InterMu-Se National Report

Italy

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1.   Introduction

The recent surge in antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate crimes and intolerance within the European Union (EU) has raised significant concerns (Kovács & Fischer, 2021). Surveys across member states have unveiled a disturbing trend of increasing societal acceptance of antisemitic attitudes, with notable variations among countries (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018). Antisemitism has been particularly pronounced in Greece and Hungary, contrasting sharply with lower levels observed in Sweden and the Netherlands (RAN, 2023). Highlighting this trend, the ADL GLOBAL 100 survey revealed that 24% of Western Europeans held antisemitic views, with a gender disparity indicating higher prevalence among men (ADL Global 100, 2018). The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the situation, witnessing a surge in antisemitic incidents, especially in France (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022).

Similarly, Muslims were found to face escalating levels of anti-Muslim hatred across the EU (ODIHR, 2020). With over 25 million individuals, Muslim communities encountered growing verbal and physical violence, exacerbated by a lack of comprehensive recording of Islamophobic incidents within the EU (Amnesty International, 2022).

Recognizing the urgency of these challenges, concerted efforts are imperative across the EU to combat antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred (European Commission, 2023). This necessitates sustained actions by stakeholders, encompassing citizens, religious communities, public authorities, and civil society, to foster cooperation and understanding among diverse groups.

In response, the InterMu-Se project emerged as a proactive initiative, targeting religious leaders and engaging faith-based organizations, religious schools, and civil society groups in promoting intercultural and inter-religious dialogue. More specifically, the project aims to combat discrimination and intolerance, in particular on grounds of religion and/or ethnic origin, to address negative stereotypes against Jewish people and against Muslims, and to build trust and understanding between Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities, by:

- ➢ enhancing availability of data and understanding on how members of Islamic and Jewish religious communities experience prejudice, and of their own prejudice and stereotypes against the "other" communities;
- ➢ enhancing access of religious leaders, faith-based institutions and civil society to tailored tools and guidelines for facilitating inter-religious dialogue and cooperation at local (community) level;
- ➢ building the capacities and sensitization of religious leaders, faith-based institutions and civil society (Islamic, Jewish, Christian and/or other) on supporting intercultural and interfaith/inter-religious understanding and cooperation at local level;
- ➢ enhancing interfaith/inter-religious dialogue and cooperation at local level between religious leaders/communities, civil society and other local stakeholders;
- ➢ engaging people from different faith/religious communities in dialogue and joint action addressing the needs of their local community;

➢ raising public awareness and understanding of negative stereotypes and misconceptions against Jewish people and Muslims, and on common traits between different faiths/religions that bring people together.

The aim of the present national report is to summarize the findings of the primary (online survey and interviews) and secondary (literature review and good practice identification) research activities carried out in Italy. It will therefore provide an extensive analysis on the current national landscape of antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred, good practices, networks and initiatives that promote inter-religious cooperation, as well as experiences of prejudice among members of different religious communities.

2.   Secondary Research outcomes in Italy

Italy has a strong history of religious values and inter-religious relations across the Mediterranean Sea. It has hosted Jewish communities since before the Christian Era, and Muslim communities since the early centuries of the spread of the Islamic civilization, considering that Italy has been a Christian land since the origins of Christianity and in it there is the Vatican state.

The Italian coasts are nowadays one of the main hubs of regular and unregular migrations coming from the MENA region. The sole city of Milan hosts people from more than 160 nationalities, according to national statistics reports (Comune di Milano, 2023). All the main religions are represented as well in the Country, both by migrants and by autochtone people.

Despite this, extremist and nationalist narratives against religious freedom are affecting Italy, at a similar level as in the rest of Europe, adding with the complexity of multiple discrimination, based on gender, social status and other identity issues as well (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2024).

Antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred are among the main topics of hate speech and motives for vandalism and violent acts.

The secondary research that took place in terms of the InterMu-Se project focused on:
- Understanding the current landscape of antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred in Italy.
- Identifying successful interventions and good practices in combating religious-based discrimination.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of these interventions in fostering interfaith dialogue and understanding.
- Providing actionable insights and recommendations for the InterMu-Se project.

In the following sections, some of the key secondary research findings aim to provide an insight into these phenomena examining their historical roots, contemporary manifestations, underlying causes, and efforts to combat them. In other words, the current national landscape will be presented and effective strategies for building inter-religious coalitions to combat anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism will be explored.

2.1.   Current Landscape of antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and Religiously Motivated Hate in Italy

Italy has a double-sided history and culture about the relations with both Jewish and Muslim communities and with religious diversity as a general fact. On one hand, the geographical historical coincidence with the headquarters of the Catholic Church in Rome, has made Italy a nation which is culturally sensitive to religious matters, so that the Italian Constitution has plenty of articles addressing, directly or indirectly, religious freedom both from an individual and from a collective point of view (Alietti & Padovan, 2010; Verducci, 2022).

On the other hand, the waves of secular culture coming from Northern Europe have produced a cultural trend of intolerance toward religions in themselves, suggesting that any authoritarianism, dictatorship or totalitarianism would be helped by a religious background, no matter its specific identity (Pasta et al., 2021; Verducci, 2022).

In the specific case of antisemitism, historical issues go back as far as the medieval age, up to the creation of the ghettos in Venice in the XV century and the prohibition to show signs of the presence of synagogues during the reign of the Savoia in the XIX century, up to the "racial laws" short before WWII (Caffiero, 2003; Maifreda, 2024).

After WWII, antisemitic issues have persisted as "subcultures that resist time and reason", as President Mattarella noted in a recent speech after the outbreak of the current Middle East crisis started with the terrorist attack of October 7, 2023 (CDEC Foundation's Observatory on Antisemitism, 2023).

Regarding anti-Muslim hatred, Italy has suffered, for many decades, from a lack of historical research and objectivity about the early Muslim presence in Italian history and culture, as well as the cultural and scientific exchanges between Europe and the Arab-Persian world across the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle Ages. Such studies have often been relegated to marginalized or niche cultural environments, dealing at the same time with the Templars and the court of Frederick II, which had both suffered, in their time, from a religious excommunication by Catholic authorities. The knowledge of Islam itself as a religious fact is very poor and fragmented, often distorted after the orientalist narratives started in the XIX century, while in recent decades a predominance of voices about fundamentalist preachers and terrorist movements has totally distorted the perception of Islamic communities and religion in the collective imagination (Pasta et al., 2021; Pasta, 2023).

2.1.1. *The historical evolution and the current landscape of antisemitism in Italy*

The historical evolution of antisemitism in Italy spans centuries of prejudice and persecution, with roots that sink deeply into the religious and social structure of the country.

Antisemitism in Italy, as in the rest of Europe, originated primarily from religious motivations. Since the Middle Ages, Jews were often accused of ritual crimes, such as ritual murder, particularly in the context of Jewish holidays, an accusation that was a persistent element of antisemitic rhetoric until the beginning of the 20th century. The Catholic Church was fundamental in the construction and consolidation of this prejudice, with both explicit and implicit promotion of negative stereotypes against Jews (Maifreda, 2024; Caffiero, 2003). In the 16th century, the establishment of the ghetto in Venice and then in other Italian cities marked a significant turning point, creating physical and social isolation for Jews. However, despite the isolation, daily interactions between Jews and Christians revealed a greater complexity than simple separation. This system of ghettoization was also maintained as a conversion strategy, as it facilitated the pressure for religious assimilation (Maifreda, 2024). Between the 17th and 18th centuries, the papacy began to actively support accusations of ritual murder, presenting Jews as a threat to Christian society. With the Counter-Reformation, religious intransigence increased, further reducing the spaces of self-defence for the Jewish community and intensifying restrictions and accusations against them. This process marked a crucial stage in the development of political

antisemitism in Italy, as religious distrust evolved into a rhetoric that included a long-term project of social and cultural exclusion (Caffiero, 2003; Caffiero, 2009).

