

## PART I

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and  
Human Rights and Anne Frank House project

# The Jewish people and anti-Semitism

*(from the Middle Ages until 1918)*

Teaching material to  
combat anti-Semitism

1. Introduction
2. Why are Jews spread throughout the world?
3. The life of Jews in the Middle Ages
4. The Jews in Southeastern Europe
5. The Jews in Europe after the revolution and the creation of national states



SAMPLE



# 1. Introduction

## Teaching material on anti-Semitism

This is a teaching material about a particular form of hatred called anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is hatred of Jews based on prejudices, stereotypes and lies, directed towards individuals, the community, or institutions and symbols that are Jewish, or are perceived as Jewish.

Hate and bias towards Jews are very old phenomena, that is spread and perpetuated for centuries, even where there are no Jews at all, or where they are only a numerically insignificant minority. As a consequence of anti-Semitism, the Jews have been persecuted, disenfranchised, looted, exiled and killed many times throughout history. The most horrible anti-Semitic crime was the **Holocaust** – a genocide committed to exterminate all the Jews, which was systematically planned and executed by the German Nazis, their collaborators and helpers across Europe, during the World War II. Six million Jews were killed then.

To understand anti-Semitism and learn how to counter it, on the one hand, we need to learn more about the Jews, their origins, their experiences and our common history, and on the other hand, we need to understand the mechanisms behind the prejudice, hate and violence, in this particular case against the Jews, as well as their far-reaching consequences.

Jews are both an ethnic and a religious community. Jewish religion is called **Judaism**. The Jews are an ancient people, whose history can be traced back for more than five thousand years. Originating from the ancient Middle East, Jews have been living as a minority dispersed all over the world for centuries. At certain periods, they lived in peace with other peoples, and contributed to the development of economy, culture and science, and yet, at other times, they became victims of persecution and expulsion. Nevertheless, they managed to foster and preserve the awareness of their identity and religion for centuries.

The Jews lived together with other peoples on the territory of the Balkans, and the present-day Serbia, for centuries. Throughout the years, the Jewish community has made a major contribution to the economic and cultural development of Serbia. In the most difficult times of the twentieth century, the Jews from Serbia, and later from Yugoslavia, have many times shared the same fate with the Serbs. During the World War II, more than 80% of Yugoslav Jewry perished in the Holocaust. Today, the Jewish community in Serbia is small, with active community organizations in several cities, with their seat in Belgrade.

We study about anti-Semitism not only because it is our civilizational, moral, and human obligation, but also because by learning about our coexistence with the Jews, we learn about our own history, and ourselves and we understand it better. In addition, the process of adopting contemporary values of tolerance, non-discrimination and respect for human and civil rights as universal values, began after the World War II, when the world was confronted by the horrors

### Jewish identity

Throughout history, as well as today, Jews define their identity in many ways, or rather the part of their identity that is related to Jewry. For some, Jewish identity is primarily linked to the religious community and faith, by, for example, going to the synagogue, celebrating Jewish holidays, and living in accordance to Jewish religious customs. Others, however, define their Jewish identity as belonging to the Jewish community as an ethnic group or a people, the same way as, for example, a Serb, an Englishman, or a Spaniard might feel a sense of belonging to their nation. Some, again, feel and express their Jewish identity through tradition and culture, and so they like Jewish music, Jewish cuisine and traditional dishes, Jewish writers and poets, read about the history of the Jews, visit Jewish landmarks while traveling, etc. Others consider that a person is Jewish by simply feeling that way. For some, the community lies at the very core of their Jewish identity, as well as common history and destiny of the Jewish people. To many of them, all these different definitions and emotions represent the elements of their Jewish identity.

of the crimes committed by the Nazis and their helpers, with the Holocaust holding unique place among them.

Anti-Semitism, as hatred based on mistrust and bias against the unknown, belongs to a broader category called xenophobia. Anti-Gypsyism, homophobia, Islamophobia, as well as other forms of hate, like the hatred of immigrants, refugees, etc., are also types of **xenophobia**. There are certain similarities among all these forms of hatred, and often the same individuals, groups and organizations are the proponents of such ideas, ideologies and programs, directed against a number of vulnerable groups, just like the same or similar mechanisms are often used to spread different types of hatred and to manipulate public opinion. On the other hand, there are certain specificities that are characteristic only of anti-Semitism.

By studying about anti-Semitism, we will learn how to protect the rights of our fellow citizens, members of the Jewish community, but also how to protect our own, as well as the rights of other groups. At the same time, we will also reflect how to protect ourselves from the malice and evil, which can find their way into each and every heart, and turn anyone into a criminal, just like history teaches us.

Repeatedly, throughout the history, driven by the hatred towards the Jews, others took upon themselves to “evaluate and determine” whether or not a person is a Jew or not, referring to the absurd racist thesis that Jewish identity is genetically inherited, thereby exposing the Jews, and those “identified” as Jews, to harassment, discrimination, plundering, and even, as in the case of the Holocaust, murder.



**Sonja Mihal Bunijevac** from Belgrade is 27 years old, and works as a risk assessment consultant.

*“For me, to be Jewish means belonging to a family, rather than a people, whose members share common values. When I observe Sabbath (day of rest), I do it not only because it is written in the Torah, but because in that way I feel connected to all other Jews doing the same, all across the world.”*



**Aleksandar Saša Nećak**, from Belgrade, is 80 years old and is a retired architect. In the photo on the right is Saša in pre-war Belgrade.



*“For me, to be Jewish means to adopt, while growing up and through education, the values of the Jewish way of life, and apply them at any moment. This means that I exist to move the society in which I live, in a direction of ethical perfection, using all my knowledge and skills. When I talk about growing up and acquiring education, it’s very important to mention that I grew up and was educated in Serbia. Living in Serbia I share the good and the bad with the Serbian people, while at the same time doing so with at least another 28 minorities living in Serbia, for whom Serbia is their country and their homeland, and who all participated in the creation of Serbia’s values. There are people who do not understand my experience of wealth of*

*identities, since they lack this other, additional dimension to their identity. Because of the wealth of identities that Jews possess, and because of the positive qualities I have gained here, I always point out that I am a Jew and a proud citizen of Serbia.”*

**In Part 3: more about religious and racial anti-Semitism, different manifestations of anti-Semitism today, and xenophobia.**



# Reflections of the young people



Young people from different parts of Serbia shared with us their thoughts about important topics and challenges of modern society, such as identity, freedom, human rights, discrimination, prejudice, etc.



