

EDUCATION IN A CULTURE OF RESPECT
FOR DIFFERENCES AND PREVENTION
OF RELIGIOUS HATRED AND INTOLERANCE.
THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS
IN COMBATING ANTISEMITISM AFTER
7 OCTOBER 2023.

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ABSTRACT: Education in a Culture of Respect for Differences and Prevention of Religious Hatred and Intolerance. The Role of Academic Institutions in Combating Antisemitism after 7 October 2023.

The paper examines the role of Italian and European Universities in promoting a culture of respect for diversity and combating religious intolerance. European and national strategies to combat antisemitism emphasize the importance of the educational role of universities and of scientific cooperation among different institutions, both for building societies capable of ensuring the effective protection of human rights and for countering the growing phenomenon of antisemitism, which has increased since 7 October 2023.

Summary: 1. *Education in a Culture of Respect for Differences as an Antidote to Human Rights Violations* – 2. *Education in Respect for Specific Identities and the Intercultural Transformation of Law* – 3. *The Educational Factor in the Prevention and Combat of Religious Discrimination: The Role of Universities in the European and National Strategies for Countering Anti-Semitism* – 4. *International Cultural and Scientific Cooperation between Universities as a Barrier against Anti-Semitism and Human Rights Violations*

Keywords: education; respect; Universities; antisemitism; fundamental rights; religious discrimination.

1. Education in a Culture of Respect for Differences as an Antidote to Human Rights Violations

The multireligious character of contemporary societies has heightened the need to promote specific educational initiatives aimed at fostering a culture of mutual respect for diversity.

Education in respect for diversity, even in the face of a progressive weakening of the institutions and international systems tasked with protecting the human inalienable rights¹, represents an effective antidote to the growing violations of human rights, and in particular to violations of the right to religious freedom². The religious factor, also in view of its impact on geopolitical dynamics³, plays a significant role in many wars—particularly in civil wars⁴—and is often one of the main causes of armed conflict⁵. This is not so much due to the inherently divisive nature of asserting

1 Cf. Amnesty International, *Rapporto 2023-2024. Analisi globale*, available at <https://www.amnesty.it/rapporti-annuali/rapporto-2023-2024/analisi-globale/>.

The «need for a reform of the international economic and financial architecture, so that the concept of the family of Nations can be given real substance» is also shared by Francis, *Encyclical Letter Fratelli tutti on Fraternity and Social Friendship*, 3 October 2020, available at http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

2 Violations of the right to religious freedom are multiplying despite the fact that, at the international level, this right is recognized as a fundamental human right by Article 18 of the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the 1966 *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, as well as, at the regional level, by Article 9 of the 1950 *European Convention on Human Rights*, Article 12 of the 1969 *American Convention on Human Rights*, Article 8 of the 1981 *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*, Article 30 of the 1994 *Arab Charter on Human Rights*, as amended in 2004, and, finally, by Article 10 of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*. Cf. Amnesty International, *Rapporto 2023-2024. Analisi globale*, cit.

3 See V. Coralluzzo, L. Ozzano, *Religioni tra pace e guerra. Il sacro nelle relazioni internazionali del XXI secolo*, Torino, 2012.

4 As underlined by M. Toft, *Getting Religion? The Puzzling Case of Islam and Civil War*, in *International Security*, Volume 31, Issue 4, 2007, p. 97 ff., religious civil wars—meaning conflicts involving at least one group acting on the basis of religious motivations—account for one third of all civil wars and have been steadily increasing in recent decades.

5 The risk is also emphasized by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Al-Tayyeb, in the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, signed in Abu Dhabi on February 2, 2019, available at www.vatican.va. See M. d'Arienzo, *Dialogo, conoscenza e fratellanza. Il ruolo del diritto*, in *Diritto e Religioni*, 1, 2021, pp. 333-339.

