past — Zagreb, Croatia

Vesna Teršelič is the founder and director of Documenta — Center for Dealing with the Past, a Zagreb-based human rights organisation that researches and documents war crimes, transitional justice, and Holocaust memory in Croatia. She has been a prominent civil society voice on Holocaust recognition, minority rights, and historical revisionism for more than two decades.

How would you describe Jewish life in your city? Is it easy or difficult to live a Jewish life there?

It is challenging, due to the fact that the community is very small. Since October 7th it has become even more difficult — more influenced by what is happening far away, in Israel and Gaza, which has led to less public space even for cultural and commemorative events.

The number of people declaring themselves members of national and religious minorities is declining from census to census. At the same time, there is public pressure to conform to a single dominant decontextualized narration about what happened in the Second World War — a pressure to accept that there is only one official truth. That is not easy for minorities. And this pressure is very often connected to the distortion of historical facts: diminishing the crimes of the Holocaust, the genocide of Serbs, the genocide of Roma, and the mass executions of anti-fascist partisans. This marks also Jewish life in Croatia.

What do you feel is the most notable Jewish imprint on your city? And where is their absence most felt?

The contribution Jews made through their economic, industrial, and cultural activities is enormous. When you look at the buildings in the centre of Zagreb —

around the main square, along the most important streets — so many were built by Jewish families, though awareness of this in society is not very high. Documenta has produced a guide to suffering and resistance in the Second World War in Zagreb, and we organise memory walks precisely to make this history visible.

Despite small numbers, Jewish contribution remains visible today. Ivo Goldstein is professor emeritus of history and has dared to speak publicly about what happened. His father, Slavko Goldstein, was a respected publisher and writer who drew on memories of his own father being killed at Jadovno. Ognjen Kraus the president of the Coordination of Jewish Communities is a well-known doctor-urologist who continues to work and speaks loudly against Holocaust distortion. Sanja Zoričić Tabaković, former judge is the elected Jewish minority representative, Melita Kraus is painter. These people are still here, still contributing.

What are the main challenges Jews face today in your city and country?

Historical distortion is the central challenge. The government continues to use the Ustasha greeting 'For Homeland Ready,' claiming it was used in a different context during the Homeland War. It was not. It was used by Ustasha during the Holocaust and the genocide of Serbs and Roma. This has no basis in reality. It was later used only by Ustasha glorifiers.

The Jasenovac memorial — the only institution fully dedicated to remembrance of the largest Ustasha concentration camp — has had only an acting director for years, under government pressure not to recognise the genocide of Serbs. Most Croatian museums do not cover the twentieth century at all. There is no public transport to

Jasenovac. Funding for school visits of pupils from elementary and secondary schools only became available a few years ago. University students and all other groups must pay for buses and guided visits. The number visiting remains very low.

Since October 7th, people who were previously outspoken are now less so, and less visible. They feel conditioned by official Israeli policy. I regret that deeply.

What does Jewish life in your city mean to you?

It means a great deal, because acknowledging the past is the best foundation for respecting each other today. It is important to create conditions in which Jews are not silent about their belonging, and are encouraged to continue contributing as they have always done. We need to face the past — to research it further, because it is not fully researched. The new generations are not responsible for what happened more than eighty years ago, but we are responsible for acknowledgement and remembrance, and for building a foundation on which we can respect everyone's human rights.

Tell me a story that shows a change for the better in your city's Jewish life.

In the early 2000s, a small memorial plaque appeared in the town of Slunj honouring Jure Francetić, a commander of the Ustasha Black Legion. As a civic initiative, we collected signatures for its removal and delivered them in person. There were ten to fifteen of us. More than two hundred men dressed in black waited for us in front of the monument. Police stood between them and us.

A policeman came and asked me: do you want to pass to the monument? If you want to pass, we will make sure you reach it. That was the first time in my life I felt that police was protecting me — not in socialist Yugoslavia, not in early independent Croatia. That day, I felt that something had genuinely changed. Eventually, Prime Minister Sanader ordered the monument removed overnight. It was never rebuilt.