*"Everyone needs to express their own ideas without having to adapt to the majority. Everyone should be exactly who they are, without being condemned by the society, and forced to fit in the society at any cost. We are all different, and we should accept diversity. If we preserve our individuality, even when we are not accepted by others because of our uniqueness, others may start to respect us. And that's something."*

**Milan Ivanović, age 16, Belgrade**



*"Most people are prone to reach conclusions about others on the grounds of insufficient information. Things are often not what they seem at the start, and as the wise saying goes, we should not judge a book by its cover. When judging too quickly and without adequate knowledge about people or an issue, we usually come to the wrong conclusions, attitudes and opinions. I don't know why people feel the need to judge someone based on unconfirmed information. I think that is very wrong. My recommendation is to think carefully before assuming any kind of categorical stance about someone or something. You need to invest an effort in order to come to the correct position. The matter needs to be examined, and all the information checked before you form and express your final opinion."*

**Златија Бошњаковић, 16 година, Београд**



*"When I offend another it's usually because I'm hurt. I react when someone humiliates me, I talk back, and then later I feel sorry. Now I realize that there is a solution when somebody hurts you - you should ignore it, just leave that place with the awareness that a person behaving so is just not as educated as you are. Such negative behavior degrades a person. To remain calm and not respond the same way means to win in such a situation!"*

**Mihajlo Miljenović, age 16, Šid**

*"For me discrimination means dismissing any peer who does not manage to identify well enough with the models that are imposed through the media, movies and even cartoons, as this mostly happens when children are younger ... around the fifth grade of primary school. Whoever cannot fit in this "little square box" is not good enough for the rest of society! In a way, this person is discriminated by being ignored. He is kicked out of the group and all joined activities, he is ridiculed, suffers verbal violence, etc. Of course, we are all different, we do not have the same interests, and we cannot expect to have something to talk about with everyone. But when someone tries to communicate with you, and you do not permit him because he is different, that is discrimination."*

**Ilija Đorđević Arsić, age 16, Niš**

*"We cannot change what we inherited. However, we can change our behavior and our worldview if we have experienced something, learned something from that experience, and then said: "Well, now I won't be like that anymore, because I felt it on my own skin!"*

**Влада Симић, 16 година, Шид**







*"For me, freedom is to be able to freely say who you are, what you are, where you come from, to be free to move and to be safe, and to have your dignity. Freedom means that not everyone needs to think alike. I think that it's the hardest for the unemployed in today's society, because they have no means of subsistence, just like the homeless."*

**Sara Đorđević, age 16, Belgrade**



*"Dignity is when a man strives to broaden his horizons from the day of his birth, and learns to look at the world around him in a different light. Everyone of us is an individual trying to concieve each following step one takes. Freedom of expression is the freedom to show all your qualities, but your flaws as well."*

**Zlatica Pavlović, age 16, Šid**

*"I have noticed that many people think that all Jews know each other. It's a bias. At times, they ask me: "Hey, you are Jewish, do you know such and such person who is also a Jew?" We are a small community and many people know each other, but it is not true that all the Jews know one another and are socializing together."*

**Marina Drašković, age 17, Jewish Community of Novi Sad's Teenage Club**

*"Students often make jokes on my account about money, because there is that stupid prejudice that the Jews are stingy. For example, almost every day someone at school says: "Today I won't be spending any money on snacks – I became a real Jew, just like you!" If I were to stand up to it, it would only get worse; they would joke about it even more. Then it's better not to say anything."*

**Hana Fa, age 17, Jewish Community of Novi Sad's Teenage Club**

*"Freedom for me means that we can safely write and say our opinion, for me to have freedom of movement, that I have the right to go to school, and that there is no slavery. Dignity for me means you have a certain attitude towards other people. I believe that the Roma minority is the most vulnerable in a society today, because people ignore them, and they are often suffering from all forms of violence."*

**Matija Veljković, age 16, Niš**



Hana Fa, Mihajlo Miletić and Marina Drašković from the Jewish Community of Novi Sad's Teenage Club



(Photos of the young people: Terraforming © terraforming.org)

## Fill out your personal card:

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Where do you live? \_\_\_\_\_

Where are your grandparents from?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

What do you love the most?

\_\_\_\_\_

The most important things in my life are:

\_\_\_\_\_

... My identity?

\_\_\_\_\_

**I believe respect for human rights is important because:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## 2. Why are Jews spread throughout the world?

The Jews were the first people to accept the belief in one god. They established their state by the end of the second millennium BCE. The Jews kept their faith and tradition under the rule of powerful states, but suffered hardship and dispersion throughout the Roman Empire. Under the Arab rule in Spain during the Middle Ages, the Jews gave an enormous contribution to science and culture, so they called this period the “Golden Age” of their history.