Moreover, forecasts for the coming years also seem to confirm this growth trend, given the expected increase in the number of people professing a religious faith as a consequence of the rise in the world population, as well as demographic changes, which

a specific religious identity, but rather to its political instrumentalization⁶.

In this paper, I will seek to highlight the importance of the educational role of universities and of international cooperation among different academic institutions in promoting the spread of a “culture of respect” for differences—something that, in today’s multicultural and multireligious societies, proves essential to curbing the increasingly frequent violations of human rights and the phenomenon of religious hatred and intolerance, including antisemitism.

2. Education in Respect for Specific Identities and the Intercultural Transformation of Law

Education in a culture of respect⁷ for differences is a necessary action within a broader and more integrated strategy for governing the complexity of

are and will continue to be significantly influenced by migration flows. Cf. P. Percoc, EPRS | European Parliament Research Service, *Religious organisations and conflict resolution*, November 2016, available at [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/593515/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)593515_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/593515/EPRS_BRI(2016)593515_EN.pdf). See also M. d’Arienzo, *Religious communities and migration phenomenon*, in *Științific Buletin-Scientific Bulletin, serie A, Fascicula Filologie- Philology Fascicle*, XXX, 2021, pp. 223-232.

6 See. M. d’Arienzo, *Tutela dei diritti umani e prevenzione dei conflitti tra crisi del diritto e diplomazia religiosa in Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință - Journal for freedom of conscience*, 11, 2-2023, pp. 37-52, especially p. 43, note 29, where the Author underlines that emblematic in this regard was the case of the war in Mali, where the conflict was shifted from the political to the religious sphere in a completely instrumental manner. In fact, between 2002 and 2003, taking advantage of political instability and the coup d’état, the rebels used religion as a propaganda tool in the conflict in northern Mali by introducing the strict application of Sharia law, thereby extending the conflict to the southern part of the country as well.

7 On the meaning of the term “respect” in the legal context cf. M. d’Arienzo, *Respect as a tool for dialogue between cultures and religions*, in *Diritto e Religioni*, 1, 2021, p. 331, according to which the term “respect,” also to emphasize its relational nature, can be understood as a mode of intersubjective relationship functional to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, based on the recognition of the equal rights of others as a limit to one’s own sphere of individual freedom. From this “static” perspective, the principle also takes on a meta-legal significance, as it guides the purposes and functions of the law itself, serving as a criterion to counter all forms of intolerance and intransigence in interpersonal relations. Respect for others thus becomes a tool to prevent the logic of conflict and confrontation, acting as an antidote to the violence that may arise from the exaggerated defense of one’s identity against anything perceived as a limit, threat, or diversity to be rejected. In its “dynamic” dimension, respect acquires an even more significant meaning, as it is not limited to the mere recognition of the rights of others but constitutes the indispensable foundation for other principles, expressed in the language of rights in terms of tolerance and intercultural dialogue.

today's multicultural societies⁸—a strategy that the law is called upon to support by adopting the method of interculturality⁹ by transforming itself into an effective tool for mediation and genuine dialogue with different legal cultures, despite its traditional role as a bulwark against the entry of foreign legal categories in order to preserve the identity heritage of a specific legal system¹⁰.

Openness to the intercultural methodology thus is intrinsically linked to the adoption of a specific educational strategy, which must also include the training of legal professionals themselves¹¹. This task falls primarily to the academic world, which is called upon to train professionals, bureaucrats, and jurists capable of promoting—in the application and interpretation of legal norms—the inclusion of diverse narratives of identity experiences¹², to the point of triggering a cross-fertilization and a process of transformation of their own legal culture¹³.

With respect to the challenges posed by intercultural societies, the academic world, and in particular law faculties, are indeed called upon to play a decisive role in the cultural formation of legal professionals and, more broadly, of public officials and administrators responsible for operating concretely within social reality¹⁴. Assessing the various identity claim-

8 See M. d'Arienzo, *Pluralismo religioso e dialogo interculturale. L'inclusione giuridica delle diversità*, Luigi Pellegrini Editore, Cosenza, 2018, especially p. 116 ff.

