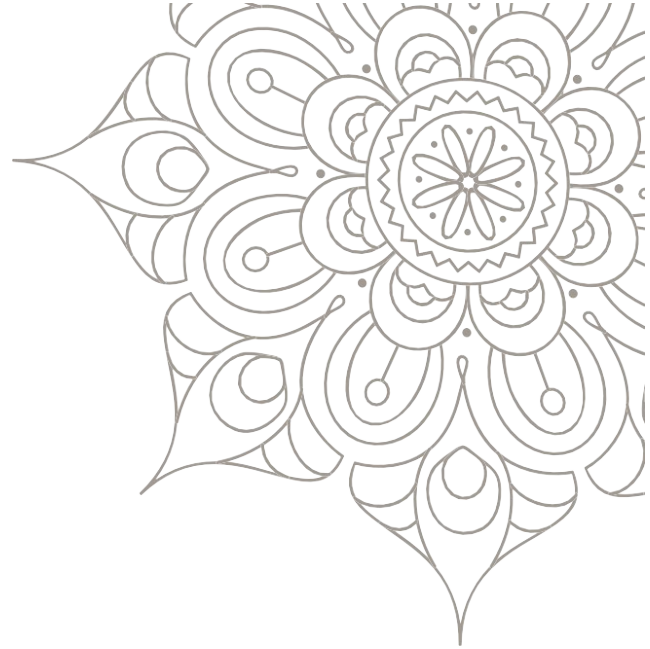


Muslim Jewish Alliance Activity Report





This work was made possible through the Muslim Jewish Alliance founded in 2020 during a global pandemic. It represents the impact immediately generated by the organization after having been created just months earlier in the middle of an international crisis. Founded in 2020 the Muslim Jewish Alliance built, organized and successfully applied for funding for the Muslim Jewish Coalition Combating Hatred in 2020 enabling the start of this joint effort in February 2021.

We Are Change



**WE TALK
TO EACH
OTHER,
NOT ABOUT
EACH
OTHER.**



Background

The Muslim Jewish Conference (MJC) is a dialogue-based leadership and educational non-profit organization based in Vienna, Austria. For over a decade, the MJC has brought together students, civil society workers, and other young leaders aged 18-40 from around the world for an immersive, multi-day interfaith experience. The MJC has taken place annually in European locations including Paris, Sarajevo, Vienna, Bratislava and Berlin, welcoming 50-150 participants for approximately 5 to 8 days of thematic presentations, skill-building workshops, capacity-building brainstorming and informal discussions under the slogan: “we talk to each other, not about each other.”

For over a decade the Muslim Jewish Conference has provided a sanctuary for independent and youth led communication, coordination and cooperation. The following action has emerged as a result of this decade of experience and resembles further inspiration for joint action, both already successfully implemented or still being co created. It represents a global Muslim Jewish Alliance.

In the face of proliferating anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim racism in Europe, the 2020 founded non for profit initiative Muslim Jewish Alliance (MJA), was well-equipped to combat discriminations as individual threats to democracy and as intertwined phenomena. Rooted in the European rights framework, the MJA, along with its partner organizations—MJC, Connecting Actions, JUMA (Jung Muslimisch Aktiv), and IWU (Integrationswerkstatt Unkel) —drew on Jewish and Muslim faith traditions to further principles of non-discrimination. The MJA aligned itself with the EU’s condemnation of all forms of racism and xenophobia, the rejection of discrimination based on religion, nationality, and ethnicity, and the EU’s Council Declaration on the fight against anti-Semitism and the development of a common security approach to better protect Jewish and Muslim communities and institutions in Europe.

Overview

Following these principles, the MJA worked to cultivate mutual appreciation and personal connections among individuals of diverse backgrounds. By doing so, the MJA served as a platform to launch long-term change among and between Europe's two largest minority religious groups. As a consortium, the Muslim Jewish Alliance's partner organizations focused on capacity-building among Jews, Muslims, and other ethnic-religious groups across Europe, addressing educational issues related to combating hate speech, empowering young leaders, and raising awareness about Jewish and Muslim issues. Each partner organization contributed its perspective, honed through years of experience, to combat anti-Muslim racism and anti-Semitism through various initiatives, including EU-wide conflict resolution dialogue, local youth engagement, and interreligious education. Throughout the project's duration, which was made possible by the Muslim Jewish Alliance, financed through the European Union and the Karl Kahane Foundation, several key activities and events were organized:

- 1. Two Muslim Jewish Conferences:** These conferences provided platforms for dialogue, learning, and collaboration between Muslims and Jews from various regions, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation.
- 2. Two Muslim Jewish Festivals:** These festivals celebrated the cultural and religious diversity of both communities, enhancing public awareness and appreciation of Muslim and Jewish traditions.