The early Jewish history took place in the area of modern-day Israel, where the Jews established their state by the end of second millennium BCE. This territory is also called Palestine, after the Philistines, the people with whom the Jews were fighting for domination at that time. The Jews were the first people to accept **monotheism**, or belief in a single God. The oldest Jewish history is described in a book that the Jews call the Tanakh, and the Christian call the Old Testament. It contains folk traditions, legal and moral norms, which have greatly influenced other monotheistic religions – Christianity and Islam. At the time of King David, the Jewish state reached the peak of its power and expansion. Under his successor King Solomon, during the 10th century BCE, a magnificent **temple** was erected in Jerusalem. After Solomon's death, the country was divided in two, and then conquered by Assyrian, and later the Chaldean-Babylonian Empire, which destroyed the temple in Jerusalem and forced the population into slavery. In the middle of the 6th century BCE, the Persian Empire dominated the Near and Middle East. Persian emperor Cyrus permitted the return of the Jews and the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem (Second Temple). After the Alexander of Macedon's conquests, Palestine was ruled by the Hellenistic rulers, who were trying to impose their own religious cults on the Jews. This provoked an uprising led by Judah Maccabee and the restoration of the Jewish state, but by the middle of the 1st century BCE the Roman state ruled over Palestine again. Because



Model of the Temple in Jerusalem from the Israel Museum



(Photo: Berthold Werner)

of the exorbitant taxes and desecration of the Jewish religion, a general revolt broke out, which Titus, the son of the Emperor Vespasian, crushed in 70 CE. The Jerusalem Temple was destroyed, and a large part of the Jewish population was taken into captivity. Another great uprising broke out in Jerusalem, which was suppressed in blood in the year 134 CE. Jerusalem was laid to ruin, and most of the remaining Jews were taken as slaves to Italy and other parts of the Roman Empire. That was the beginning of the two-millennial Jewish **Diaspora** (dispersion).



**In Part 3: Find out more about the challenges and problems faced by the refugees, exiles and migrants in our region, in different periods of history.**



### The Arch of Titus

In 70 CE, the triumphal arch was erected in Rome in order to commemorate Emperor's son Titus' victory over the Jews, depicting the triumph after the conquest and plunder of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. It shows Roman soldiers leading the captured Jews who carry a seven-branched candlestick holder (menorah), a symbol of the Jewish people, looted from the temple in Jerusalem.

(Photo: Dnalor 01)

## Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews

Over time, two large Jewish groups were formed, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, who shared the same religion, but with the specific differences in culture and customs. Sephardim lived in Spain, Portugal, North Africa, and the Middle East, and later settled in the Balkan Peninsula, and other regions. Ashkenazim lived predominantly in France, Germany, Central and Eastern Europe. The Sephardic Jews spoke the Ladino language, derived from Spanish, and the Ashkenazi spoke Yiddish, which was based on the German language. Discrimination and anti-Jewish prejudice followed both groups throughout history.



## Example: **Jewish life in Cordoba**

In the 7th century, the Arabs conquered the largest part of Spain and established a state, the Caliphate of Cordoba, with the capital in Cordoba, where Jews enjoyed personal liberties and freedom of religion. The Jews played a prominent role in economy and science, especially at the University of Cordoba, founded in 756. Besides the Arabic, Jewish scholars were among the best translators of the works of Greek philosophy, so in that way Western Europe came to know the ancient Greek heritage. The 10th century was especially fruitful for the Jewish culture, philosophy, poetry and science. In Jewish history, this period, marked by prosperity and progress, is called the “Golden Age”. With the decline and disintegration of the Arab caliphate, began the period of instability for the Jews in Spain, filled with wars, deprivation of civil rights and pogroms. One of the worst pogroms took place in Granada in 1066 when, in a frenzy of anti-Semitism, a crowd of Muslim citizens massacred thousands of Jews in that city.

Among the Spanish Jewry there were a number of prominent artists and scientists. The most famous among them was the rabbi and philosopher Moses Maimonides. Born in Cordoba in the mid-twelfth century, he spent most of his life travelling, and eventually settled in Cairo, where he became the court physician to Sultan Saladin. He wrote in Arabic and Hebrew, and his works on philosophy, Jewish religion and tradition, as well as medicine, influenced the thought of a broad circle of scholars.



Rabbi and philosopher **Moses Maimonides**, monument in Cordoba

### GLOSSARY

**Maccabees** — the name for the Jewish rebel army that liberated the Jewish lands from the Hellenistic rule, around 160 BCE.

**Monotheism** – belief that there is only one God.

**Temple** — a structure dedicated to religious activities and prayer, a building for religious rituals, a house of worship.

**Diaspora** — refers to members of a people who live away from their homelands; since the end of the first century CE, this word is especially associated with the Jews.

### QUESTIONS/ASSIGNMENTS for students

1. Today the Jews live in various parts of the world.
  - a) Think about what were the causes of migration of the Jewish people throughout history.
  - b) Why is the period of Jewish history under the Arab rule in Spain considered to be the “Golden Age”?
  - c) What were the two major Jewish groups in Europe? What are their specific characteristics?
2. Why are there millions of refugees and internally displaced persons in the modern world?
3. What are the causes of migration today?

# 3. The life of Jews in the Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages, the Jews lived in various parts of Europe, in countries with different rulers, laws, majority peoples, cultures and languages. What connected them across Europe and made them a homogeneous group was Judaism, Jewish culture and customs. A characteristic form of anti-Semitism in this period is religious in nature, predominantly Christian anti-Semitism, which attempts to justify the discrimination and persecution of Jews with religious reasons. Despite pressures and persecutions, Jews managed to preserve their culture, traditions and faith, which will become an integral part of the common European heritage.

The period of European history between the 5th and 10th century is characterized by the migration of nations, the struggles to conquer new territories and the establishment of new principalities and kingdoms. During this period the Slavs settled in the Balkan Peninsula and established their first states. The Jews too were a part of this diverse European mosaic of peoples, dispersed in various parts of Europe, as well as in North Africa and the Middle East, ever since their expulsion from Israel in the 2nd century.

Between the 11th and 13th century, the Christian rulers of Western Europe, in collusion with the Roman Catholic Church and the Roman Pope, organized a number of military campaigns in the Middle East, known in history as the “Crusades”, in order to conquer Jerusalem and the “Holy Land”. During this period, Jerusalem was under control of various Arab and Seljuk dynasties, of the Islamic faith, and the Crusaders were attempting to bring it back under Christian rule. This entire period was permeated with extreme religious intolerance.

In Europe, this period is marked by violence against all who were identified as enemies of Christianity. Among the first to be targeted were the Jews settled in Western and Central Europe, who were subjected to forced conversions to Christianity.