We are travelling back now. But I still hope the wind can shift again.

What could be done to further foster Jewish life in your city?

There has long been talk of rebuilding a synagogue in Zagreb as a cultural centre. That project would be enormously important. The question of Jewish property taken in 1941 is also unresolved — when Croatia addressed nationalisation, the date chosen for property returns was 1945, not 1941 when the Ustasha actually seized it. Restitution remains pending. Jewish cemeteries across Croatia, including Mirogoj in Zagreb, need proper care and attention. And the Ustasha greeting could be prohibited overnight if the Prime Minister wished it. He does not.

Is there anything important to you that we have not discussed?

One thing that runs through everything: it is quite different to criticise Israeli government decisions, especially regarding war in Gaza, continual violence in Palestine, war in Iran and Libanon, and to treat Jews as a community as responsible for them. Speaking about antisemitism in Europe is not a competition of pain. Past and current genocides have to be named. And acknowledging Ustasha crimes against Jews, Serbs, and Roma is not in competition with acknowledging other crimes. It is simply what facing history and respecting human rights today honestly requires. Croatia has not fully done that. Europe has a role to play in requiring it.



VIKTORIJA JUSE

Community Liaison Baltic, Nordic, Eastern European Countries — Vilnius, Lithuania

Viktorija Juse is based in Vilnius, Lithuania, where she works as community liaison for Baltic, Nordic, and Eastern European communities, and European projects manager for the World Jewish Congress. She has worked as Director of the International Yiddish Center. Her background spans project management, youth programming, and family camp leadership across the Baltic Jewish community. She has been deeply involved in regional Jewish networks across the Baltic and Nordic states and Eastern Europe, and comes from a family with roots in both Lithuania and Ukraine.

How would you describe Jewish life in Vilnius?

It has certain challenges. It's safe — I'm not afraid to be openly Jewish. However, there is very limited access to activities or to being part of any Jewish community organisation. There is a state Jewish school, but the majority of the kids there are non-Jewish, so although it has a Jewish curriculum, it's not really reaching its target audience. There is no community centre. Community activities are focused around social services for the needy. There is no rabbi.

The Jewish community of Lithuania has a lot of restitution money — but doesn't do much with it for the Jewish population. If you want to feel and be Jewish here, you have to be active, initiating, searching, outgoing. That's the only way.

When do you feel most Jewish, and when the least?

Because I work in Jewish organisations and stay connected to communities across the Baltics, Nordics and Eastern Europe, I feel very Jewish through those connections. The people managing the Estonian and Latvian communities are people I went to camps

with. There are regional events — LIMUD, Baltic Jewish Network, annual community gatherings — where even people from different communities can participate and feel part of something larger. For small communities, this is essential.

When I feel the least connected is actually right here in Vilnius, because there's no organised structure. Ten years ago the community here was thriving and active — there was a Jewish community centre. Now it's just very different. Leadership changed everything.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

The main challenge here is the lack of institutional Jewish life — very limited activities and support for the Jewish population. We do have growing antisemitism in younger, left-wing circles, and also in certain right-wing circles, though interestingly the right-wing political parties are now often the most vocally pro-Israel, which is strange but real.

What I think is important — and maybe this is my own position — is that I can be Jewish, I can support the State of Israel's right to exist, and I can still not always agree with the government of Israel. That distinction is very important. Diaspora Jews are citizens of their countries. We are loyal to our countries. But we cannot simply distance ourselves from Israel either, because the existence of Israel is becoming an integral part of modern Jewish identity in Europe.

If Jewish life were flourishing in Lithuania in 25 years, what would it look like?