3. One Symposium: In 2021, Connecting Actions engaged citizens, intercultural, interfaith, and intercommunal dialogue member organizations, and experts to share best practices for active interfaith coexistence and combating radicalism and hatred, both offline and online. The CA symposium included the 12 founding member organizations of the European Institute for Dialogue and brought together professionals in the field of interfaith dialogue to build EU-wide coalitions.

4. One Book of Best Practices (Dialogue - a tool against hate): This publication compiled effective strategies and experiences from various experts, providing a comprehensive guide for combating discrimination across Europe

5. Multiple Interfaith Celebrations organized by the Integrationswerkstatt in Unkel with a Focus on Refugee Integration: These celebrations aimed to integrate refugees into the local community while promoting interfaith understanding and cooperation.

6. Twenty-Seven Interfaith Training Workshops: These workshops provided skills and knowledge to participants, enabling them to identify and combat discrimination and hate speech within their communities.



Overall, the MJA achieved significant progress in addressing anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim racism in Europe, by providing safe spaces for minority communities, empowering Jews and Muslims, and fostering interfaith dialogue.

The collaboration and coordination between organizations made a tangible impact on individuals and communities. The initiatives raised awareness about Jewish and Muslim faith traditions, cultures, and histories, contributing to structural and institutional change. The projects activities facilitated local and transnational cooperation, enhancing the capacity of individuals and organizations to combat discrimination and promote social inclusion.

Key activities supported and coordinated by the Muslim Jewish Alliance included:

1) Two Muslim Jewish Conferences:

The conferences in 2021 and 2022 served as crucial platforms for dialogue, learning, and collaboration. The 2021 virtual conference focused on "Building Muslim-Jewish Resilience in Challenging Times," bringing together over 150 participants from diverse backgrounds for project incubation, skill-building workshops, and thematic discussions on issues such as religion and interfaith activism. Despite the challenges of an online format due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the conference successfully facilitated meaningful exchanges and the development of both local and global initiatives. Participants engaged in practical sessions on conflict resolution, interfaith dialogue, and nonprofit management, which allowed them to lead sessions for their peers and foster mutual understanding. The 2022 conference introduced a hybrid format, integrating both in-person and virtual elements, and expanded its focus on sustainable resource management and local impact. This approach aimed to maintain the international spirit of the MJC while empowering participants to address localized challenges effectively. The conference featured a comprehensive program over five days, including project incubation sessions, skill-building workshops, and thematic discussions on critical contemporary issues such as religious bigotry, antisemitism, and anti-Muslim racism. Participants also engaged in one-on-one and small group networking sessions, fostering meaningful connections and collaborations. The introduction of MJC Local Hubs was a significant innovation, allowing direct connections with alumni and facilitating in-person gatherings in Germany, France, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, thereby enhancing the MJC's global reach and local impact.

2) Two Annual Muslim Jewish Festivals:

These festivals, held in Berlin in 2021 and 2022, celebrated the cultural and religious diversity of Muslim and Jewish communities. The 2021 festival, themed "ART United – Muslim Jewish Voices," showcased the diversity and creativity of Berlin's Muslim and Jewish communities through eleven different events and fifty separate performances. The festival included music, dance, poetry, film screenings, and panel discussions, reaching over 750 in-person visitors and thousands more online. Highlights included an opening ceremony, a visual arts exhibition, panels on Muslim-Jewish relations and perspectives, a concert, authors' readings, a cooking show, and discussions on music and mental health.

*“We don’t talk change.
We are change.”*

This event created a vibrant space for artistic expression and interfaith dialogue. Building on the success of 2021, the 2022 festival continued to foster Muslim-Jewish cooperation through arts and culture. The events included film screenings, public readings, panel discussions, and performances focusing on mental health and music. The festival maintained a hybrid format to accommodate both in-person and virtual participants, ensuring broader reach and engagement. Notable events included the screening of "Two Trees in Jerusalem" and discussions with Holocaust survivor Cornelia Schmalz-Jacobsen. By integrating arts and culture, the festivals provided a unique platform for fostering mutual understanding, combating anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim racism, and celebrating the shared heritage and diversity of Muslim and Jewish communities.