Much more drastic were organized Jewish pogroms. In 1096, on its way to Palestine, the Crusader’s army began the destruction of Jewish communities in Europe, burning their quarters and synagogues, and conducting massacres of several thousand Jews. The worst pogroms took place in the cities of the German Rhine province, in Prague, in Hungary, and in other places. During the same period, the Jews also suffered persecution in Spanish and North African cities under Muslim rule.

After accusing Jews of “disloyalty,” the English king Edward I issued a special law in 1290, ordering the expulsion of all Jews from England and the seizure of their assets. In France, the Jews were expelled for the first time in 1182, and also had their property confiscated. Afterwards they were permitted to return, but were burdened with heavy taxes and exposed to various forms of discrimination. The new expulsions from France followed in 1306 and 1394. In Spain, expulsion of all Jews who did not accept Catholicism was ordered in 1492. Several years later, the same fate would befall the Jews in Portugal.

Example:

## Jewish life in Krakow

Krakow in Poland was one of the cities where the Jews lived alongside the Poles and other peoples. In 1334, king Casimir the Great granted the Jews the right to trade and practice Judaism in the city of Krakow and its surroundings. Since that time, the periods of conflict, in which the Jews were occasionally deprived of their rights, and expelled from one part of the city to another, were alternating with the periods of peace and prosperity. After the 1495 pogrom, the Jews were expelled to the other side of the Wisla River, to Kazimierz. In 1558, a wall separating the Christian from the Jewish part of Kazimierz was erected. With the expansion of Krakow, Kazimierz became a part of the city and from the 16th century, despite the occasional attacks against the Jews, turned into the most important cultural, intellectual and spiritual center of Polish Jewry. Many synagogues and schools were built in Kazimierz, and some of the most prominent rabbis of that time lived there and wrote books that had an immense influence on Jewish religion and culture throughout Eastern Europe, and beyond.



In the 14th century, a huge plague epidemic struck Europe. It is believed that the “Black Death”, as the plague was called, took the lives of as much as half of the European population. The panic and fear of contagion took hold of the continent, and physicians and priests could not explain the causes of the disease, nor offer the cure. So the Jews were accused of “poisoning the wells” and thus spreading contagion. In the pogroms that followed, more than 60 Jewish communities across Europe were obliterated, and many Jews were burned at the stake.

Many Christian rulers prohibited the Jews from owning land. Since they could not farm the land, the Jews mainly lived in the cities. But even in the cities a whole range of professions was closed to them, and they were banned from trading in certain types of goods. The reason for this policy was primarily the preservation of monopolies and the prevention of competition for domestic traders and craftsmen, whereby discriminatory policy was justified by various anti-Semitic bias. On the other hand, Christian rulers urged the Jews to work for them as tax collectors or moneylenders (because the church prohibited such work for Christians). Without much choice, Jews were forced to take up occupations that were not prohibited at a particular time or place.

Thus, in Italy and England, for example, members of the Jewish community were often tailors. Some Jews were physicians, lawyers, translators, scholars, or engaged in other professions that needed special knowledge and skills. Forced to be constantly alert to the danger of another expulsion or pogrom, one of the motives for selecting such professions was that, even if they found themselves dispossessed and driven away, they could always apply their expertise in another country.



Jewish moneylenders in France, c 1270.



One of the malicious myths about the Jews, which originated back in the 12th century, was that the Jews are “abducting and killing Christian children in order to use their blood for religious rituals”. The accusations that the Jews perform “ritual murders” are part of a typical anti-Semitic narrative, which persists in different forms to this day.



“Blood Libel”, painting by Karol de Prevot, Sandomierz Cathedral, Polandbek (18th Cent)