With the 19th century and the advent of the Enlightenment, the discourse on antisemitism began incorporating pseudo-scientific elements, developing an ideology of racial discrimination that transcended religious issues. Theories that depicted Jews as a separate "race" contributed to the turning point that led to the fascist racial laws of the 20th century. This transition highlighted a continuity of historical prejudices, which were however reinterpreted in racial terms, culminating in the policies of exclusion and persecution of fascism and, later, in the deportations during the Second World War (Finzi, 2019). Antisemitism in Italy has evolved from religious anti-Judaism to political and racial antisemitism, maintaining a continuous line of prejudices that, while changing in form and intensity, has never completely died out. The current landscape of antisemitism in Italy reveals a complex and varied phenomenon that is expressed on various levels and manifests itself in different forms.

One of the most visible dimensions of contemporary antisemitism is found online, where hate speech spreads rapidly via social media and websites. Antisemitism is expressed primarily through conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial, and defamation of Jews as the alleged holders of global "economic power." The spread of these ideas is facilitated by social media, where it is easier to spread hateful content without control (CDEC Foundation's Observatory on Antisemitism, 2023; Pasta et al., 2021).

Modern antisemitism is often linked to periods of economic and social crisis. Global events such as the 2008 economic crisis and the pandemic have reignited latent prejudices, leading to a growth of resentment towards minorities perceived as "different", and among these the Jewish community stands out, often represented as a scapegoat (Alietti & Padovan, 2010).

Furthermore, the Arab-Israeli conflict and hostilities against the State of Israel have often evolved into antisemitic sentiments directed at Jews in general, mixing political criticism with ethnic and religious prejudice (Finzi, 2019).

2.1.2. The historical evolution and the current landscape of anti-Muslim hatred in Italy

The historical evolution and the current landscape of anti-Muslim hatred in Italy present a complex phenomenon, reflecting a series of social, political, and cultural dynamics with deep roots and diverse manifestations. The analysis of this phenomenon highlights how anti-Muslim hatred originates in historical legacies and further develops in response to contemporary events and the growing debate on immigration and security.

Anti-Muslim hatred has deep historical roots, intertwined with Italian colonial history and the long relationship between the Western world and Islam. From the late nineteenth century, in particular, the negative perception of Islam was consolidated through Italian colonialism in Africa. Representations of the Muslim "other" as "savage" or "barbaric" permeated Italian culture, creating persistent stereotypes that today resurface in new forms of hostility (Vicini, 2022; Schmidt di Friedberg, 2004).

The arrival of immigrants from Muslim countries in the 1980s and 1990s marked a new phase for anti-Muslim hatred in Italy, which manifested not only through hostility towards Muslims as a religious group but also as an ethnic and cultural minority. With the September 11, 2001, attack and the subsequent "war on terrorism," the portrayal

of Muslims as a threat intensified, promoting a narrative that links Islam to violence and fanaticism. This rhetoric, amplified by the media and influential political figures, has embedded prejudice against Muslims within Italian public and political discourse (Schmidt di Friedberg, 2004; Sciortino, 2002).

Since the 2000s, anti-Muslim discourse has further rooted itself in public debate, promoting an image of Muslims as a group culturally and religiously incompatible with Western values. During this period, recurring themes were consolidated, such as the presumed refusal of Muslims to integrate, their inclination towards radicalization, and the danger posed by their communities to Italian culture and security. This has led to widespread stigmatization that has not only polarized public debate but has also limited many Muslim communities' ability to forge meaningful connections with Italian society (Floridia, 2017; Alietti & Padovan, 2018).

In everyday life, anti-Muslim hatred in Italy manifests itself through acts of discrimination and micro-racism that particularly affect young Muslims, especially girls who wear the veil. Schools present one of the main spaces where these young people experience hostility towards their religious affiliation. Such acts develop through subtle and almost imperceptible forms of discrimination, where cultural and religious aspects, such as clothing or names, are used to differentiate and marginalize Muslim students (Vicini, 2022).

Furthermore, institutions, including educational ones, do not always effectively counter these forms of anti-Muslim hatred, sometimes inadvertently fostering attitudes and practices that perpetuate prejudice. The Italian labor market also reflects this bias, with Muslims facing difficulties in obtaining stable and well-paying positions, thus contributing to the economic and social marginalization of these communities (Alietti & Padovan, 2018; Perocco, 2024).

Anti-Muslim hatred has also expanded significantly into the digital world, where hate speech against Islam and Muslims finds space on social media and information platforms. The digitalization of hate has allowed anti-Muslim groups and individuals to reach a broader audience and legitimize existing prejudices with aggressive and polarizing narratives. Muslims, often labeled as "terrorists" or "threats" to European culture, are frequent targets of disinformation campaigns, which, according to some studies, have fostered a widespread climate of fear and hostility among the Italian population (Vitullo, 2019).

Italian media play a significant role in shaping the public image of Islam and Muslims. Newspapers and television programs often present a distorted and stereotyped view of Islam, reinforcing anti-Muslim hatred. The portrayal of Islam as an inherently violent religion and of Muslims as a community resistant to integration is a recurring theme that reinforces existing prejudices and makes it difficult to build an inclusive image of Italian society. This has negative effects on the public perception of Muslims, often translating into discrimination and acts of violence (Sciortino, 2002; Alietti & Padovan, 2018).

Anti-Muslim hatred in Italy is a deeply rooted and multifaceted challenge that requires a comprehensive solution. In addition to measures to combat institutional discrimination and promote inclusive policies, a cultural shift involving all sectors of

society is essential. Awareness-raising in schools, improving the representation of Islam in the media, and interfaith dialogue are vital steps to promote a more inclusive society. Italian Muslim communities, although still marginalized, play an essential role in building an alternative narrative that shows their diversity and helps overcome widespread prejudice and hatred (Alietti & Padovan, 2018; Floridia, 2017).

Anti-Muslim hatred in Italy thus has historical origins but has evolved in response to contemporary factors, fueled by a public and media narrative that links it to issues of security and integration. The response to this form of religious discrimination requires a common commitment that encompasses both institutional interventions and grassroots initiatives to tackle one of the country's most significant social challenges.

2.1.3.   Intersectionality of antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred in Italy

The intersectionality between antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred in Italy presents a complex phenomenon, where prejudices against Jews and Muslims intertwine and reinforce each other, fueled by social, political, and cultural dynamics. Both groups suffer from discrimination that manifests in similar ways and often overlaps, especially in the contexts of online hate and public discourse. This connection, also known as "cross-bias" against ethnic and religious minorities, is extensively studied in social sciences as a result of the human tendency to generalize and polarize.

Antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred in Italy have roots going back centuries, and the two phenomena share some common traits. Historically, antisemitism often portrayed Jews as powerful yet suspicious figures, stereotypes exploited for political ends. Similarly, negative perceptions of Islam have often been associated with colonialism and religious wars, depicting Muslims as "enemies of the West" (Alietti & Padovan, 2010; Pasta, 2023). With the beginning of the 20th century, both groups were labeled as "outsiders" to European culture, establishing stereotypes of separation that reemerged in recent times with the increase in global tensions.