9 Cf. S. Ferlito, *Società multireligiosa e interpretazione normativa*, in A. Fuccillo (edited by), *Multireligiosità e reazione giuridica*, Torino, 2008, p. 143 ff., F. Remotti, *Tradurre e convivere. L'antropologo e il diritto interculturale*, in *Daimon. Annuario di diritto comparato delle religioni*, 8, 2008, p. 97 ff.; P. Parolari, *Culture, diritto, diritti. Diversità culturale e diritti fondamentali negli Stati costituzionali di diritto*, Torino, 2016, especially p. 166 ff.

10 M. d'Arienzo, *Respect as a tool for dialogue between cultures and religions*, cit., p. 331.

11 Simion Belea, „Pluralismul religios, O valoare a drepturilor omului în secolul XXI”, *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință* (*Journal for Freedom of Conscience*), Vol. 12, no.1, pp. 129-147. “The plurality of religious presences, linked to different ethnicities, has therefore created an extremely varied scenario whose reading confirms how Europe has become, structurally, a multicultural, multiethnic and multireligious region.”

12 M. d'Arienzo, *Pluralismo religioso e dialogo interculturale. L'inclusione giuridica delle diversità*, cit., p. 17.

13 M. Ricca, *Sul diritto interculturale. Costruire l'esperienza giuridica oltre le identità*, in *Daimon. Annuario di diritto comparato delle religioni*, 8, 2008, especially p. 16.

14 Simion Belea, „Pluralismul religios, O valoare a drepturilor omului în secolul XXI”, *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință* (*Journal for Freedom of Conscience*), Vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 129-147. “The role of religions for international peace and development (and, within this, interreligious dialogue) has become increasingly central after the tragic events of September 11, 2001”

sclearly presupposes the activation of dialogue and a profound synergy between civil authorities and the different social actors, including religious communities¹⁵.

The adoption of an intercultural approach is considered a priority in several supranational documents and regulatory interventions, as evidenced at the European Union level by the publication of the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* in 2008¹⁶ and the *Resolution of the European Parliament on the Role of Intercultural Dialogue, Cultural Diversity, and Education* in 2016¹⁷.

For example, the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* explicitly states that «the free choice of one's own culture is fundamental as a constitutive element of human rights»¹⁸. Education in a culture of respect for diversity through dialogue therefore represents a cornerstone of the pedagogy of intercultural law, aimed at preventing and addressing phenomena such as racism and religious intolerance, which still hinder the effective exercise of fundamental human rights, and especially the right to religious freedom.¹⁹

15 Cf. M. d'Arienza, *Il ruolo delle comunità religiose nel dialogo tra culture e diritto nell'area del Mediterraneo*, in *Iura & Legal Systems*, IX, 3, 2022, p. 1 ff.

16 Cf. Council of Europe, *White paper on intercultural dialogue*. «Living together in equal dignity», Strasbourg, 7 May 2008, which you can peruse at: https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/Source/Pub_White_Paper/WhitePaper_ID_ItalianVersion.pdf: especially p. 17, where «intercultural dialogue is understood as a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others. Intercultural dialogue contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies. It fosters equality, human dignity and a sense of common purpose. It aims to develop a deeper understanding of diverse world views and practices, to increase co-operation and participation (or the freedom to make choices), to allow personal growth and transformation, and to promote tolerance and respect for the other».

17 Cf. European Parliament, *Resolution on the role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education with a view to promoting EU fundamental values*, 19 January 2016, available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0005_IT.html.

18 Council of Europe, *White paper on intercultural dialogue*. «Living together in equal dignity», Strasbourg, 7 May 2008, cit., p. 18.