**More about various myths and falsehoods about the Jews in Part 3**





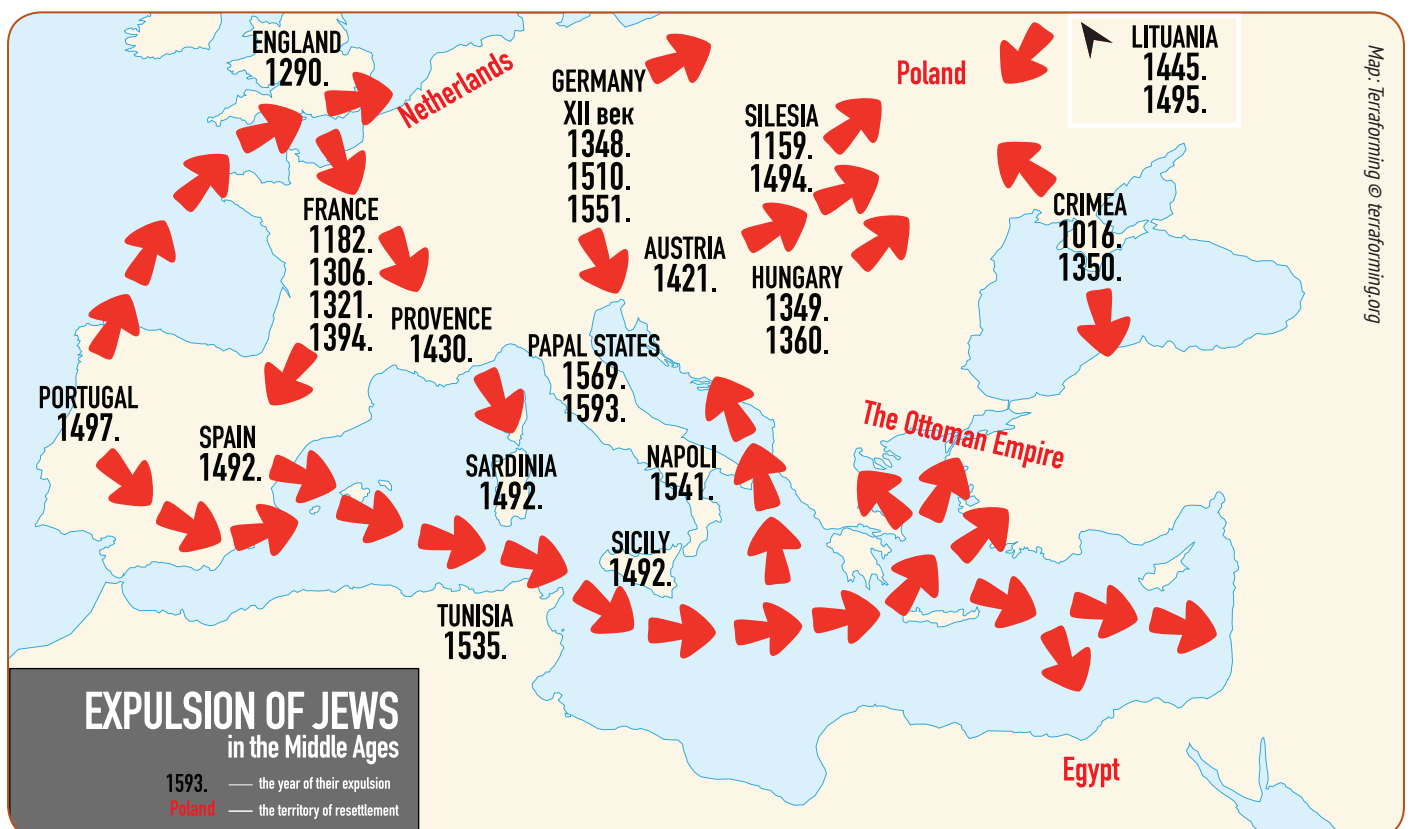
Venetian Ghetto

The miniature from the medieval French chronicle depicting expulsion of Jews from France in 1182.



Throughout Europe, the Jews were often compelled to live in the separate parts of the city, in "Jewish quarters". In Venice, in 1516, all Jews were ordered to live in a designated part of the city, called the "ghetto". The Venetian ghetto is the oldest Jewish ghetto in which the Jews were obliged to live, segregated from other inhabitants.

Religious intolerance towards non-Christians that flared up during the Crusades suited Christian merchants of Paris who, in order to destroy the competition of Jewish tradesman, complained to the French king Philip II Augustus. The king ordered expulsion of all Jews. Their property was confiscated and handed over to the Christians, while the synagogues were turned into churches. This was another traumatic experience that taught the Jews a lesson not to invest in real estate, but rather in objects and items of value that they could carry with them in case of new pogroms.





*Codex Manesse* is the most famous medieval collection of poems in the German language. Among the poets whose songs are included in the collection is Süsskind von Trimberg. Not much is known about him, except for the fact that he was a Jew, which exemplifies the important role that the Jewish artistic creativity played in the creation of German, as well as European culture.

**In Part 3: More about religious and other forms of anti-Semitism. Also, find out more about the attacks on Jewish communities and their property in Europe today.**

## GLOSSARY

**Holy Land** – a religious term for the territories that today are politically and geographically referred to as Israel and Palestine, and in a broader sense includes surrounding areas (Lebanon, Syria, etc.)

**Discrimination** – exclusion, segregation, different treatment of individuals or groups only because they are, by some criterion, “different” (objectively or subjectively). Examples of characteristics on the grounds of which a person or a group may be discriminated against are: race, ethnicity, religion, sex or gender, disability, sexual orientation, social status, marital status, age, and others.

**Ghetto** – derived from the Italian word *ghetto* which means “to discard”, it denotes a part of a city inhabited by a certain ethnic or social group, which is segregated there through various forms of social, economic or political pressure; the word was first used to describe the Venetian ghetto, and later for the Jewish ghettos in Europe.

**Pogrom** – mass violence against the members of an ethnic, racial or religious minority, followed by the destruction and looting of their property.

**Stereotypes** – oversimplified generalizations based on a minimum knowledge of certain phenomena or groups; stereotypes are based on the assumption that members of a certain group have attributes that are unique to them and that distinguish them from the rest, and that all the members of the given group possess these traits. Stereotypes can be attributed to all social groups and categories of people, to their occupation, ethnicity, religion, race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, etc. Although stereotypes can be positive and negative, depending on the characteristic attributed to a particular group, it should be kept in mind that even the “positive” stereotypes are based on ignorance and incorrect assumptions, so that they also contribute to false, unnecessary and essentially negative social divisions.

**Prejudices** – negative judgements or opinions about a person, a social group, or a phenomenon that are not based on true experience or on reasonable evidence.



Süsskind, the Jew of Trimberg, illustration from the *Codex Manesse*

## QUESTIONS/ ASSIGNMENTS for students

1. Why did the Crusades mark the beginning of the Jewish pogroms throughout Europe in the Middle Ages?
2. Using the illustration determine how were the Jews marked in order to distinguish them from other citizens?
3. What were the most prevalent prejudices against the Jews in the Middle Ages?

# 4. The Jews in Southeastern Europe

After expulsion from Spain, the Jews established several communities in the Ottoman Empire. One of them was on the territory of Serbia. In the area of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, or today's Vojvodina, the Serbian Jewry achieved significant economic and social prosperity, but was periodically exposed to prejudices and discrimination. Jews in Serbia cultivated their cultural and religious identity, but they also developed a strong sense of loyalty to Serbia, so they identified and declared themselves as the "Serbs of Moses' religion".

After expulsion from Spain and Portugal by the end of the 15th century, the Jews settled mostly in the Ottoman Empire. They mainly lived in the big cities, in the capital Constantinople (today's Istanbul), as well as Edirne, Thessaloniki, Sofia and other cities. In the Ottoman Empire, the identity was based on religion, so the recognized non-Islamic religious communities, Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish, were organized as special units (millets). Their religious leaders, appointed by the Sultan, managed all the affairs of the community, both spiritual and secular. Hence, the Jews were enabled to foster their religious life, tradition and culture. The Great Ottoman Empire allowed the Jews to diversify their business activities, and because of their connections with the Jews in other countries, they developed strong international trade. They also practiced various crafts, in particular the production of gunpowder and weapons for the Turkish army. Some Jews occupied high positions in the Ottoman court, and they were also permitted to return to Palestine where the Jewish life was slowly being re-established. One of the largest Jewish communities was in Thessaloniki, in which the Jews made up the majority of inhabitants. The strong Jewish migration flows ran from Thessaloniki and from the cities along the Adriatic coast to the interior of the Balkan Peninsula, creating large Jewish communities in Sarajevo, Belgrade, Bitola, Skopje and other cities, during the 16th century.