September 11, 2001, marked a turning point for anti-Muslim hatred, triggering a new wave of hostility toward Muslim communities and reviving some old antisemitic accusations linked to the "Jewish conspiracy." Both minorities became targets of conspiracy theories depicting Muslims as potential terrorists and Jews as manipulators of international dynamics. These conspiratorial narratives have intensified intolerance, transforming antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred into a form of overlapping hate, where the accusation of being "antagonists" of Western society unites the two groups (Alietti & Padovan, 2010).

In the Italian context, both groups face discrimination that expresses itself in cultural and religious stereotypes, especially through online discourse. Online hate content often does not distinguish between Jews and Muslims, merging them into a narrative of "incompatibility" with Italian values. This discourse is fueled by the idea of an identity threat, where Jews are associated with economic control and Muslims with violence (Pasta et al., 2021; Verducci, 2022).

Digital platforms amplify these narratives, allowing the spread of content that constructs a negative and distorted image of both communities. In this context, polarization becomes particularly evident: public debate tends to link religious and cultural differences to security and national identity, thus creating fertile ground for the rooting of intersectional prejudices (Pasta, 2023).

The intersectionality between antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred in Italy is a complex reality that requires an interdisciplinary approach, encompassing both prevention and public education. The main challenge remains building a society that recognizes and values diversity, overcoming cultural and religious divisions and addressing the problem at its root, in the perception and discourse that fuel hate.

The main challenges stem from the difficulty in combating stereotypes and prejudices deeply rooted in culture and public perception. As highlighted by the Commissione Jo Cox and confirmed by the REASON project, one of the obstacles lies in the fluid and ever-evolving nature of hate speech, especially online. Discriminatory language towards Jews and Muslims often manifests in subtle forms, disguised as legitimate discourse, making it challenging to identify and effectively resistant to conventional legal or regulatory tools (Pasta et al., 2021; Alietti & Padovan, 2010).

Another significant challenge is the "normalization of hate." Disinformation and hostile discourse, spread through traditional and digital media, perpetuate negative perceptions of religious minorities, as highlighted by the reports from the Special Commission Jo Cox and the findings of the Center for Research on Intercultural Relations. These perceptions often find an echo in political groups and extremist movements, which exploit feelings of insecurity and mistrust to gain consensus. This systematic legitimization of discrimination attitudes is one of the most pressing challenges to be addressed (Verducci, 2022; Pasta, 2023).

2.1.4. Responses and initiatives aimed at combating antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and religious-based discrimination in Italy

Holocaust denial and neo-fascism remain pressing manifestations of antisemitism. In response, the Italian government has adopted the "National Strategy to Fight Antisemitism", which integrates preventive, educational, and security measures to strengthen historical knowledge, combat Holocaust trivialization, promote tolerance, and ensure the safety of Jewish communities. Additionally, the Senate Extraordinary Commission utilizes the "pyramid of hatred" model to monitor and counter the escalation of antisemitic behavior through education and awareness campaigns (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 2021; Ministero dell'Istruzione, 2021).

A key milestone in fostering interfaith understanding is the Second Vatican Council's "Nostra Aetate" document, which significantly advanced Jewish-Christian dialogue and reduced interfaith tensions (Finzi, 2019). To address challenges faced by Muslims, Italy supports initiatives such as the "Consigli Territoriali per l'Immigrazione", which promote intercultural dialogue and counter hostile narratives. These efforts are complemented by national and local programs aimed at ensuring fair representation of Muslims in public discourse and fostering education on religious diversity to combat stereotypes and institutional racism (Sciortino, 2002; Floridia, 2017).

In recent years, Italy has enhanced its legal framework against hate crimes and religious discrimination. The Special Commission Jo Cox Against Intolerance and Xenophobia, established in 2016, and the "Mozione Segre", adopted in 2019, have been instrumental in addressing intolerance and hate, particularly towards Jews and Muslims. These initiatives emphasize the need for intersectional strategies, combining legal protections, education, and awareness campaigns. A 2022 report recommended strengthening the protection of religious minorities and recognized the interconnected nature of discrimination, advocating for targeted campaigns and robust legal frameworks to combat hate speech (Alietti & Padovan, 2010; Pasta et al., 2021; Verducci, 2022).

Education plays a pivotal role in combating antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred. The "National Strategy to Combat Antisemitism" prioritizes awareness-raising and school-based initiatives, fostering dialogue between Jewish communities and other faith groups. Concrete actions include collaborations with cultural and academic institutions to monitor and prevent the spread of conspiracy theories and Holocaust denial content (Verducci, 2022).

One prominent example is the "Osservatorio Mediavox", part of the European project "REASON – REAct in the Struggle against Online Hate Speech", led by the Università Cattolica di Milano. The program trains young activists from targeted groups, such as Jews and Muslims, to identify and counter hate speech through categorization, data collection, and the development of counter-narratives to reshape public perceptions of minorities (Mediavox Report, 2020; Pasta et al., 2021; Pasta, 2023). In parallel, Italian schools promote activities on Holocaust remembrance, inclusion, and respect for human rights. Education guidelines emphasize a historical and intercultural approach to Islam, fostering understanding of religious diversity and addressing widespread prejudice (Pasta et al., 2021).

Social media and online platforms play a significant role in the spread of discriminatory content. To address this, various organizations and institutions have intensified efforts to monitor online hate and promote counter-narratives. The Center for Research on Intercultural Relations at Università Cattolica di Milano, through its Osservatorio Mediavox, analyzes hate speech targeting Jews and Muslims and develops alternative narratives. These initiatives include training young individuals from target groups to identify and respond to offensive content, as well as producing educational videos and materials to raise public awareness about the impact of anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism (Mediavox Report, 2020; Pasta, 2023).

The media, both traditional and digital, are central to shaping public opinion and combating hate. Italian authorities actively monitor hate speech to prevent the spread of negative stereotypes about Jews and Muslims. The Commissione Jo Cox has emphasized the need for fair and inclusive representation of religious minorities in the media. Additionally, various organizations have issued guidelines encouraging journalists to avoid stereotypes and sensationalism in their reporting (Pasta et al., 2021).

In a context of growing religious diversity, interfaith collaboration and intercultural dialogue are essential tools for preventing discrimination. The Territorial Council for Immigration, an institution that promotes integration and dialogue among Italy's various religious and cultural communities, has promoted several interfaith dialogue initiatives involving Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities. These meetings, in addition to representing opportunities for reflection and mutual understanding, provide a safe space to address shared challenges such as discrimination and religious prejudice (Pasta, 2023; Floridia, 2017).

Religious discrimination in Italy often manifests in work and school settings. To address these issues, various civil society organizations and institutions have promoted inclusion policies that embrace religious diversity. In particular, the National Social Inclusion Strategy has highlighted the need for targeted interventions to reduce disparities in access and treatment in the workplace for religious minorities, ensuring that discriminatory practices and prejudice do not hinder access to employment and vocational training (Verducci, 2022).

In schools, where young Muslims and Jews may experience discrimination due to their religion, awareness initiatives and the involvement of parents and local communities have shown positive outcomes. Italian schools have responded by implementing

citizenship education programs that emphasize acceptance of religious and cultural diversity, providing students with tools to understand the roots of prejudice and promote a more cohesive and respectful society (Pasta et al., 2021).

At the international level, Italy collaborates with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and the European Union, which provides a regulatory framework for combating religious discrimination. Adopting the IHRA's definition of antisemitism, which includes prejudice against Jewish communities as a hate crime, represents a significant step in the fight against hate, ensuring legal protection for victims and promoting Holocaust awareness in schools and public spaces. This approach also extends to the protection of Muslim minorities, whose protection is provided in European human rights protocols and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (Pasta et al., 2021).