3) One Symposium:

The 2021 Connecting Actions Symposium, themed "Dialogue, Not Hate," shared best practices for active interfaith coexistence and combating radicalism and hatred. Held online from November 15 to 17, the symposium brought together 28 participants from 20 European organizations, including the 12 founding member organizations of the European Institute for Dialogue. The symposium was structured around plenaries, breakout sessions, and workshops, focusing on themes such as the rise of populism, cancel culture, and migration. The event provided a platform for dialogue practitioners, experts, and civil society leaders to exchange their practices, tools, and philosophies, and to identify areas for collaboration. Throughout the three days, participants engaged in skill-building workshops and networking sessions, which facilitated the exchange of projects and collaboration opportunities. The symposium also featured discussions on the role of advocacy in dialogue, organizing inter-religious events, and the use of music and art encounters to create more inclusive dialogue. Additionally, the symposium allowed the European Institute for Dialogue (EIFD) members to advance their coalition's mission, with sessions dedicated to the life of the coalition and its future steps. This event underscored the importance of dialogue in addressing the challenges posed by populism, extremism, and hate, while also fostering stronger EU-wide coalitions among interfaith dialogue practitioners.

4) One Book of Best Practices:

The " Dialogue - a tool against hate " publication, emerged from the collective efforts of Connecting Actions and the broader network of interfaith dialogue practitioners. This book, published in February 2022, compiled effective strategies and experiences from a diverse group of experts, providing a comprehensive guide for combating ethno-religious discrimination across Europe. The White Book was a result of the fifth symposium held by Connecting Actions, which brought together over 20 civil society leaders working with dialogue to share their practices, tools, and philosophies in combating hate and fostering peaceful coexistence. The publication included contributions from various organizations across Europe, each presenting concrete examples of dialogue in action. It covered a range of topics, from planning and preparing professional dialogues, to countering hate speech through virtual exchanges, and promoting interfaith dialogue through music and arts. By showcasing these diverse approaches, the publication aimed to inspire and equip practitioners with the knowledge and tools necessary to address and reduce hate and division within their communities. This guide emphasized the importance of dialogue as both a concept and a practice, highlighting its critical role in repairing and consolidating the social fabric of a diverse European society.

5) Multiple Interfaith Celebrations in Unkel with a Focus on Refugee Integration:

The interfaith celebrations in Unkel, organized by the Integrationswerkstatt Unkel (IWU), played a crucial role in integrating refugees into the local community while promoting interfaith understanding and cooperation. These celebrations included a series of events such as Sukkot, Eid al-Fitr, and Passover, which were meticulously planned and executed to foster a sense of unity among participants from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. In 2021, the IWU organized two interfaith Sukkot celebrations, which were held in smaller groups due to COVID-19 restrictions. Despite the limitations, these events successfully brought together families from different faiths to collaboratively build sukkahs, symbolizing unity and inclusivity. The construction of the sukkah and subsequent discussions on Jewish nomadism provided a platform for participants to reflect on themes of community, resilience, and hospitality. The shared values highlighted during these celebrations facilitated a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural traditions among attendees. The 2022 edition of the interfaith Sukkot celebration was held on October 30th, aligning with the German-Christian Thanksgiving/Harvest Festival (Erntedankfest). This event saw a larger participation due to eased restrictions and included collaborative activities such as the construction of a sukkah and a showcase of locally-grown produce, further enriching the cultural exchange and dialogue. The interfaith Eid al-Fitr celebrations in May 2021 were another significant event that brought together refugees and local German families from various religious and secular backgrounds. These Iftar feasts focused on the shared experiences of fasting in different religions, fostering a sense of similarity and mutual respect among participants. The 2022 celebrations continued to build on this foundation, with deeper conversations and increased participation, highlighting the cultural and religious similarities between Muslim, Jewish, and Catholic traditions. These events underscored the importance of intercultural interactions in promoting openness and interest among the local population towards their new neighbors.



The interfaith Passover Seder celebrations in April 2021 were similarly impactful, bringing together refugees and locals to share and reflect on the significance of Passover. The intimate settings allowed for meaningful exchanges on themes of migration and belonging, resonating deeply with the refugee participants. The 2022 event, which coincided with Easter and Ramadan, further expanded on these themes, fostering interfaith dialogue and cooperation among a diverse group of attendees. The celebrations included explanations of religious practices and shared meals, creating a powerful narrative of shared humanity and cultural similarities. Additionally, bicycle repair workshops provided a practical avenue for refugees to integrate into the local community. These workshops, initiated in cooperation with the Catholic Church and local volunteers, offered training in bicycle repair, promoting self-reliance and environmental responsibility. The workshops not only equipped participants with valuable skills but also served as a social convening space, fostering interactions between refugees and local residents. This initiative significantly contributed to combating local prejudices and promoting effective integration.