In the period after the Turkish conquest of Belgrade in 1521, the Jewish community developed in the city. Wars between Austria and Turkey, waged over the next two centuries, brought considerable hardships to the Jews in Belgrade. After the conquest of Belgrade in 1688, the Austrians forced the Jews to clear the debris after the bombardment and take out the corpses. After that, all the Jews were taken to the interior of Austria, mostly to the Osijek fortress, and detained there. The commanders of the Austrian army units blackmailed Jewish communities from other cities to pay a heavy ransom for the imprisoned Belgrade Jews, which they did. After the return of the Turks to Belgrade in 1690, the life of the Jewish community slowly rebuilt anew. During the next siege of Belgrade in 1717, Austrian bombs destroyed the Jewish quarter in Dorćol once again. At a time of Austrian administration from 1718 to 1739, a range of discriminatory measures against the Jews were introduced. Among other things, the Jews were deprived of the right to own real estate, and they had to reside exclusively in the part of Belgrade along the Danube bank.

A new period of prosperity for the Jewish community in Serbia began after the Second Serbian Uprising, in 1815. Besides the one in Belgrade, large Jewish communities were established in Niš, Šabac, Smederevo, and after the Balkan wars (1912-1913), in Priština, Bitola, Skopje and Štip as well.



Belgrade synagogue Sukkat Shalom

There were two Jewish communities in Belgrade: more numerous Sephardic and a smaller Ashkenazi community. In 1908, the Sephardic community built a synagogue in Cara Uroša Street, and later the community building in Kralja Petra Street. In 1925, Ashkenazi community constructed a synagogue in Kosmajaska Street. Among the significant Jewish buildings in Belgrade are also the buildings of social and cultural institutions, such as *Oneg Shabbat* and *Jewish Women's Society*.





In Serbia, the majority of Jews were Sephardim, who first came to our lands after their expulsion from Spain. The smaller Ashkenazi community settled somewhat later, coming mainly from Central and Eastern Europe, which were under Austro-Hungarian rule.

The Jews mostly engaged in trades and crafts, and partly in free professions. In the region of the present-day Vojvodina, which was then a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, large Jewish communities lived in Novi Sad, Subotica, Sombor, Veliki Bečkerek (present-day Zrenjanin). In the second half of the 19th century, the Jews were holding prominent positions in both trades and crafts, as well as in industry. However, anti-Semitism existed in Austro-Hungary, and it was also evident in the area of present-day Vojvodina, among the Hungarian, German and Serbian elites.

Since the second half of the 19th century, the Jewish communities in Vojvodina strived to demonstrate their prosperity by constructing ever more beautiful synagogues. Besides the ones in Novi Sad and Veliki Bečkerek (today Zrenjanin), one of the most impressive synagogues is in Subotica, erected in the early 20th century, in the style of the Hungarian secession. There were 78 synagogues in Vojvodina, of which only three remain today. Many were destroyed during the World War II, and many fell into disrepair and collapsed in the decades after the war, due to the lack of maintenance and neglect, because many Jewish communities vanished completely in the Holocaust, and there were no more Jews left to look after their local synagogues.



Synagogue in Zrenjanin was destroyed by the Germans in 1941.



Subotica Synagogue today

After many years of restoration works, the reconstruction of Subotica Synagogue was completed in 2018. The synagogue in Subotica is one of the most beautiful sacral buildings in Serbia, and the second largest synagogue in Europe.



Pančevo Synagogue

The Pančevo Synagogue was built in 1909. It was one of the most beautiful buildings and a symbol of a town of Pančevo, as well as one of the loveliest synagogues in Vojvodina. A few surviving Jews were not able to maintain the temple and gifted it to the city to preserve and take care of it, in 1955. Later, the synagogue was sold, most of it was demolished, and the remains were damaged in the 2007 fire.

persisted there, including the one accusing the Jews of “ritual murders”, that is kidnapping Christian children to use their blood in religious rituals (blood libel). In the Hungarian town of Tiszaeszlár, a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Jews were put on trial for the “ritual murder”, in 1883. The same charges appeared in Bačko Petrovo Selo and Senta, in 1903, accompanied by a campaign in the Hungarian press. Despite the efforts of the authorities and the Orthodox Church to suppress them, in the Serbian public there were also occasional manifestations of traditional anti-Jewish prejudices, various superstitions and even accusations of “ritual murder” laid against the Jews. Such charges appeared in Belgrade in 1841, and in Niš in 1910, but they soon turned out to be false.

## Examples of anti-Semitism in Serbia

**1** In Belgrade, in 1841, a young Serb worked as a servant in the house of a Jewish man. One day he died in his master's house. It was rumored that the young man was killed by the Jews to use his blood in a “religious ritual”. Of course, the official police and medical reports did not confirm it. However, the rumors of “ritual murder” stoked resentment against the Jews, who felt threatened. For those reasons a group of prominent Jews addressed the authorities on behalf of the Belgrade Jewish community, asking for an edict to be issued that would clear their name of any wrongdoing, and prevent such superstition in the future. The Ministry of the Interior found that certain priests and students were inciting the masses, so they addressed the Ministry of Education, who turned to the Metropolitan, the Rector of the Lyceum, the principle of the Gymnasium and the teachers, and through their efforts the issue was settled.

**2** By the end of May 1910, a rumor spread through the city of Niš, that a girl from a nearby village was murdered in the house of David Nahmijas, a local Jew. A peasant mob tried to break into his house and avenge the girl's death, but was prevented by the police. The head of the Niš district personally convinced the mob that a whole story was a fabrication. Soon, it turned out that the accusation was unfounded, because the girl was alive and well.