19 Simion Belea, „Pluralismul religios, O valoare a drepturilor omului în secolul XXI”, *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință (Journal for Freedom of Conscience)*, Vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 129-147. “The spirituality and expansion of new communities (especially Islamic) in the social fabric of the European continent, the “political” need has arisen to verify the role of public education as the main place for promoting, in a new light, the basic values of cohesion threatened by an

Even more focused on the importance of the educational factor in building plural societies based on mutual respect is the *UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*²⁰, in which the pursuit of social cohesion and development goals is considered achievable not through processes of cultural or economic homogenization, but rather through education in respect for differences and mutual assistance. The well-being and progress of society—which is not only material but above all spiritual—therefore require the full realization of the individual's identity in equal freedom and dignity²¹. To this aim, as highlighted by Goal 4.7 of the *UN 2030 Agenda*, the adoption of education systems capable of promoting «the appreciation of cultural diversity» is deemed a priority²².

From the analysis of supranational and international instruments, it emerges that the promotion of education grounded in a culture of respect for diversity constitutes an indispensable tool for preventing and countering discrimination—particularly that based on religion—in the broader perspective of fostering societies capable of guaranteeing the effective protection of fundamental human rights.

3. The Educational Factor in the Prevention and Combat of Religious Discrimination: The Role of Universities in the European and National Strategies for Countering Anti-Semitism

The recent increase in incidents of antisemitism confirms the need to implement specific educational strategies to counter the phenomenon of hate and religious intolerance, of which hate speech constitutes, especially due

unprecedented emergence of the religious factor.”

20 The full version of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly resolution of September 25, 2015, is available at <https://unric.org/it/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/11/Agenda-2030-Onu-italia.pdf>.

21 Cfr. R. Memoli, *Cultura, Mutamento e Sviluppo nell'Agenda ONU 2030 per lo sviluppo sostenibile*, in *Culture e Studi del Sociale*, 5, 2020, p. 7 ff.

22 United Nations, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, available at <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>, Target 4.7: «By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development».

to the development of new digital communication tools²³, one of the most worrying manifestations²⁴.

At the EU level, with the publication of the *EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life (2021–2030)*, adopted on 5 October 2021²⁵, the rise in incidents linked to the phenomenon of hate and religious intolerance was specifically attributed to «the widespread ignorance and indifference in society that allow antisemitism to proliferate and even grow»²⁶.

This underscores the need for EU and national institutions to assume full responsibility to continuously inform and educate both young people and adults²⁷. In addition to conducting surveys to detect antisemitic prejudices and establishing networks of young European ambassadors tasked with promoting Holocaust remembrance in schools and universities, the European educational strategy to combat antisemitism provides

23 Within the Council of Europe, there is growing awareness regarding the prevention and suppression of hate speech, also in light of the impact of new digital technologies on the upholding of the prohibition of discrimination set out in Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). This is evidenced, most recently, by the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe of 7 May 2024, which specifically noted that «hate crimes can be perpetrated both online and offline» and urged member States to adopt appropriate criminal law responses by enacting «effective, proportionate and dissuasive legal provisions to prevent and combat hate crimes and to respond to their occurrence». On this issue see F. Balsamo, *La tutela del diritto di libertà religiosa nell'era dell'intelligenza artificiale*, Cosenza, 2025, p. 116 ff. See also P. Annicchino, *Interazione tra diritto e religione nella transizione digitale*, Torino, 2025.

24 See C. Cianitto, *Quando la parola ferisce. Blasfemia e incitamento all'odio religioso nella società contemporanea*, Torino, 2016, especially p. 177 ff. See also A. Fuccillo, *Diritto, religioni, culture. Il fattore religioso nell'esperienza giuridica*, Torino, 2025, p. 259 ff.; A. Licastro, *Incitamento all'odio religioso e tutela della dignità della persona*, in *Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale*, Online Journal (www.statoechiese.it), 18, 2022, p. 61 ff.; P. Cavana, *Il rapporto tra la libertà di espressione e la tutela della dignità delle tradizioni religiose in Italia e in Europa*, in A. Piccione (edited by), *Libertà di espressione, diritto di satira e tutela del sentimento religioso*, Roma, 2021, p. 69 ff.; I. Spadaro, *Il contrasto allo hate speech nell'ordinamento costituzionale globalizzato*, Torino, 2020, especially p. 31 ff.