Although Italy has made significant progress in countering antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and religious discrimination, the challenges remain significant. The fight against these forms of prejudice requires a continuous, multi-level, and intersectional approach that integrates institutional, educational, and social initiatives aimed not only at mitigating but also preventing the roots of prejudice.

In light of the above-mentioned challenges and initiatives implemented so far, Italy's responses to combating the hate phenomenon require strengthening and expanding the strategies already in place:

- Ongoing and in-depth education: Educational initiatives must expand their impact and reach. Training on respecting religious diversity and the history of antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred needs to be integrated at all educational levels, from primary schools to universities (Verducci, 2022; Alietti & Padovan, 2010).
- European collaboration and stricter regulations: Collaborating with European institutions is crucial to strengthening anti-hate legislation, aligning Italian laws with European guidelines, and improving the effectiveness of penalties for hate crimes and hate speech online (Verducci, 2022).
- Involvement of religious communities and the private sector: The fight against hate requires the active involvement of religious communities themselves, as well as civil society organizations and the private sector. Jewish and Muslim communities can collaborate on interfaith dialogue projects and initiatives that promote mutual understanding, breaking down barriers and prejudice. Moreover, tech companies and social media must actively participate in moderating online hate content by adopting stricter protocols and control tools to monitor and remove discriminatory content (Pasta et al., 2021; Pasta, 2023).
- Media campaigns and alternative narratives: To combat the normalization of hate, large-scale media campaigns are needed to promote positive and alternative narratives. These campaigns should be promoted by both the government and non-profit organizations, involving influential public figures, such as artists, writers, and influencers, who can broaden the message of inclusiveness (Pasta, 2023).
- Constant monitoring and analysis of hate: It is essential for institutions to continue monitoring forms of online and offline hate, collecting data and analyzing trends in hate toward religious minorities. This monitoring allows for the quick identification of new forms of discrimination and the implementation of targeted and timely interventions, helping institutions make informed decisions on how to address the evolving phenomenon (Pasta et al., 2021).

Italy has adopted a series of promising measures to counter antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and religious discrimination, but these initiatives need to be supported and expanded to meet current challenges. Institutional, legislative, and social responses must evolve with changes in the hate landscape, integrating education, regulation, and international collaboration. Only through collective commitment and continuous awareness-raising can a more inclusive Italian society be built, capable of embracing and valuing its own cultural and religious diversity.

2.2.   Successful Interventions and Good Practices

The secondary research on effective interventions and good practices that address religious intolerance and promote interfaith dialogue in Italy revealed relatively few well-established initiatives in this area. Despite the limited number, two significant practices were identified that stood out for their impact and innovation.

1. A Sea of Letters on the Shores of the Mediterranean
Islamic calligraphic art in its relations with the Latin West. Can calligraphy unite East and West, Islam and Christianity, the civilizations of the Mediterranean today? The exhibition aims to discover an art like calligraphy, forgotten in the West, but always present in the Islamic world as the graphic art form par excellence. To stimulate dialogue and comparison with Western culture and the Christian religion, the art of writing in Islam is compared, in its variety of styles and different eras, with the writing and calligraphic art – largely lost –developed in Europe from the High Middle Ages onwards. The initiative itself represents a sign of intercultural and inter-religious Islamic-Christian encounter and dialogue as it was promoted and organized by the Diocesan Museum "Pietro G. Nonis" of Vicenza, together with the ISA Academy of Interreligious Studies and the Italian COREIS (Islamic Religious Community). Through the exhibition, people who are usually not interested in Islam had an occasion to approach the Islamic culture and spirituality through the universal language of beauty and arts. The involvement of young Muslim students in the Italian schools was also a key success factor to promote an interreligious education of the Islamic tradition, providing them (and to the teachers as well) intellectual tools to tackle nowadays challenges in the multicultural society.

2. MJLC Muslim and Jewish Leadership Council Europe
MJLC Muslim-Jewish Leadership Council is the first European platform for Muslim leaders and Jewish religious authorities to proactively support religious freedoms for Muslim and Jewish communities across Europe. MJLC supports education, information exchange and promotes greater understanding and respect for minority religions. The MJLC enables information exchange about the local and national communities' needs, concerns, challenges and the day-to-day experience of living a minority religious identity in Europe. The Muslim and Jewish communities share a common heritage, and have been connected by many bridges in the past. The Council serves to build more bridges between and among these communities.

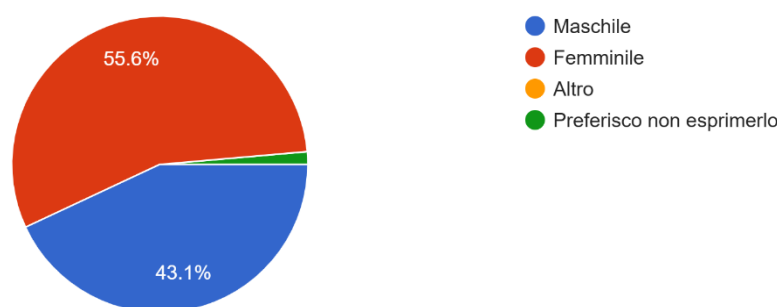# 3.   Online Survey Results in Italy

3.1.   Demographic Information

The survey received **72 responses**, distributed as follows:
Gender:

- **Female:** 40 responses (55,56%)
- **Male:** 31 responses (43,06%)
- Prefer not to specify: 1 response (1,39%)

1. Genere:

72 responses

The survey received 72 responses, with a slightly higher participation from females (55.56%) compared to males (43.06%), while 1.39% preferred not to specify their gender. In terms of age distribution, most participants were in the 26-35, 56-65 and 18-25 age brackets, although younger and older participants responded as well, contributing to a balanced demographic representation.

2. Età:

72 responses
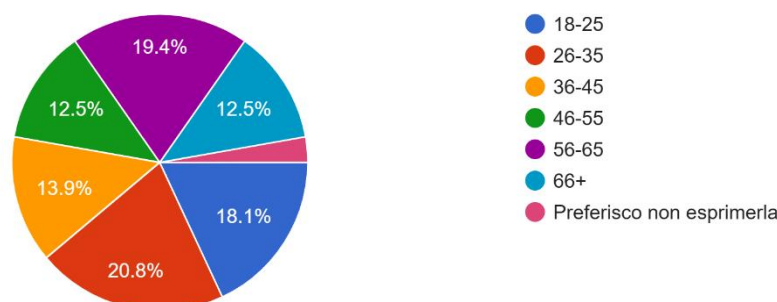
Religious Affiliation:

- **Christian:** 32 responses (44,4%)
- **Muslim:** 19 responses (26,4 %)
- **Jewish:** 13 responses (18,1%)
- **Other:** 8 responses (11,1%) (including Buddhists, agnostics, and atheists)

3. Religione:

72 responses

- ● Ebraica
- ● Cristiana
- ● Islamica
- ● Altra

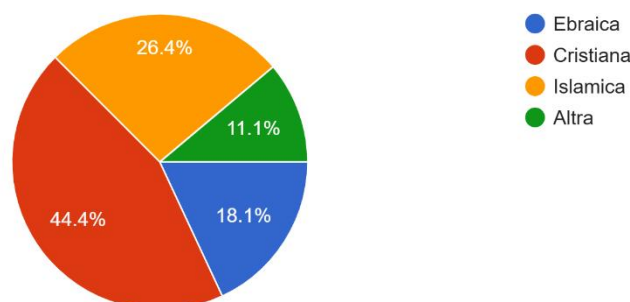The survey indicates that Christians provided the majority of responses (44.4%), reflecting their significant presence in Italy and a strong openness to participating in surveys. Muslims (26.4%), Jews (18.1%), and respondents of other affiliations (11.1%) also contributed, though in smaller proportions.

