

## **RN31: Ethnic Relations, Racism and Antisemitism - Report 2017**

Kim Robin Stoller, International Institute for Education and Research on Antisemitism/Free University, Germany, March 2018

This research network is the only international network that gathers social scientists who research on racism and antisemitism altogether. Since its creation in 2008, it has become an important ESA network in terms of quantity of members and sessions it organises.

Developments since Prague 2015 have been very positive. The Research Network is now well established within ESA and has grown to be one of the medium-sized networks with a respectable membership. The recent **Mid-term conferences** in Thessaloniki (2012), Vienna (2014) and Warsaw (2016), as well as a **conference** on Antisemitism in Europe in Berlin (2015) outside the normal range of mid-terms, were all extremely productive. We thank the respective organisers for the hard work of making them so. In addition to these meetings, we have worked on collective **publishing activities**. Our special issue of *European Societies* 2012 (edited by Robert Fine and Christine Achinger) has been republished as a book by Routledge with a new introduction by Christine and Robert. A **special issue** of the *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* (Volume 7, Number 2) collecting contributions based on the presentations at the 2014 Vienna Mid-term meeting has been published with the editing team led by Karin Stoegner, Nicolas Bechter, Lesley Klaff and Philip Spencer.

While initially the main **research focus** of the Network's presentations and debate was on the relation between antisemitism and racism, more recently the focus has broadened in order to develop a comparative analysis of different forms of antisemitism, racism and racialisation across different European and global contexts, with attention to the significance of antisemitism within that analysis but also in regard to anti-Roma, anti-Muslim, anti-migrant and anti-refugee resentments and racisms, nationalism and xenophobia. We have sought to respond sociologically to the on-going economic and political crises in Europe and to offer solidarity and intellectual resources to activists as well as scholars working to understand and combat antisemitism and racism across our continent.

We have sought to strengthen our active membership in **under-represented European countries**. We are pleased, for example, to have recruited board members from the Czech Republic, Poland and Portugal. Our 2016 mid-term in Warsaw and our upcoming 2018 mid-term in Ferrara, Italy are reaching scholars, including junior scholars, in Eastern, Southern and Central Europe, a task we consider a priority given the urgency of our issues in many Eastern, Southern and Central European countries. We have actively encouraged **PhD and early career participants**, reserving spaces on the Board for representatives of these categories.

### **2016 Midterm conference: Warsaw**

This mid-term conference, entitled *Refugees and migration - nationalist/racist responses*, was very successful. The call for papers was drafted by the board of the Research Network in co-operation with the local conference organizers. We asked contributors to consider general theoretical approaches to antisemitism, racism and ethnic relations, but also different nationalistic, antisemitic and racist responses to refugees, migration and the crisis in the EU. The response to the CFP was so strong that we continued (since Vienna) with parallel sessions in order to accommodate some 70 papers at 14 panels. Presenters ranged from doctoral students and early career researchers to some of the most distinguished senior scholars in the field, and also civil society activists. We had papers presenters from 15 countries. Session

titles included: antisemitism and anti-refugee articulations and violences; current ‘refugee crisis’; concepts of ‘race’, tools of racism; modern antisemitism; hate speech and discourses; images and media; sociology confronts migration; identities – challenge and construction; Sinti and Roma: between politics and perceptions.

Furthermore, we held a panel discussion on the book ‘Antisemitism and the left: on the return of the Jewish question’ authored by our two board members Robert Fine and Philip Spencer. Panelists included Karin Stoegner, David Hirsh, Robert Fine and Philip Spencer.

During the conference, a special dinner was kindly sponsored by the University of Warsaw. Two separate visits (for two groups) at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews were kindly sponsored by POLIN Museum.

The conference was hosted and sponsored by the Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw and co-sponsored by the ESA Executive. It was mainly organised by Ireneusz Krzeminski, Malgorzata Glowania, Maria Ferenc-Piotrowska and Jowita Wisniewska, University of Warsaw, with support by Karin Stoegner, Kim Robin Stoller and Ben Gidley.