25 Cf. European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021-2030)*, 5 October 2021, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/>.

26 *Ibidem*.

27 *Ibidem*.

for the creation of a European research hub on contemporary antisemitism and Jewish life and culture. This hub is intended to foster multidisciplinary research across Europe on the subject²⁸. Knowledge of Jewish culture should also be promoted by Member States, with the support of the *Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training*, including through the adoption of inclusive education models implementing the *Council Recommendations on the promotion of common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching*, dated 22 May 2018²⁹. With this aim, Member States may also be assisted in defining school system reforms capable of offering better protection against discrimination in general and antisemitism in particular. It should be noted that the *2014 OSCE Basel Declaration of the Council of Ministers on strengthening efforts to combat antisemitism*³⁰ already invited OSCE Member States to promote educational programs to fight antisemitism and provide young people with opportunities for education on human rights, including antisemitism.

The Member States of the European Union are also encouraged to report incidents of anti-Semitic discrimination in schools, and for this purpose the European Strategy provides for concrete support to be offered to school leaders and teachers who are actively engaged in reporting and combating such incidents.³¹

28 As part of the strategy, funding is planned through Horizon Europe for research on various structural forms of racism and xenophobia, taking into account national specificities and intersectionality. La conoscenza e la ricerca sulla vita ebraica, sull'antisemitismo e sull'Olocausto potrà essere ulteriormente attuata mediante attività di ricerca sul campo che prevedano l'interazione e scambi con le comunità locali.

29 *Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching (2018/C 195/01)*, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/>.

30 *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Declaration on Enhancing Efforts to Combat Anti-Semitism*, 5 December 2024, available at <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/d/130556.pdf>.

31 Simion Belea, "The Anti-discrimination Law in The European and International Context, Actions to Fight Discrimination", *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință (Journal for Freedom of Conscience)*, Vol. 11/2023, No: 1, pp 307-319. "It should be noted, however, that although the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of nationality has always been present in the legal system of the European Union, with the development of the integration process and the development of anti-discrimination legislation, its protection is less extensive than that granted to other prohibitions of discrimination and, in particular, its regulation seems to be separate from that of other prohibitions of discrimination".

The European Strategy focuses in detail on the specific issue of training “education professionals”. Policy makers in the field of education, as well as European and national institutions responsible for teacher training, are called upon to implement the provisions of the guidelines “*Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education*”, jointly published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 4 June 2018³². The joint document is inspired by the earlier “*Guidelines for Educators on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims*” of 2011³³ and calls on OSCE Member States to adopt measures aimed at preventing anti-Semitism, ensuring that school systems: promote human rights, respect, inclusion, and safe learning environments; employ inclusive pedagogical approaches and global citizenship education to foster democracy, peace, gender equality, and a sense of belonging; develop students’ resilience against prejudice and stereotypes, enhancing their critical and reflective thinking.

Special attention is given by the *Guidelines* to the university context, which is increasingly affected by serious incidents of anti-Semitism³⁴. The *Guidelines* encourage higher education institutions to establish dedicated research centers³⁵ and to promote debate on the phenomenon through the organization of international conferences and the creation of postgraduate scholarships or awards for students³⁶.

Direct involvement of universities in preventing anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance is explicitly foreseen by the *European Strategy for Combating Anti-Semitism*. In particular, the document aims to leverage the

32 ODIHR, UNESCO, *Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education. Guidelines for policymakers*, 4 June 2018, available at https://osservatorioantisemitismo.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/addressing_anti-semitism_through_education.pdf.

33 ODIHR, Council of Europe, UNESCO, *Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims. Addressing Islamophobia through Education*, 28 October 2011, available at <https://www.osce.org/odihhr/84495>.