In Italy, the Jewish community is a minority, which may account for their limited participation in surveys due to demographic factors and privacy concerns. However, their notable engagement in interviews highlights a preference for personal interactions, which encourage trust and allow for more nuanced expression.

3.2.   Knowledge and Awareness

When asked about their familiarity with the concept of inter-religious coalition building against anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism, 40,3% (29 participants) reported being "somewhat familiar," while 20,8% (15 participants) indicated they were "not familiar at all". The remaining respondents were divided between "very familiar" (26,4% or 19 participants) and "extremely familiar" (17,6% or 6 participants). The data shows most participants (84.3%) had some degree of familiarity with inter-religious coalition building against anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism, though their levels of awareness varied considerably.

4. Quanto ti è famigliare il concetto di costituzione di una coalizione interreligiosa contro l'islamofobia e l'antisemitismo?

72 responses

- Per niente famigliare
- Un po' famigliare
- Molto famigliare
- Estremamente famigliare
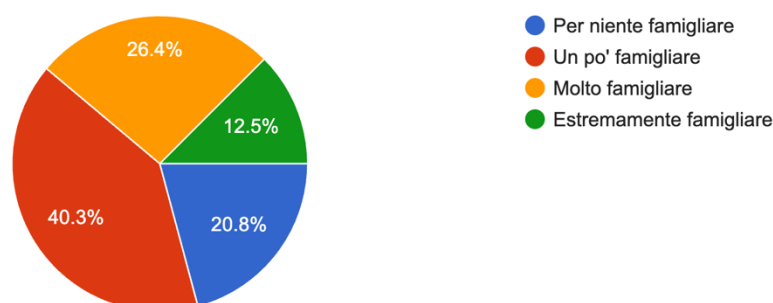
Among those who did participate, their involvement spanned various areas like academia, community, and interfaith activities. Some took specialized university courses, such as the theology of religions at Waldensian University, Islamic studies at the University of Insubria, and advanced programs like Gender Studies and Islam at Humboldt University in Berlin.

Academic engagement was particularly strong, with participants attending courses and events at well-known institutions like the Catholic University of Milan and Brescia. These educational experiences ranged from formal academic programs to specialized interfaith training sessions.

Community involvement was also significant, with people actively participating in established interfaith networks like the Milan Religions Forum and the Como Interfaith Table. Practical engagement included organizing intercultural workshops for youth, participating in initiatives like the MILC and Fighting Online Antisemitism, and implementing projects like TRUST.

The responses also highlighted various forms of cultural and educational outreach, including interreligious concerts, art exhibitions, and school-based initiatives. Several participants worked directly in educational settings, particularly as religious education teachers and citizenship education coordinators in secondary schools.

Professional development and practical dialogue initiatives were also emphasized, with participants organizing and attending public meetings dedicated to interfaith understanding, charity dinners, and cultural exchange events. Some even integrated these experiences into their professional roles, especially in educational and community leadership positions.

Buddhist philosophical perspectives were also mentioned, with one participant noting how Buddhist teachings informed their approach to rejecting hatred and contempt

towards others, demonstrating how religious principles can actively contribute to interfaith harmony.

5. Hai frequentato qualche corso/seminario/formazione o partecipato a altre iniziative destinate a combattere l'islamofobia e l'antisemitismo?

72 responses

- Si
- No
- Non saprei

68.1%

26.4%
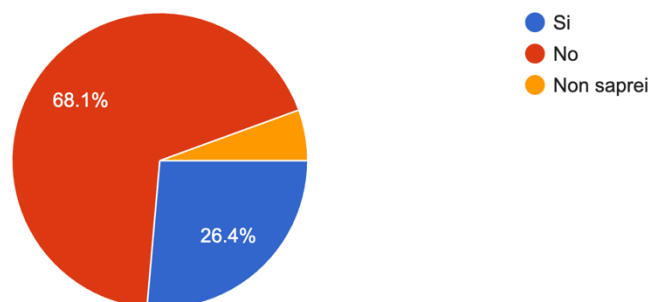
3.3.   Current Situation

When asked if they have experienced prejudice from members of other religious communities or other groups within their religious community, 68.1% (49 participants) reported having experiencing prejudice, 30,6% (22 participants) had not, and 1.4% (1 participants) were unsure.

Muslim respondents highlighted persistent stereotypes in Western society, particularly the characterization of Islam as an "immigrant religion" considered secondary to established faiths. Several participants noted a widespread perception of Islam as fundamentally foreign to European culture. Muslim women faced specific challenges related to wearing the hijab, with respondents reporting prejudiced assumptions about their autonomy and femininity. Common stereotypes included assumptions about being forced to wear religious attire or lacking decision-making capacity. Some respondents also noted experiencing prejudice related to terrorism stereotypes and radicalization.

Jewish respondents described experiencing direct discrimination, particularly from Christian communities. Some reported being blamed for societal problems solely due to their Jewish identity, with specific mentions of Christian-originated antisemitism.

Discrimination within religious institutions emerged as a significant theme, with several respondents pointing to an implicit sense of superiority among some Christian communities toward other faiths. Protestant respondents, representing a religious minority, reported their own experiences of marginalization.

Interfaith relations appeared strained in many cases, with respondents reporting disrespectful comments from members of other religious communities. This was particularly evident in interactions between Muslim and Catholic communities, where misconceptions and prejudices created barriers to understanding. Some respondents also noted discrimination from non-religious individuals who viewed people of faith as inherently irrational.

Gender discrimination intersected with religious prejudice, with some respondents noting that women faced additional barriers to leadership roles within religious

communities. Family relationships were also affected, with some participants reporting experiencing prejudice within their own families.

Some of the answers include the following:

"In the West, Islam is considered the religion of immigrants and therefore second-class"

"In general, the consideration that Islam is a foreign religion for Europeans"

"Prejudices from non-believers, who consider religious people incapable of reasoning"

"Mainly towards Catholic and Jewish communities"

"From Muslim people"

"I was mocked"

"Accused of being the cause of all evils because I am Jewish. Especially by Christians"

"Prejudices within family"

"There is an implicit and unconfessed belief among Christians of having a superior religion to others..."

"I am Muslim, and I have received many disrespectful comments from members of the Catholic community"

"Prejudice from some Catholic representatives who consider Islam the religion of immigrants"

"I don't think so"

"As a Protestant minority"

"Sometimes I am reproached that Islam often produces terrorists and radicals"

"The prejudice linked to the hijab stereotype, according to which you are considered a poor thing incapable of making your own choices, or who 'has lost femininity' or who was forced to wear it through coercion and manipulation, at best"
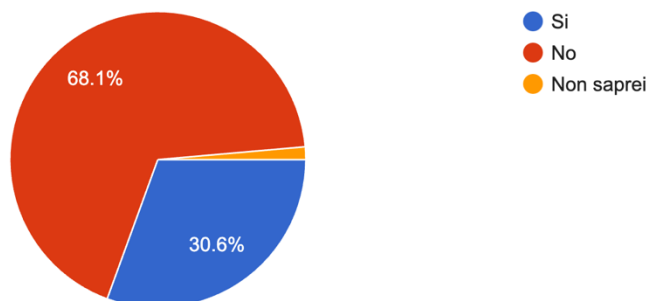
"For a Muslim companion"

"Due to ignorance or misinformation surrounding Islam"

"For some, women cannot have a leadership role in communities"

6. Hai subito pregiudizi da parte di membri di altre comunità religiose o di altri gruppi all'interno della tua comunità religiosa?

