

# CALL FOR EVIDENCE - EU STRATEGY ON COMBATING ANTISEMITISM

## FIRST PROGRESS REPORT

### **QUEST's answer to the European Commission**

Answered on the 18th of April 2024

QUEST welcomes the EU Commission's ambition to prevent, protect and preserve both communities and cultures throughout the EU, as well as its consideration of education as a pillar towards these goals. While great action has been taken at EU and national levels to promote intercultural understanding, much more could be achieved by : 1. Opening schools to society ; 2. Promoting the democratic education philosophy and children participation as the backbone to strengthening children's overall resilience, including to discrimination, well-being and the acquisition of life skills necessary to live together; 3. Embedding a culture of cooperation and solidarity, through children-led research and activities.

Today schools mainly remain closed units, where students learn within single classrooms, isolated from society and the concrete diversity of realities. By allowing children to collaborate directly with a diversity of actors (communities, minorities, experts, associations, local stakeholders, other children...) children can both develop their understanding of otherness through intercultural dialogue, their understanding of themselves and their own culture, and work together to protect European rights. Doing so builds social cohesion and can foster positive perceptions of the jewish culture in the long-term around the EU. QUEST therefore encourages to include the promotion of the open-schooling and the democratic education approaches, at both EU and national levels, as the next steps to strengthen the EU strategy on combating antisemitism and on fostering Jewish life. This first means highlighting these philosophies as good practices to promote a culture of peace and intercultural dialogue within EU policies, but also granting funding and training to promote their spread throughout the EU. Concretely, this can also mean inviting school classes to take part in European Heritage Days as well as any other cultural protection and preservation activities, as actors rather than solely visitors. Children must be given the opportunity to actively engage, collaborate and find solutions with European communities to develop life skills (emotional, technical, cognitive...), allowing them to act, today and later on, as positive agents of change. This in turns grants a feeling of agency, deepens resilience to physical and emotional shocks, and promotes children's well-being. Opening schools is therefore an investment for greater social cohesion at the European level. For instance, children-led research and activities can promote data collection and analysis, while serving as learning and cohesion creation opportunities. QUEST therefore encourages the commission to pay a strong attention to children's active participation in its evaluation of the EU and national strategies to combat and prevent antisemitism.