34 Report of the Inquiry Panel (Ottawa: Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism, 2011), p. 40, available at <http://www.cp-cca.ca/pdf/Report%20of%20The%20Inquiry%20Panel-CPCCA.pdf>.

35 Remarkable is the experience of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism, established by the Pears Foundation in 2010 and based at Birkbeck, University of London, in the School of Social Sciences.

36 ODIHR, UNESCO, *Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education. Guidelines for policymakers*, 4 June 2018, cit., p. 60.

potential of the Erasmus+ program, considered effective, together with the activities of the European Solidarity Corps, in promoting civic education and youth participation in democratic life.

The *European Strategy for Combating Anti-Semitism* has been fully implemented within the Italian legal framework through the development, starting in 2022, of a specific *National Strategy for Countering Anti-Semitism* and the establishment of the position of *National Coordinator for Combating Anti-Semitism*, introduced at the *Presidency of the Council of Ministers* in January 2020 pursuant to Article 5 of the *European Parliament resolution of 1 June 2017 on combating anti-Semitism*³⁷.

The 2025 edition of the *National Strategy for Countering Anti-Semitism*—covering the five-year period 2025-2029—also assigns universities, alongside schools³⁸, an even more prominent role in the prevention and combat of anti-Semitism than that outlined at the European level³⁹.

In particular, the *National Strategy* invites universities to implement training programs, research projects, and “Third Mission” initiatives specifically dedicated to combating anti-Semitism. At the same time, it provides for the expansion of the expertise of certain bodies already operating in the university context, particularly the *Comitati Unici di Garanzia*⁴⁰, in the area of anti-Semitic and xenophobic policies.

37 European Parliament resolution of 1 June 2017 on combating anti-Semitism (2017/2692(RSP)), available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0243_IT.html.

38 The *National Strategy for Countering Antisemitism* aims to operate within educational structures from the earliest levels of schooling up to universities.

According to the provisions of the 2022 *National Strategy for Countering Antisemitism*, schools are called upon to «give prominence to intercultural education and respect for differences, in order to combat stereotypes and prejudices, within the civic education curriculum and in school life.’ In the event of antisemitic incidents in the school environment, they must ‘ensure that school principals, teachers, and other staff members are adequately prepared to respond to such problems effectively, including through the establishment of listening and counselling services». Nelle scuole italiane, inoltre, è stato attuato, su iniziativa del Ministero dell’Istruzione e del Merito, il *Piano nazionale per l’educazione al rispetto. Rispetta le differenze*, available at <https://www.mim.gov.it/>.

39 Presidency of the Council of Ministers – National Coordinator for the Fight against Antisemitism, *National Strategy for Countering Antisemitism, Edition 2025*, 18 February 2025, available at https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/documenti/documenti/Presidenza/NoAntisemitismo/StrategiaNazionale/Strategia_Nazionale_2025-EN.pdf.

40 The Joint Committees for Equal Opportunities (*Comitati Unici di Garanzia - CUG*), pursuant to Directive 2/2019 of the Ministry for Public Administration, are joint bodies established within public administrations with the functions of making proposals,

Among the various measures that Italian universities can adopt, the National Strategy suggests: the establishment of university courses in Jewish Studies and other courses including specific modules on combating anti-Semitism and the memory of the Shoah⁴¹; the organization of nationally relevant doctoral programs and the promotion of PRIN projects (Projects of Significant National Interest) specifically dedicated to the study of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism; the organization of thematic workshops focused on combating anti-Semitism, interreligious dialogue, and the rights of religious minorities⁴².

Moreover, with the aim of building relationships based on respect and mutual understanding capable of countering stereotypes, fear, and xenophobia⁴³, the National Strategy explicitly seeks to promote, especially at the university level, the establishment of cooperation agreements and Italy-Israel exchange projects to implement joint educational initiatives/programs and intercultural dialogue among young people and teachers from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

The implementation of these activities will be monitored by the *National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes* (AN-VUR), which will develop a questionnaire to assess the status of implementation of these initiatives.

