

Diversity and Identity - Jewish Communities and the Future of Europe

International Conference

organized by the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg and the Institute for Jewish History and Culture, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München.

Sponsored by Shalom Europe.

Location/Date:

Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg,

Sat. Jan 10th – Mon. Jan 12th, 2015 (Motzei Shabbat to Monday afternoon)

The development of Jewish Life in Europe after 1945 can be seen as a success story. Between the dominating poles of Judaism - Israel and the USA – Jewish communities in European countries have not only continued to exist but have also generated a broad variety of distinct identities and cultures. New communities and institutions emerged all over Eastern Europe following the dramatic changes in the region after the demise of the Soviet Union. Following hesitant new beginnings in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the number of Jewish communities in Germany has grown to more than 100, and their membership has quadrupled in the past 25 years. Impressive new synagogues and community centers signal to the broader public that Judaism and its various religious currents and identities are again an integral part of Germany and Europe today.

But do we know whether this success story will continue? The prospect of European Jewish life today is not just overshadowed by the past. The present poses its own challenges, including emerging neo-nationalistic movements, the attraction of populist and right wing parties, the acceptance of anti-Zionist arguments on many political and social levels, and the withering of the “European idea.” Given the Europe-wide anti-Jewish manifestations and the often violent demonstrations during the summer of 2014, these questions have become even more urgent.

This conference aims at presenting a broad spectrum of voices from different disciplines and countries concerned with these challenges. We especially encourage contributions that provide empirical and qualitative data analysis from a local, national, or cross-cultural level, including observations about the impact of internal tensions on the communities' and individuals' capacity to cope with current challenges.