It would be a community with several organisations, inclusive of all types of Jews — Israelis, Halachic Jews, non-Halachic

Jews affiliated culturally. There would always be tension between religious and non-religious — that exists everywhere. But the more there is, the better. Right now we have a vacuum. If you have a Masorti, a Reform, a religious, a cultural option, then everyone can find their way. Maybe they come for cultural Judaism and find a path to something more.

The communities are all facing the same questions in Europe — what is the defining sector when communities are mostly non-religious? But still, more is better.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

I see grassroots initiatives — not institutionalised, but where people come together to feel connected to Judaism, to celebrate festivals, to find ways for their children to feel Jewish outside of what the institutions should be providing. Amongst my friends and people I grew up with, we discuss what we can do to fill this vacuum. Out of need, you create something.

And the regional cooperation matters enormously. Teenagers' camps where young people meet across borders, stop feeling isolated, and realise they belong to a wider network — rather than having to explain themselves alone in a very small circle, they feel strong and proud as part of something bigger.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

I used to run a family camp for the Baltics — it stopped before Covid and we haven't resumed. It was a great opportunity for families who aren't connected to the Jewish school or formal institutions to connect to Jewish history, Jewish tradition, and also just to modern parenting challenges, with Jewish values as the pillar.

I try to stay actively involved in small initiatives around Vilnius when it comes to celebrating Jewish holidays. I believe that only by turning to our roots, to our history, can we build a successful future for our children.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

For diaspora Jews living in our national countries, we cannot distance ourselves from Israel — the State of Israel is the national home of all Jews. Whenever anti-Zionism is raised, you cannot simply separate that from your Jewish identity. Supporting the State of Israel, while not always agreeing with its government, and continuing to live a Jewish life in Europe — that tension is something European institutions need to understand, not flatten.

Then there is legislation. At a European level, there need to be enforcement mechanisms that force national governments to act. Here in Lithuania, calls for 'globalising the Intifada' are not banned. Police don't intervene. That is incitement to hatred — active incitement against Jewish populations living in the diaspora. It has to come from Europe, because some national governments will not act until forced to. Until we see dead Jews on the streets, nothing happens. And that is not something we can accept.



YARON NADBORNIK

President, Central Council of Jewish Communities of Finland & Vice President, World Jewish Congress — Helsinki, Finland

Yaron Nadbornik is a sixth-generation Finnish Jew whose family roots in Finland trace back to his ancestor Chaim Nadbornik, a Cantonist soldier who arrived in Helsinki in 1858, served 25 years in the Russian army, and subsequently settled in Finland — part of the founding generation of the Finnish Jewish community. Nadbornik has been President of the Central Council of Finnish Jewish Communities, and of the Helsinki Jewish Community, since 2010 and until 2024, and is a member of the European Jewish Congress Executive representing Finland. He holds a master's degree in Supply Chain Management and works professionally as Vice President of Finland's largest real estate management corporation. He has served as president of the National Forum for Cooperation of Religions in Finland (2013–2015 & 2019–2021) and is a member of the Finnish Religious Leaders President's Council.

How would you describe Jewish life in Helsinki?

It depends what you compare it to. If you compare it to New York or Jerusalem, it's not easy. But if you compare it to other places, it is easy. Jewish life in Finland is very good — there's all kinds of things you can do. The only thing we don't have is a kosher restaurant, but other than that, it's a very full Jewish life.

When do you feel most Jewish in your everyday life?

I feel most Jewish when I eat. Because I keep kosher, I have to think about what's being served — can I eat that, can I not? I keep kosher, but I'll eat in a vegetarian restaurant, so I have a larger spectrum of options than if I were exclusively strictly kosher.

The least Jewish I feel is probably when I go to an ice hockey game.

I became more openly Jewish when I met my wife, who's a French Moroccan Jew. They were proud and outward. That was a big change for me. I nowadays believe you should be open and proud to be Jewish and vocal about it. They're not going to hate you less just because you don't say who you are.

What are the main challenges Jews face today?

Main challenges: terror attacks, assimilation. We haven't had any terror attacks — but that is the main concern. And assimilation: intermarriage, people living less Jewish in their life. That's the big thing, a kind of silent threat.