72 responses

- Si
- No
- Non saprei

When asked about feeling safe in places of worship, 87.5% of respondents (63 people) reported feeling secure, while 5.6% (4 respondents) did not feel safe, and 6.9% (5 respondents) were unsure.

The survey responses reveal varying experiences of safety and security concerns across different religious communities. Some respondents express serious concerns about the safety of their places of worship, with antisemitism being a notable threat that has led to the need for armed guards around religious sites.

Personal experiences of discomfort emerge in religious spaces, with some respondents feeling embarrassed by discriminatory discussions that denigrate other faiths. Internal criticism within religious communities is also present, as noted by Muslim respondents who mentioned facing criticism from fellow Muslims. The presence of identity-based fundamentalism was also noted as a persistent concern across religious communities.

Some of the answers include the following:

"Antisemitism is present and sometimes attacks on places of worship are feared"

"Not always. Mainly I sometimes feel embarrassed by certain discussions that are aimed at denigrating a different religion"

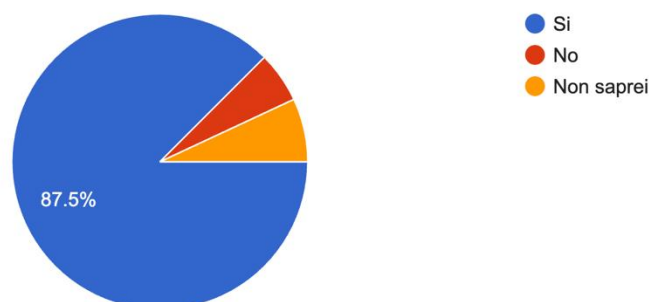*"Because my places of worship are always surrounded by armed guards"*

"My place of worship is nature"

"Some of my own Muslim brothers are critical"

"A certain percentage of identity fundamentalism is always present"

7. Ti senti al sicuro e a tuo agio nei tuoi luoghi di culto?

72 responses

- ● Si
- ● No
- ● Non saprei

87.5%
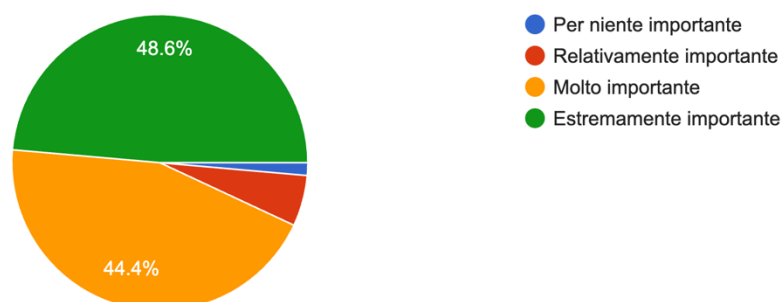
When asked about the importance of promoting inter-religious coalition building against anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism, a strong majority of respondents (approximately 93%) considered it significant, with 48.6% (35 respondents) rating it as "extremely important" and 44.4% (32 respondents) as "very important." A small minority of 5.6% (4 respondents) rated it as "relatively important," and only 1.4% (1 respondent) considered it "not at all important."

8. Quanto ritieni importante promuovere la creazione di coalizioni interreligiose contro l'odio anti-musulmano e l'antisemitismo?

72 responses

- ● Per niente importante
- ● Relativamente importante
- ● Molto importante
- ● Estremamente importante

48.6%

44.4%

When asked about the importance of incorporating inter-religious coalition building against anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism in educational programs and curricula, an overwhelming 93.1% of respondents viewed this as a high priority.

Of all respondents, 43.1% (31 people) rated this integration as "extremely important," while 50% (36 respondents) considered it "very important." A small portion (6.9%, 5 respondents) viewed it as "relatively important," and notably, no respondents considered it "not important at all."

These findings demonstrate strong consensus across participants about education's crucial role in addressing religious discrimination. The near-unanimous support, with over 93% rating it as either very or extremely important, suggests widespread recognition of education as a key tool for promoting interfaith understanding and combating both anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism.

9. Quanto pensi sia importante integrare le questioni legate alla costituzione di una coalizione interreligiosa contro l'islamofobia e l'antisemitismo nei corsi e nei programmi educativi?

72 responses

- Per niente importante
- Relativamente importante
- Molto importante
- Estremamente importante
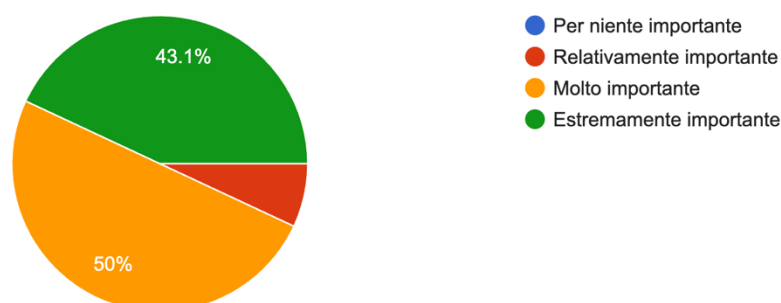
Regarding the effectiveness of organizations promoting inter-religious coalition building against anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism in Italy, most respondents (52.8%, 38 people) expressed uncertainty about their impact by responding "I don't know."

A significant portion (34.7%, 25 respondents) explicitly stated that these organizations are not effective in their mission. Only 12.5% (9 respondents) considered the organizations effective in promoting inter-religious cooperation and combating anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism.

This considerable skepticism (87.5% either uncertain or negative) suggests a perceived inadequacy in current organizational efforts to address religious discrimination and promote interfaith dialogue in Italy.

10. Ritieni che le organizzazioni che promuovono la costituzione di coalizioni interreligiose contro l'islamofobia e l'antisemitismo in Italia siano efficaci?

72 responses

- Si, sono efficaci
- No, non sono efficaci
- Non saprei
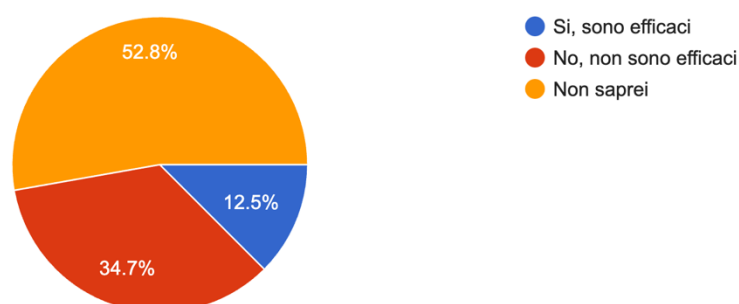
When asked about the sufficiency of current inter-religious coalition building initiatives against anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism in Italy, most respondents (70.8%, 51 people) explicitly stated that existing efforts are inadequate.

More than a quarter of participants (27.8%, 20 respondents) expressed uncertainty about the sufficiency of current initiatives, while only 4.1% (1 respondent) considered them adequate. This overwhelming skepticism (98.6% either uncertain or negative) indicates a perceived need for more robust and effective interfaith cooperation programs to combat religious discrimination in Italy.

11. Ritieni che le attuali iniziative volte a costituire in Italia una coalizione interreligiosa contro l'islamofobia e l'antisemitismo siano sufficienti?