4. International Cultural and Scientific Cooperation between Universities as a Barrier against Anti-Semitism and Human Rights Violations

As highlighted in the report by the *European Union of Jewish Students* (EUJS)⁴⁴, following the Israeli military response to the massacre on 7 Oc-

providing advice, and carrying out monitoring activities in the areas of equal opportunities and organizational well-being, with the aim of contributing to the optimization of public sector productivity, facilitating the efficiency and effectiveness of services, fostering commitment to work, and ensuring a work environment in which any form of discrimination against workers is opposed.

41 In this regard, the establishment of the second-level Master's degree in *Holocaust and Memory Studies* at the University of Rome 'Tor Vergata' is remarkable.

42 Cf. Presidency of the Council of Ministers – National Coordinator for the Fight against Antisemitism, *National Strategy for Countering Antisemitism, Edition 2025*, 18 February 2025, cit

43 *Ivi*, Action 5.5.

44 The EUJS Report is available at <https://eujs.org/resources/antisemitism/report-rise-of-antisemitic-acts-and-incidents-in-universities-across-europe-since-7th-of-october-2023/>

tober 2023 perpetrated by Hamas militants against the civilian population, there was a considerable increase in incidents of anti-Semitism in university settings, as well as in European society more broadly. Furthermore, the subsequent human rights violations committed by Israeli authorities against the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip during military operations, and the resulting humanitarian crisis, have further exacerbated the scope of the phenomenon.

Even in the face of the persistent disregard for the ruling of the International Court of Justice of 24 April 2024⁴⁵ and the resolutions in which the United Nations General Assembly called for a ceasefire in Gaza and respect for human rights—most recently with the resolution of 12 June 2025, in which the UN General Assembly strongly condemned «any use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and the unlawful denial of humanitarian access»⁴⁶—motions have multiplied whereby some Italian universities have adopted – see, for examples, the Resolution of the Academic Senate of the University of Bologna dated 17 June 2025⁴⁷ - a systematic mechanism for reviewing ongoing scientific projects and research programs with universities, companies, and all Israeli public and private institutions, with the aim of excluding any involvement in violations of international law⁴⁸.

In other cases, some Italian universities have instead decided to suspend the implementation of existing scientific and cultural cooperation agreements with Israeli universities or to block the establishment of new partnerships⁴⁹. Most recently, the Academic Senate of the University of Padua approved, in its session of 1 July 2025, a motion committing the university «not to enter into new institutional agreements, nor to renew existing agreements, with Israeli institutions and entities that contribute to the perpetration of serious violations of international law and the main-

45 The ordinance of the International Court of Justice dated 24 May 2024 is available at <https://icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240524-ord-01-00-en.pdf>.

46 The Resolution is available at <https://docs.un.org/en/A/ES-10/L.34/Rev.1>.

47 The Resolution of the Academic Senate of the University of Bologna is available at <https://magazine.unibo.it/archivio/2025/06/17/luniversita-di-bologna-sullescalation-militare-israeliana-a-gaza>.

48 *Ibidem*.

49 Cf. E. Rossi, *Le università italiane e Gaza*, in *Quaderni costituzionali*, 3, 2024, pp. 706-709.

tenance of the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory»⁵⁰. Even more recently, the University of Pisa suspended the validity of two framework agreements signed with Reichman University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem through the resolution of the Management Board of 24 July 2025, which ratified what had previously been decided by the Academic Senate on 11 July 2025⁵¹.

Although these decisions are considered a potential form of pressure on Israeli authorities, they are clearly at odds with the European and National *Strategies for Countering Anti-Semitism*, which identify the Erasmus+ program and cultural and scientific cooperation agreements between European and Israeli universities as fundamental instruments to promote, alongside the fight against anti-Semitism, education in respect for diversity and the protection of fundamental rights⁵².