On antisemitism, Finland is the least affected in the Nordics. The worst in Europe, I would say, is Belgium, Ireland and Norway. Here, in everyday life, nobody reacts negatively almost ever. People don't care.

If Jewish life were flourishing in Finland in 25 years, what would it look like?

We will probably see a lot of Jewish migration to Finland, because it's a European country — very quiet, very easy life, not much antisemitism, very clean, sophisticated lifestyle. Finland has been chosen nine years consecutively as the happiest country in the world. I would rather say it's the least miserable country in the world — but that's what's attracting people.

Tensions wise, the main risk for increased tension is if North African and Middle Eastern migration increases significantly. If it stays at current levels, it won't. But if it grows, it will — because those communities harbour a lot of antisemitic sentiments.

Tell us a story that shows change for the better.

Overall, the amount of Jews in the country has grown significantly. There are a lot more Jewish associations and institutions than 20 years ago. We have rabbis living in the city — before we didn't. We have a very active youth network, youth leadership, youth movement. A lot more people are keeping kosher and keeping Shabbat, and a lot more religious families than in many, many years.

People are coming from everywhere: Israeli families, Hungarian families, Nordic Jews, North Americans, Russian Jews, Argentinians. There was just a couple from Argentina that moved here last week because Finland is the happiest country in the world.

As president of the Helsinki Jewish community, I built the youth movement, expanded the school premises and kindergarten, and helped Chabad create another kindergarten. From age one to fifteen, there is now Jewish education existing in Helsinki.

How do you contribute to fostering Jewish life?

First of all, I married a Jewish person and had Jewish kids — that's my number one contribution.

Beyond that, I've introduced a lot of Jewish people to each other. As president, my role has to do with public advocacy — a kind of diplomacy and public influence. I'm quite active on social media about Israel and Jewish topics. I don't speak to people who already oppose what I think. I speak to people who have no thoughts on the topic yet. And people react very positively.

The biggest challenge is that people have an emotional understanding that there is a genocide being committed against Palestinians. I explain to them that this concept was launched by the Soviet Union around 1965 — and after that, the Palestinian population has gone eightfold. It is a Holocaust inversion: making the victims

into perpetrators. And antisemitism always follows the same logic, just in new clothes. In the Middle Ages, the worst thing was not being Christian — Jews were hated for that. In the Enlightenment, Jews were scientifically proven to be inferior. Today, the finest value is human rights — and that's why Israel is framed as the biggest perpetrator of human rights violations. It's the same ancient virus, looking for new forms.

What would you want a European policymaker to know?

The reason to combat antisemitism and foster Jewish life is not to protect Jews. The reason is to protect society. Because if such a small and insignificant demographic cannot be protected and helped to prosper, there is no future for Europe. The reason to protect Jews is to protect Europe.

There is no sense of urgency in Europe right now. When we compare it to the response to COVID — where decisions were taken in hours, laws were changed in days — and then compare that to how antisemitism and hate crimes are handled, you're talking about decades before anything happens. Unfortunately, in all the countries where Jews have been killed on the street in recent decades, those countries now take it seriously. The rest do not. Politicians and citizens only believe what they see. And until they see dead Jews on the street, nothing happens. We cannot accept more dead Jews. So we want all European countries — not only the ones that have already seen blood on their streets — to wake up.

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COORDINATED BY

AEPJ — the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage

LEAD EDITOR

Luca Baraldi

CONTRIBUTORS (in alphabetical order)

Jonathan Boyd
Francesco Carelli
Estelle Cincinatis
Noa Hermele
Bruno Karsenti
Stéphanie Lecesne
Helise Lieberman
Robin Sclafani
Victor Sorensen
Daniel Staetsky

INTERVIEWS AND FIELD INSIGHTS

Alan Grabinsky
Eitan Bergman
Paul Sánchez Keighley

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