The first Jew in the Serbia's diplomatic service was **Haim S. Davičo**. Born in the Jewish community of Šabac, he graduated at University of Belgrade. As a diplomat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was the head of Serbian trade agency and Serbian consul to Budapest, Rome, Munich, Thessaloniki, Trieste and Geneva. He collaborated with various Serbian literary journals, where he published stories from Jewish life, critical reviews and translations.



Haim S. Davičo (1854–1916)

In the 19th century, the Jews gradually gained full civil rights in most European countries, but this process was somewhat slower in Southeastern Europe. Old anti-Jewish prejudices

## QUESTIONS/ASSIGNMENTS for students

1. What was the position of Jews in the Ottoman Empire, compared to their position in Western and Central Europe?
2. What are the basic characteristics of everyday life of Jewish community on the territory of the present-day Serbia, in the second half of the 19th and early 20th century?
3. Find the examples of the Jews who distinguished themselves in the public and political life of the Serbian state in the modern period:
  - a) Research the history of Jewish community in your area, through literature, Internet and other sources.
  - b) Do the research using books, the Internet, and other sources to find information about prominent personalities of Jewish origin from the local history of your region.



# 5. The Jews in Europe after the revolutions and the creation of national states

In the 19th century, modern nation states were emerging and developing in Europe, and their citizens were increasingly participating in political struggles, primarily to ensure their civil rights and freedoms. After the French Revolution of 1789, major changes took place in many European countries. The ideas of liberty and equality spread and became dominant in the 19th century. Gradually, equal rights with other citizens were granted to the European Jews too. Certain occupations were no longer reserved for Christians only. For the first time in the history of the Old Continent, the Jews took an active role in society, contributing to the processes of modernization in Europe.



Revolutions and the creation of national states in the 19th century resulted in the emancipation of ethnic and minority groups in Europe. The Jews were permitted to possess the land, enter civil service, and serve as officers in the army. However, new stereotypes emerged by which the Jews were “snatching up” jobs traditionally reserved for the Christians, those in finance, banking, commerce, industry, medicine, law, journalism, art, music, literature, theater, etc..

Frédéric Sorrieu, *The Springtime of Peoples*, 1848

Throughout Europe there was a burgeoning sense of national awareness, and the movements in which different nations strive to create their own independent and sovereign nation states, were becoming widespread. In major European cities, a movement was created, whose political goal was the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. The movement, known as **Zionism**, will become the foundation of a new Jewish identity, which after the World War II will be the ideological basis for the creation of the State of Israel.

On the other hand, with the emergence of new nationalistic and racist ideologies, the Jews found themselves exposed to the ferocious anti-Semitic attacks. Among the most illustrative is certainly the so-called “Dreyfus Affair”.

In the same period, new anti-Semitic stereotypes were constructed, which will later be used by the Nazi propaganda. In Tsarist Russia, the so-called “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” appeared at the beginning of the 19th century, a book purporting the Jewish conspiracy to “establish global domination”. Although it soon proved to be a forgery, this book became, and remains to this day, one of the symbols of modern anti-Semitism.

The World War I, which took millions of human lives between 1914 and 1918, was a period of great pogroms against the Jews. In Russia, about half a million Jews, who lived in the western regions of the empire, were deported to the interior after being accused of acting in the interest of the German enemy.

The Dreyfus Affair got its name from the French army officer of Jewish origin, who was unjustly accused in 1894, and then sentenced to life imprisonment for alleged espionage in favor of Germany. The trial and incarceration of Dreyfus, as well as the public demonstrations of anti-Semitism in France during that period, found a strong echo in the European public opinion. French author Emile Zola stood up in Dreyfus' defense and wrote the famous text "I accuse!", requesting revision of the trial. **Alfred Dreyfus** was acquitted of all charges and released in 1906.

Degradation of Alfred Dreyfus, by Henri Meyer, illustration on the cover page of the magazine "Le Petit Journal": (13 January 1895) entitled "The Traitor"



"Protocols of the Elders of Zion", a fabricated anti-Semitic text purporting to describe a Jewish plan "to rule the world", was first printed in Russia in 1903, and then throughout the world, in order to spread hatred towards the Jews. Ever since then it is persistently reprinted. In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the "Protocols" were first introduced in 1925, as excerpts in the "New Review", a paper published by the Franciscan Order in Makarska, with some parts of it republished in the Belgrade's "Political Gazette", that same year. The entire text was published for the first time in 1929, by the "New Review" Library, Split-Šibenik.

## Jews in Serbia

During the 19th century, the national state of the Serbian people was established, and the Jewish community participated in it. Back in those times, the Jews mostly lived in Belgrade, where they constituted a tenth of the population. The Jewish quarter (mahala) was located on the Danube side of the city, in Dorćol. Most Jews engaged in trade, much less in crafts, like metalwork or tailoring, and over time a growing number took up free professions (as doctors and lawyers). There were Jewish schools in Serbia, and the state press printed Jewish books also. Because of the pressures exerted by the Serbian merchants, the government occasionally introduced anti-Jewish measures and laws, which included the ban on settling and possession of real estate outside of Belgrade. The common threat of Turkish violence led the Serbs and Jews to side with each other, and the participation of the Jews in the wars for liberation contributed to their social integration and identification as the "Serbs of Moses' religion." With Serbia's independence in 1878, the Jews gained full equality, confirmed by the 1888 Constitution. The manifestations of anti-Semitism in public, or in the press were relatively rare. Influence of the Jewish national movement, Zionism, was felt both in Austro-Hungary and Serbia. One of the forerunners of Zionism in the 19th century was Rabbi Yehuda Hai Alkalai from Zemun. At the beginning of the 20th century, the first Zionist society "Zion" was founded in Belgrade, led by Dr. David Alkalai, a participant of the First Zionist Congress in Basel, in 1897

**Theodor Herzl** was a journalist, writer and political activist who is considered to be the creator of contemporary Zionism. Zionism is a movement that was based on the idea that the Jews should establish their own state and that they have the same rights of doing so as all other nations. The Jews should have their own state primarily in order to be protected from the centuries-long persecution and anti-Semitism, and that state should be established by returning to their native land of Palestine. Theodor Herzl was the initiator of the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897, where the Zionist Organization was founded. The State of Israel today considers Theodor Herzl to be its spiritual father. Theodor Herzl's family and his father Jacob were from Zemun, while he himself was born in Budapest. The graves of Rivka and Simon Herzl, Theodor Herzl's grandparents, are still found at the Jewish cemetery in Zemun. In 2018, a street in Zemun was named after Theodor Herzl.