6) Twenty-Seven (27) Interfaith Training Workshops:

Conducted between 2021 and 2022, these workshops equipped participants with the skills and knowledge needed to combat discrimination and hate speech. Held across various educational and faith institutions in the Bonn and Unkel region, the workshops were organized in collaboration with partner organizations such as United Religions Initiative (URI), the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, and Coexister Germany. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, which necessitated a reorganization of the schedule, the workshops continued to effectively reach diverse audiences. Each workshop was led by three experts—a Muslim, a Jew, and a Catholic—who shared their personal stories and experiences. These narratives set the stage for open and meaningful discussions. For instance, one expert shared his journey of growing up in a small German Catholic community, meeting people from different religious backgrounds, and working with refugees. Another expert recounted his experiences as a Syrian Muslim refugee and his encounters with diverse communities in Germany. The third expert spoke about his interfaith upbringing as an American Jew and his life as a Jewish immigrant in Germany. These personal introductions helped humanize the discussion and broke down initial barriers, making it easier for participants to engage with the topics of discrimination and interfaith cooperation.

The workshops covered a wide range of topics, from addressing stereotypes and prejudices to discussing feminism, religious practices, and the importance of interfaith dialogue. Interactive sessions allowed participants to ask questions and explore the similarities and differences between their own beliefs and those of others. For example, in the workshops at Konrad Adenauer Gymnasium, students discussed the American Dream and experiences of discrimination. These discussions highlighted the shared struggles and aspirations of people from diverse backgrounds, reinforcing the idea that common goals can unite communities. In addition to classroom-based workshops, practical activities such as visits to religious sites and participation in interfaith events further enriched the learning experience. For example, participants visited a synagogue and a Catholic church, where they engaged in discussions about religious practices and the feeling of security among members of different communities. These hands-on experiences emphasized the importance of direct interaction in fostering understanding and respect among different faith groups.



Overall, the interfaith training workshops successfully equipped participants with the tools to combat discrimination and hate speech, fostering a culture of empathy, mutual respect, and coexistence. By addressing sensitive topics and promoting open dialogue, these workshops contributed significantly to building more inclusive and harmonious communities in region. The positive feedback and continued engagement of participants underscore the lasting impact of these initiatives.

Muslim Jewish Conference has responded to the call, having grown to include members from nearly forty countries from all over the world. Under the leadership of founder Ilja Sichrovsky, the commitment of your volunteers and the success of your grassroots movement has been an inspiration for all who endeavor for a politics of dignity and mutual respect.

Bill Clinton
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Thank you for all that you are doing with your colleagues, to create more chances to spread the culture of dialogue and mutual respect inside the Muslim Jewish communities.

André Azoulay,
COUNSELLOR TO
H.M. KING MOHAMMED VI MOROCCO

Civil society engagement as lived out by the friends and supporters of the Muslim Jewish Conference is essential in a society that regards diversity as an asset and wants to promote peaceful coexistence characterized by mutual respect and interest in others. To ensure that this engagement can be maintained, the Muslim Jewish Conference is rightly calling on those in government for support.

Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL
REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Change is possible only through dialogue and that is the aim of the MJC.

Bakir Izetbegovic
MEMBER OF PRESIDENCY,
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Muslim Jewish Conference is one of the most powerful vehicles to demonstrate that religious and cultural differences can and must be vehicles for deepening mutual discovery and respect, combatting prejudice and bigotry.

Rabbi David Rosen
INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR OF
INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, AJC

Antisemitism and Islamophobia are two sides of the same coin. At MJC they fight this menace together, for a better future of the next generation.

Jakob Finci
PRESIDENT OF INTER-RELIGIOUS,
COUNCIL BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

At MJC, young Muslim and Jewish leaders have a unique opportunity to discuss issues affecting their communities and work together towards solving them. These open dialogues are critical for creating a peaceful future.