72 responses

● Si, sono sufficienti
● No, non sono sufficienti
● Non saprei

27.8%

70.8%
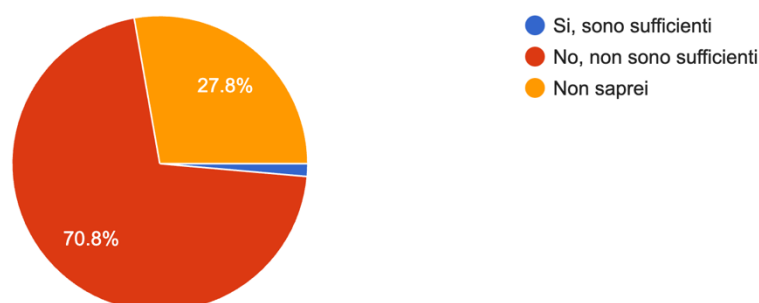
3.4. Barriers and Challenges

Survey findings reveal significant challenges in addressing religious discrimination and interfaith dynamics in Italy. The most prominent concern, identified by 76.4% of respondents (55 people), relates to institutional bias and discrimination, manifesting through lack of support, limited opportunities, insufficient resources, and under-representation of diverse religious groups in institutional settings.

Nearly half of the respondents (45.8%, 33 people) pointed to a fundamental lack of awareness and understanding of inter-religious dynamics as a key barrier. This is closely followed by 43.1% (31 respondents) who identified entrenched cultural and social norms that perpetuate prejudice and intolerance as significant obstacles to interfaith harmony.

A concerning 30.6% of participants (22 respondents) highlighted the insufficiency of existing policies and enforcement mechanisms for combating religious discrimination. Additionally, 19.4% (14 respondents) noted limited access to education and resources specifically aimed at promoting interfaith dialogue as a notable challenge. A small portion of respondents (2.8%, 2 people) indicated other barriers:

> *"Tensions between Jewish and Muslim communities, also due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."*

> *"I think the obstacles are dynamics rooted in the fabric of social structure. I also don't believe it's adequate to pursue "anti" hate policies, rather, I would support "pro" love ones. We shouldn't teach children what NOT to do, but WHAT TO DO. Scientists and anthropologists say this, and besides being the strategy with the highest probability of success, I believe it's also a struggle that doesn't involve all parties."*

> *"Ignorance from people towards other religions, ignorance that leads to prejudices"*

These findings paint a picture of systemic challenges in Italy's approach to religious diversity and inclusion, with institutional barriers and societal attitudes forming the primary obstacles to effective interfaith relations. The high percentage identifying institutional bias suggests a need for fundamental structural changes in how religious

diversity is approached at an organizational and policy level. The significant concern about awareness and cultural norms also indicates a need for broader societal education and cultural transformation to promote more inclusive interfaith dynamics.

12. Quali ritieni siano in Italia i principali ostacoli alla promozione della costituzione di una coalizione interreligiosa contro l'islamofobia e l'antisemitismo?

72 responses
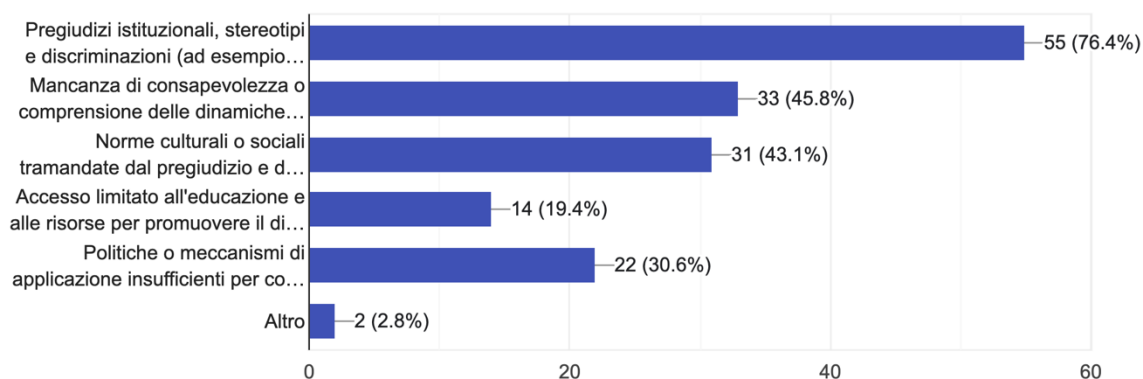
When asked about challenges or barriers in their participation in initiatives for inter-religious dialogue and cooperation, 44.4% (32 respondents) mentioned they had not participated in any related initiatives, 40.3% (29 respondents) faced no challenges, and 15.3% (11 respondents) faced the following challenges:

"Little interest and participation"

"The conviction of absolute truth in one's religious choice"

"Christian representatives tend to monopolize events"

"Fear of identity loss; prejudices; opposition from civil institutions; little interest from religious communities."

"Countering poorly concealed attempts by Catholics to monopolize everything"

"Prejudices and stereotypes cannot be dismantled through dialogue because Islamic theocracies (Afghanistan, Iran, etc.) generate persecution, murders, and intolerable restrictions on freedom, especially for women, which have echoes in immigrant communities. I personally know immigrant women and girls who hate the veil or its worst derivations, who endure it because they are harassed or threatened by their families. All this generates violent reactions that prevent dialogue. Proselytism leads those born into Islam to consider others or a girl in a miniskirt as infidels to be punished. This mess will end when no Islamic religious authority will have the power to exercise secular power and condemn in the name of ALLAH."

"Role of women religious leaders"

"Sometimes the lack of real and concrete openness towards others. A basic prejudice, especially from some affiliations, whereby one considers oneself

the keeper of absolute adherence, without true drive for encounter, understanding and sharing"

"Not a popular topic, little recognized by ordinary citizens and also by institutions: schools, politics, various churches"

"The interfaith event always finds fundamentalist obstacles in its reference communities in every part"

13. Hai incontrato sfide o barriere specifiche nella tua partecipazione a iniziative per il dialogo e la cooperazione interreligiosa?

72 responses

- 🔵 Si
- 🔴 No
- 🟠 Non ho partecipato ad alcuna iniziativa per il dialogo e la cooperazione interreligiosa
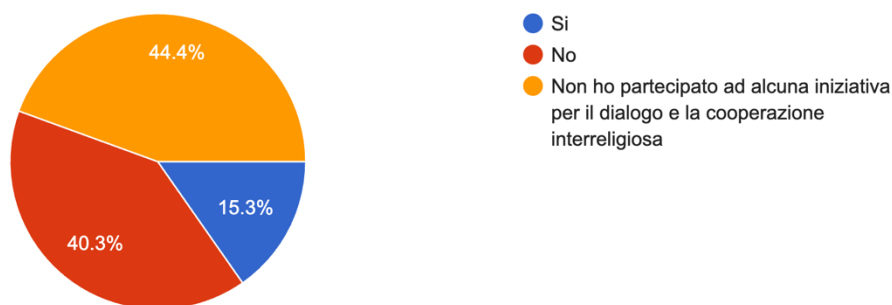
3.5.   Suggestions and Recommendations

When asked about strategies or methods which organizations and groups could use to promote unity and combat anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism, respondents suggested the following:

The majority selected developing educational programs to promote understanding and tolerance which received 75% (54 respondents), followed by encouraging interfaith dialogues and collaborations at 59.7% (43 respondents). Advocating for policies that promote religious freedom and inclusivity gathered significant support with 54.2% (39 respondents).

Engaging with political leaders and policymakers to address systemic issues received 44.4% (32 respondents), while promoting cultural exchange programs to bridge divides accounted for 43.1% (31 respondents). Both facilitating community events that foster solidarity and cooperation and supporting grassroots initiatives that promote peace and mutual respect represented 40.3% each (29 respondents).

Creating awareness campaigns to address stereotypes and misconceptions gathered 38.9% (28 respondents), while cooperation for the re-design of worship places accounted for 19.4% (14 respondents). Providing resources and support for victims of discrimination represented 15.3% (11 respondents), collaboration for the protection of abandoned worship places gathered 9.7% (7 respondents), and other suggestions represented 4.2% (3 respondents).