### **2017 13th ESA Conference, Athens**

At this conference, the RN included fourteen sessions with 51 presentations from several European and non-European countries on antisemitism, racism and ethnic relations, including scholars not previously affiliated to the network. We also organized a Semi-Plenary Session with open CfP on ‘*Right-Wing Extremism and Islamist Extremism in Europe: Similarities and Differences*’.

Beside the general issues of the conference and the RN, we called specifically for papers focusing on the role of antisemitism, ethnic relations and racism in current threats to democracy and democratic values in Europe; how antisemitic, xenophobic and racist myths, narratives and discourses circulate in the digital “post-truth” age.

Specific questions were included in the call:

- How can we explain the relationship between authoritarian populism, right-wing extremism and Islamism, three of the main dimensions of antisemitic, racist and xenophobic narratives? - How can we explain anti-Muslim and anti-refugee hatred in Europe today?
- What are the gender politics of these formations?
- How can sociologists considering these questions intervene in debates on free speech, academic freedom and hate speech?

We also asked for papers exploring philo- as well as antisemitism, and ostensibly liberal and critical forms of racism, nationalism and intolerance. For example, how does Israel figure in both antisemitic and philosemitic discourses of the Jewish other?

What kind of racist, intolerant or antisemitic views exist on the part of discriminated minorities? And does the discrimination faced by minorities in turn feed these views?

We also welcomed presentations that highlighted neglected forms of racism and racialisation (including anti-Roma discrimination or “anti-Gypsyism”) and presentations that explored the intersection of different racisms or of racisms with other axes of difference and power. We

particularly welcomed contributions that offered a comparative framing (e.g. cross-nationally or from the perspective of different European regions), presentations that offered a multi- or inter-disciplinary framing (e.g. drawing on history), and papers that offered theoretical and methodological innovation in studying our questions.

We were pleased that the ESA, on RN31's proposal, invited Esther Webman and Zbyněk Tarant for the Semi-Plenary Session at the 2017 Athens conference.

### **Future activities**

We are currently planning our **2018 mid-term conference**, which will be held in **Ferrara, Italy**. Beyond this, we are committed to building our collaborations with new research areas in the broad field of the comparative study of antisemitism and racism – including continuing to support dialogue between scholars of antisemitism and anti-Roma, anti-Muslim, anti-migrant and anti-refugee racism, as well as nationalism.

### **Board members**

After welcoming new members at the 2016 and 2017 meetings, our current Board membership is as follows. We thank recent officers for their active membership, including our out-going chair Ben Gidley, and we welcome the growing geographical reach represented on the Board.

#### **Coordinators:**

- Coordinator: Karin Stoenner, University of Vienna/ Goethe University Frankfurt, Austria, karin.stoenner[at]univie.ac.at
- Co-coordinator: Kim Robin Stoller, International Institute for Education and Research on Antisemitism/ Free University, Germany, robin.stoller[at]iibsa.org

#### **Board Members:**

- Christine Achinger (University of Warwick, UK)
- Alfredo Alietti (University of Ferrara, Italy)
- Véronique Altglas (Queen's University Belfast, UK)
- Sina Arnold (Humboldt University, Germany)
- Claudine Attias-Donfut (CNRS, France)
- Ben Gidley (Birkbeck, University of London, UK)
- Robert Fine (University of Warwick, UK)
- David Hirsh (Goldsmiths, University of London, UK)
- Günther Jikeli (Indiana University, USA)
- Ireneusz Krzeminski (University of Warsaw, Poland)
- Maria José Manso Casa-Nova (University of Minho, Portugal)
- Dario Padovan (University of Turin, Italy)
- David Seymour (City University, UK)
- Philip Spencer (Kingston University, UK)
- Zbyněk Tarant (University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic)