



VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

International roundtable discussion

**TEACHING OF JEWISH HISTORY AND CULTURE AT UNIVERSITIES.
EVALUATION OF EXPERIENCE AND NEW VISIONS**

The original mission statement ('event rationale')

In the decades after World War Two, Jewish Studies became a separate field of studies in Humanities at Western European universities, while experience in Eastern European academic institutions in this field is far more recent. As other disciplines in the Humanities, Jewish Studies may benefit from international exchanges and cooperation. Especially in the context of growing challenges to the Humanities in general, and also to a small field like Jewish Studies, the time is right to evaluate former experiences and to discuss potential initiatives for such forms of cooperation. During the discussion we encourage to building of a network of scholars for research and teaching cooperation to develop studies of East European Jewry on the one hand, and to bring the knowledge to the teaching of Jewish studies, on the other.

The aim of the following discussion is to find means and ways to improve teaching of Jewish studies in Europe by developing new or improving existing programs of Jewish studies focusing mainly on history and culture of Eastern European Jewry. We aim to discuss how to provide a balanced, high quality studies for future young scholars and to ensure its existence in the future. We also aim to make studies of East European Jewry dynamic, global and engage with the teaching of East European History, both local and general.

A discussion will invite speakers - leading scholars and teachers - from European and Israel universities to discuss ongoing Jewish studies programs in different universities and discuss the need of cooperation in teaching Jewish studies, possibilities to establish common teaching network, or international Jewish studies MA program in the future.

Sections and Papers

A two day discussion during the XIth Congress of Jewish Studies:

15th July 2018

13.00 – 13.10 Welcoming and introductory remarks

13.10 – 13.30 – Invited speakers Dina Moyal (Tel Aviv university), Jörg Schulte (Köln University) – Jewish studies: contemporary situation, challenges and perspectives

13.30 – 13.40 - Jurgita Verbickienė, Dovilė Troskovaitė (Vilnius university), General situation in Jewish studies and contemporary challenges. Case of post-Soviet countries

13.40 – 13.50 – François Guesnet (UCL), Introductory remarks on discussion “Contemporary situation in European Jewish studies: the state, problems and possible solutions”

13.50 -14.50 – Discussion (moderator – François Guesnet)

14.50 – 15.00 François Guesnet (UCL), Jurgita Verbickienė (Vilnius University), Closing remarks.

First day of the meeting was dedicated to discussing two different programs of Jewish studies – the one MA program under the title “Cultural and Intellectual history between East and West”, practiced by Cologne university, together with their partners: Warsaw University, The Higher School of Economics of Moscow, and Belgrad University. Another one – collaboration on local level between several Israeli universities on teaching Eastern European studies.

These presentations were followed by discussion what aspects of these programs can be successful and which not in different European universities, what other challenges they experience in teaching Jewish studies, and how much international they may be in each case.

19th July 2018

10.00 – 10.50 discussion “How an international study program on Jewish studies should look like?” (moderator – François Guesnet)

10.50 – 11.00 François Guesnet, Jurgita Verbickienė, Closing remarks and future perspectives (creating of a network).

The main purpose of the second day was to receive talks on couple of specific issues from scholars, hear the initial vision on the developing Jewish studies in Europe and give some insights, comments, on what should be the priority, what is feasible and what is not, what are the prospects of Jewish studies.

The discussions highlighted the main following issues related with the development of teaching of Jewish studies in Europe:

- The whole development of international Jewish studies programs and cooperation initiatives should be rational and separated into different phases and stages.
- Firstly, by involving unique and interesting already prepared courses on various topics of Jewish studies into an international European platform, to be shared (by virtual means, visits of invited scholars, consultations, etc.) among institutions and their students, to give them a broader knowledge and to inspire cooperation between institutions, students, and teachers.
- To encourage universities in students’ exchange practices, especially in the form of field research, research trips and etc. This would broaden their knowledge on specific topics and would also bring into contact students and teachers from different countries. A long term cooperation and research projects are more likely to be developed after such meetings.
- The possibility of establishment of mutual Jewish studies (double degree, joint) degree programs was discussed. However, this idea needs to be developed gradually, starting from smaller scale cooperation.
- The need to strengthen cooperation with Israeli universities was discussed.

Full list of participants:

1. Marcin Wodziński
2. Michał Gałas
3. Anna Michalowska –Mycielska
4. Dina Moyal
5. Pavel Sladek
6. Elisabeth Hollender
7. Sylvie Anne Goldberg
8. Christoph Dieckmann
9. Jorg Schulte
10. Irina Czapiewska
11. Carsten Wilke
12. Nadiia Skokova
13. Marek Turzewicki
14. Noemie Duhant
15. Jaakov Lattes
16. Dita Valova
17. Yael Barouch
18. Rami Kimchi
19. Joseph Davis
20. Silvia Guetta
21. Maria Giuseppina Mascolo
22. Hana Pinkas Cohen
23. Robin Nobel
24. Amelie Sugane
25. Astrid Starck
26. Ravny Vallannt
27. Viktoria Gerasimova
28. S. E. Barth
29. Ilana Wartenberg
30. Samuele Rocca
31. Dovilė Troskovaitė
32. Jurgita Verbickienė
33. Francois Guesnet

All in all, the discussion enabled us to evaluate existing practices and given proposals on how to develop the Jewish studies programs in Europe and to make them more international. Scholars and teachers who participated in this discussion gave plenty of comments, tips, reflections that will be used to develop cooperation in teaching Jewish studies in Europe.

This discussion which in some points was a new way for internal communication, allowed to identify not only main danger points, but also main possibilities, critical points, advantages of teaching Jewish studies in Europe. The most important initial steps in building the international teaching network in Jewish studies were taken and we believe that in the near future we will have an established network of Jewish studies teachers and researchers, who would then develop wide range of initiatives of international cooperation both in teaching and research. Such cooperation would truly benefit for the development of Jewish studies, engagement of young scholars in this field.

Planned outcomes and outputs

The outcomes are as follows:

1. Establishment of an international network of teachers in Jewish studies;
2. Promoting international cooperation in teaching by establishing students' exchange practices; visiting teachers on specific topics; students' field research and research trips; creation of video seminars and etc, which would help to establish small scale cooperation between universities and bring to larger scale projects in the future.
3. To establish an international double degree MA program on Eastern European Jewish history, carried out by the Vilnius university Faculty of History and Jagiellonian University, Institute of Jewish studies. The discussion was very fruitful for launching this program: the preliminary program was set up, the meeting for further discussions were planned. The expected start of the program – academic year of 2019-2020. Simultaneously, the cooperation is being launched with the group of Israeli universities (Haifa, Tel Aviv, Ben Gurion, Ber Sheva) – in the near future the cooperation agreements will be established and further mutual activities launched.

Project manager – Mrs Jurgita Verbickienė

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