Theodor Herzl  
(1860–1904)



The Jews shared a fervent patriotism with the Serbs, which was especially evident during the Balkan Wars and the World War I. Lieutenant Moša Amar, from Belgrade, liberated Uroševac in 1912, but lost his life together with his entire unit. In World War I, many Jews distinguished themselves in battles, or were killed and died of diseases in Austro-Hungarian camps. Jewish physicians gave an enormous contribution to the war effort, especially Dr. Avram Vinaver, who himself died of typhus. One of the heroines of these wars was a volunteer nurse Neti Munk, who was decorated the Order of Karadjordje's Star with Swords.



**Natalija Neti Munk**, (née Tajtacak) was born in Belgrade (1864–1924), and served as a volunteer nurse during the Serbian-Bulgarian War, both Balkan Wars and the World War I. She was decorated with many honors for her humanitarian work in war and in peace time.



### Dr. David Albala

Among the brave Jewish fighters in the Serbian army was the medical captain Dr. David Albala. After being wounded and participating in the retreat across Albania to the island of Corfu, he was sent by the government on a Serbian Royal Mission to the United States. On 2 November 1917, the United Kingdom issued the Balfour Declaration, recognizing the right of the Jews to the state in Palestine. At the initiative of David Albala, Serbia was the first country to endorse this declaration, on 27 December 1917.



The painter **Leon Koen** was the most prominent representative of symbolism in Serbia; born in an old Sephardic family from Belgrade, he lived between 19th and 20th century.

Leon Koen, self-portrait

## GLOSSARY

**Zionism** — named after Mount Zion in Jerusalem, Zionism is a national movement of the Jewish people whose goal is to create a free and independent state of the Jews, on the territories they lived before the exiles and the Diaspora.

## QUESTIONS/ASSIGNMENTS for students

1. What was the impact of the period of revolutionary turmoil and the emergence of civil movement in Europe on the position of Jewish community?
2. Under what circumstances did the Jews achieve full equality with other citizens in Serbia?
3. Why is the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” considered to be one of the most famous forgeries in history?
4. Who stood up in defense of Dreyfus and in what way did he oppose the injustice?

# Who is who?



Illustration: Terraforming © terraforming.org, Illustrator: Nada Serafimovic

This illustration shows different famous people of Jewish origin. Can you recognize who is who?

a) Write the appropriate number next to their name. b) Research who they are and what they are known for.

- |                                     |   |                                       |                                       |                                    |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Karl Marx     | <input type="radio"/> Anne Frank        | <input type="radio"/> Franz Kafka     | <input type="radio"/> Moša Pijade     | <input type="radio"/> Danilo Kiš   |
| <input type="radio"/> Amy Winehouse | <input type="radio"/> Levi Strauss      | <input type="radio"/> Harry Houdini   | <input type="radio"/> Albert Einstein | <input type="radio"/> David Guetta |
| <input type="radio"/> Dach Schulz   | <input type="radio"/> Bob Dylan         | <input type="radio"/> Sigmund Freud   | <input type="radio"/> Woody Allen     | <input type="radio"/> Marie Curie  |
|                                     | <input type="radio"/> Stephen Spielberg | <input type="radio"/> Natalie Portman |                                       |                                    |

Conduct a research and find a famous (or lesser known) personality of Jewish origin from your local area, or from Serbia. Present the research results.

**Authors:** Dr. Milan Koljanin, Dr. Milovan Pissari, Miško Stanišić, Aleksandar Todosijević • **Anne Frank House expert team:** Nevena Bajalica, Dr. Evelien Gans, Jaap Tanja, Dr. Dienne Hondius • **Collaborators:** Aron Albahari, Dr. Sanja Petrović-Todosijević, Branko Đurić • **Consulting editors:** Ivana Janković, Nataša Kostić, Dr. Marko Šuica • **Proof-reading and correction:** Milena Macura • **Design:** Mario Lampić • **Print:** xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx • **Publishers:** xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

We would like to express our appreciation to all members of the Project Implementation National Task Force. We would especially like to express our gratitude to all who offered their considerable assistance and contributed their important expertise in preparation of this material: Karen Polak, Ilan Cohn, Jan-Erik Dubbelman, Jan Fahlbusch, Ruben Fuks, Anne Giebel, Jelena Jokanović, Irena Mirković, Dragana Mladenović-Nestorović, Roksanda Ninčić, Aleksandar Nećak, Bojana Perović, Aleksandra Popović, Danica Stefanović, Biljana Stojanović, Robert Sabadoš, Sonja Viličić, Anna Zielinska, as well as the Historical Archives of Belgrade, Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade, National Youth Council of Serbia, Jewish Community of Novi Sad's Teenage Club, and the young people Zlatica, Zlatija, Ilija, Matija, Milan, Mihajlo and Sara, we have learnt so much from during the workshop at Andrevlje.

Publication "Teaching materials to combat anti-Semitism" is composed of three parts: Part 1: The Jewish people and anti-Semitism, Part 2: Holocaust, and Part 3: Never again, with the aim to enable the students to recognize anti-Semitism, as well as other forms of intolerance and discrimination, and learn how to confront them.

This publication was published with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Words into Action to Address Anti-Semitism project. The opinions and information it contains do not necessarily reflect the policy and position of ODIHR.

Director of the Institute for Improvement of Education of the Republic of Serbia approved the publishing and use of this additional teaching material by Decision No. 1639-3/2018, from 15 October 2018.

CIP – Cataloguing in Publication  
National Library of Serbia, Belgrade  
ISBN xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx  
COBISS.SR-ID xxxxxxxxxxxx