Nevertheless, the adoption of differentiated policies, even while respecting the autonomy of individual universities, risks further fragmenting the European framework, undermining the very effectiveness of the *European Strategy for Combating Anti-Semitism*. Indeed, as was already highlighted during the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian crisis⁵³, human rights violations perpetrated against civilians during wars should, on the contrary, provide an opportunity to reflect thoroughly on the role universities can play in building a European unity grounded in solidarity.

Precisely following the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, I had the opportunity, as coordinator of the international agree-

50 The text of the Resolution is available at <https://www.unipd.it/news/luniversit-pado-va-prende-posizione-quanto-si-sta-verificando-medio-oriente>.

51 The text of the Resolution is available at <https://www.unipi.it/wp-content/uploads/DeliberaCdADEFINITIVA.pdf>: «»

52 The action 5.5 of the *National Strategy countering antisemitism*, Edition 2025, suggest the development of exchange projects between Italy and Israel, especially at university level, to support joint educational initiatives/programs and intercultural dialogue between young people and professors from different cultural and religious backgrounds, in order to build new relationships based on mutual respect and understanding and to eliminate stereotypes, fear and xenophobia». Cf. Presidency of the Council of Ministers – National Coordinator for the Fight against Antisemitism, *National Strategy for Countering Antisemitism*, Edition 2025, 18 February 2025, *cit*.

53 The role of the religious factor in the Russian- Ukrainian conflict is underlined by G. Cimbalò, *Il ruolo sottaciuto delle Chiese nel conflitto russo-ucraino*, in *Diritto e Religioni*, 2, 2021, pp. 485-510.

ment active since 2019 between the University of Naples Federico II and the University of Cluj-Napoca (Romania), to experience firsthand how the synergy and network of relationships established between universities within the framework of scientific cooperation agreements can serve as an important tool for deploying the civic engagement of academic communities in the social sphere to protect human rights.

Immediately after the Russian attacks on Ukrainian territory on 24 February 2022, thanks to this international agreement, it was possible, with the involvement of student associations, to set up a collection point for essential goods within the University Federico II of Naples. The collected goods were then sent to the University of Baia Mare, specifically to the *Documentation and Research Center on Migrations* in Baia Mare, which cooperated with non-profit organizations and religious communities near the Romania-Ukraine border that were directly engaged in the initial reception and assistance of Ukrainian refugees, particularly women and children⁵⁴.

At the same time, further exchange activities between Italian and Israeli academic staff will be activated as soon as security conditions allow, in implementation of the cooperation agreement signed in 2023 between the Oranim Academic College of Education and the University of Naples Federico II, of which I am the promoter and the coordinator.

Indeed, any boycott of relations with Israeli academic institutions would deprive Israeli civil society of essential support in exerting pressure on political and military authorities to induce them to cease hostilities. The voices of Israeli academic institutions expressing, courageously, their disapproval of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza are becoming increasingly strong. This is confirmed by the clear stance taken on 29 July 2025 by the Rectors of the Weizmann Institute, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Technion of Haifa, Tel Aviv University, and the Open University, who explicitly and unequivocally highlighted that the current situation is causing immense harm to innocent Palestinian civilians⁵⁵.

54 For further information on the initiative, please refer to the following web address: <https://maramedia.ro/video-au-sosit-ajutoare-de-la-universitatea-din-napoli-pentru-refugiati-cazati-in-caminul-studentesc-baimarean/?fbclid=IwAR15Tg4prbTCgFqnIKtGl07-WRbnMEZaBwWYQoaUyxGDVEsAC5qZg5u8oHAE>.

55 Cf. N. Del Gatto, *Israele, le Università contro Netanyahu*, in *La Stampa*, 29 luglio 2025.

Isolating these voices by depriving them of the support of European academic partners would certainly be counterproductive to the goal of contributing to the end of the conflict and to a fair resolution of the long-standing Israeli Palestinian issue, one capable of finally opening a period of respect for fundamental rights and peaceful coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

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