Sally A. Painter
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,
BLUE STAR STRATEGIES

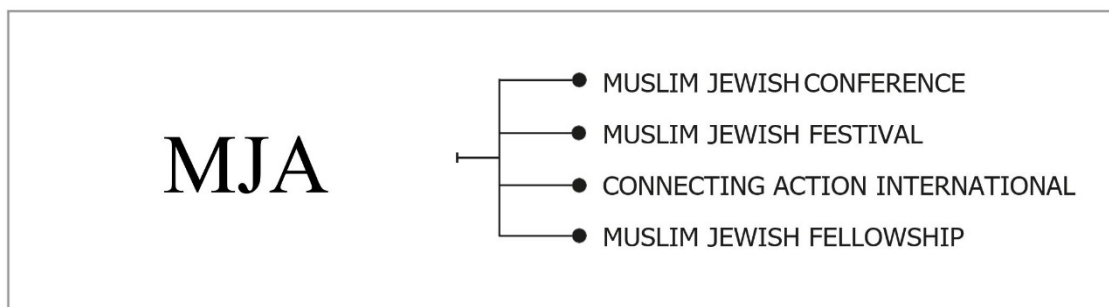
Impact

As one of its first big attempts to make a coordinated difference the Muslim Jewish Alliance managed to built a coalition to combat hatred and achieved significant and lasting impact on Muslim and Jewish communities across Europe. The supported initiatives raised awareness about Jewish and Muslim faith traditions, cultures, and histories, contributing to structural and institutional change. The projects increased the MJC alumni community by 20%, integrating participants into a trust-building network trained for more than a decade, in non-violent conflict resolution. The Connecting Actions collection of expertise provided a streamlined set of guidelines for combating discrimination, facilitating institutional-level interventions and advising governmental actors on best practice. The MJA's robust network of individual igniters, human rights professionals, and policymakers further amplified the reach and impact of the projects outcomes. This success in fostering interfaith dialogue and cooperation, coupled with the strategic dissemination of its results, significantly contributed to promoting mutual understanding, respect, and coexistence.

In Conclusion

The MJA achieved a significant and lasting return on investment, impacting Muslim and Jewish communities across Europe. Through educational workshops, training sessions, and art events, the partner organizations effectively mitigated the individual and structural effects of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim racism. By providing safe spaces for minority communities and empowering Jews and Muslims to identify and combat discrimination and hate speech, this Alliance delivered tangible results for individuals and communities. Raising awareness about Jewish and Muslim faith traditions, cultures and histories and fighting anti-Muslim racism and anti-Semitism together, contributing to structural and institutional change in the communication between Jews and Muslims, in the European Union and beyond.

Over the two-year period, the MJC increased its alumni community by 20%, integrating new participants into a trust-building network and training them in non-violent conflict resolution. These alumni brought their skills back to their communities through projects and interactions, creating measurable local impact across countries both within and outside the European Union.



The Connecting Actions publication integrated decades of experience in cross-cultural dialogue and conflict resolution from a diverse set of professionals into a streamlined set of guidelines. Compiling best practice from experts across six EU member states (France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, and Finland), the CA Symposium and published collection facilitated institutional-level interventions regarding discrimination, allowing professionals to collect efficient methods to identify and combat anti-Muslim racism and anti-Semitism.

JUMA's art and culture events reached a variety of guests at the Muslim Jewish Festivals, raising awareness about the diversity of Muslim and Jewish culture in Germany. Empowerment activities reached young Muslims and Jews throughout Germany, particularly in Berlin, and the publicizing of JUMA's work on social media channels reached the general public, inspiring interfaith empowerment.

The Integrationswerkstatt in Unkel supported the vibrant community of migrants living in Unkel, using the German-Jewish refugee experience as a point of departure to provide solidarity work for those most in need. The IWU set an example for Muslim-Jewish cooperation for refugees across, and beyond the EU.

Guided by the value of dialogue, the Muslim Jewish Alliance not only prevented and combated anti-Muslim racism and anti-Semitism but also offered an alternative to discrimination by promoting conversations rather than stereotyping. The coalition set an example for initiatives working to bridge divides along lines of nationality, ethnicity, religion, age, and ability. By promoting an alternative to hate, the MJA brought about positive change.

The Muslim Jewish Alliance developed mutual trust, cooperation, and capacity-building among EU member states in addressing the EU-wide challenges of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim racism. All participating organizations contributed to the development and dissemination of best practices to combat discrimination and to empower Jewish and Muslim communities. The partner organizations raised awareness about and implemented principles of equal rights, non-discrimination, and peaceful dialogue. The project's focus on trust building, skill building and coalition building as well as the joint and coordinated fight against anti-Muslim racism and anti-Semitism helped to promote values of integration and human rights, communication, cooperation and real change.