The strategies cover a range of approaches, with the majority emphasizing the importance of educational initiatives and interfaith dialogue to promote understanding and tolerance. Policy advocacy and engagement with political leaders also gathered significant support, highlighting the need for systemic change. Community-driven actions such as cultural exchange programs, solidarity events, and grassroots

initiates were also considered important. Practical measures including support for discrimination victims and protection of worship spaces, while receiving fewer responses, round out the comprehensive approach suggested by participants to combat both forms of religious discrimination.

14. Quali strategie o metodi potrebbero utilizzare organizzazioni e gruppi per promuovere l'unità e combattere l'islamofobia e l'antisemitismo?

72 responses

Incoraggiare il dialogo e la coll...	43 (59.7%)
Sviluppare programmi educativ...	54 (75%)
Creazione di campagne di sen...	28 (38.9%)
Fornire risorse e sostegno alle...	11 (15.3%)
Sostenere politiche che promu...	39 (54.2%)
Facilitare eventi comunitari che...	29 (40.3%)
Coinvolgere i leader politici e di...	32 (44.4%)
Promuovere programmi di sca...	31 (43.1%)
Sostenere iniziative di base ch...	29 (40.3%)
Collaborazioni per la protezion...	7 (9.7%)
Cooperazioni per la riprogettazi...	14 (19.4%)
Altro	3 (4.2%)

Other suggestions include the following:

"Create small community living spaces where young people and/or families of different religions choose to share daily life (while maintaining individual commitments to study, work, volunteering, sports, etc.), supporting each other in taking their faith seriously, offering a testimony to the local area and opening up to welcome people going through difficult situations in semi-autonomous rooms or apartments, such as asylum seekers and refugees who have recently arrived in Italy."

"Propose an educational plan where CATHOLIC religion class is replaced with "world religions," through which students of all ages can understand various interpretations of metaphysics throughout history and across the world to help form their own understanding. I believe that religion is discussed with children too superficially, and thus they think it's a "useless thing," and I believe instead it's important to teach them from an early age that it's important to understand how others see things that they see in a certain way, and that there isn't one TRUE RIGHT way to see/interpret them."

"Educational programming at every school level must be aimed, through historiography, at establishing religion as a personal matter rather than as a cultural and especially political institution. Today, dialogue between religions is hindered by regimes."

Regarding the most important topics to address in interfaith coalition building efforts against anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism, respondents identified the following priorities (could choose up to 5 options):

Prejudices and stereotypes 65.3% (47 respondents)

Intercultural communication and how intercultural dynamics influence interreligious dialogue 48.6% (35 respondents)

Team building and conflict resolution 36.1% (26 respondents)

Active listening 36.1% (26 respondents)

Building empathy 36.1% (26 respondents)

Language and rhetoric 25% (18 respondents)

Developing effective goals and objectives for actions involving interfaith dialogue 25% (18 respondents)

Phases of interfaith dialogue, proven methodologies and best practices 23.6% (17 respondents)

Gender issues and intersectionality 22.2% (16 respondents)

*Understanding power relations 19.4% (14 respondents)*

Types of interfaith dialogue 18.1% (13 respondents)

Applying proven methods and best practices in interfaith dialogue actions 16.7% (12 respondents)

Other 1.4% (1 respondent)

15. Quali ritieni siano i principali argomenti da affrontare negli sforzi per la creazione di coalizioni interreligiose contro l'islamofobia e l'antisemitismo?

72 responses
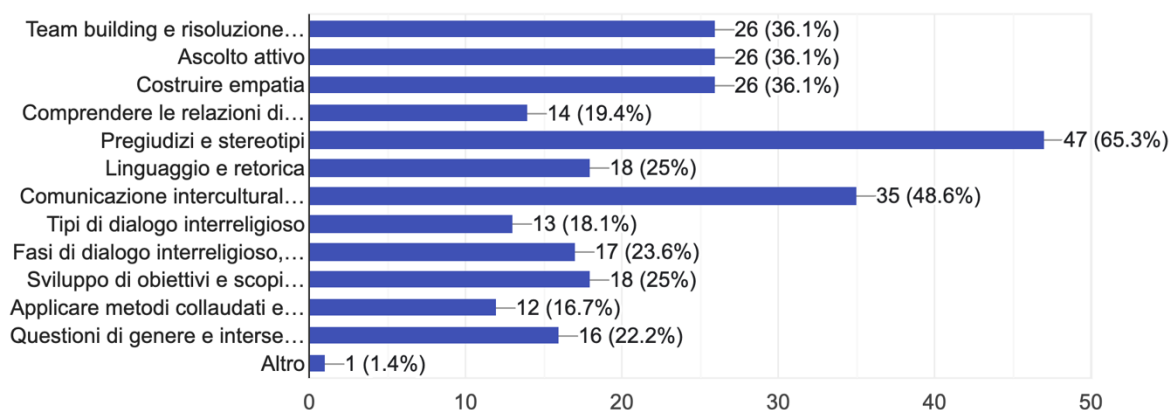
The respondent who chose "Other" answered the following:
"In-depth study of the experiences of joint Israeli-Palestinian groups working towards peace"
When asked for additional thoughts on inter-religious coalition building against anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism or related topics, respondents emphasized several key areas for action and improvement.
Respondents noted the importance of making the entire nation aware of Muslim and Jewish religious calendars and rhythms, suggesting this could enrich perspectives on

religious celebrations, similar to Christian holidays. There was particular concern that Muslim and Jewish festivals currently receive insufficient media coverage in Italy.

Institutional Support and Prison Services emerged as another significant theme. Several respondents emphasized the need for religious assistance in prisons for Muslim and Jewish inmates, suggesting the establishment of an organization enabling Muslim and Jewish religious leaders to support incarcerated individuals.

Youth Engagement and Education was also identified as a critical component for long-term success. The importance of involving young people was stressed, with respondents noting that future community leaders should develop personal friendships and connections early on. They emphasized the need to explore the relationship between religions and schools from a cultural and objective, non-denominational perspective.

Public Communication and Media Representation was seen as essential for fostering understanding. Respondents suggested establishing public television channels to help society understand the positive aspects of both religions, including highlighting good examples in educational settings.

Clear Stance Against Extremism was emphasized by multiple respondents. This included encouraging clear dissociation from terrorism and violence, with Islamic dialogue participants publicly condemning theocracies and violence perpetrated in the name of their faith. They stressed that religion should be a personal choice rather than an imposition.

Grassroots Approach was identified as crucial for authentic change. Some respondents specifically emphasized that coalition building should emerge from local communities embedded in their territories rather than being purely institutional or top-down initiatives.

Ongoing Dialogue was seen as vital for sustained progress. Respondents suggested that any such organization should actively comment on daily events to clarify principles and address misrepresentations, with several noting that additional meetings in this area could help eliminate ignorance on these subjects.

The responses collectively emphasized the need for practical, sustainable solutions that combine institutional support with grassroots engagement, focusing on education, media representation, and clear communication to combat both antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred effectively.

Some of the answers provided include the following:

> *"We need to make the entire nation aware of the rhythm and calendars of both religions to enrich the perspective of religious festivities, like the Christian ones."*

> *"Beyond educational programs, we need to consider religious assistance in prisons for Muslims and Jews."*

> *"Conviction about the importance of interfaith coalitions to build communities free from fear of those who are different."*

> *"Act quickly and form working groups at all levels to counter antisemitism and islamophobia."*

> *"It's fundamental to involve young people, the new generations, so that future community leaders are already connected through personal friendships."*

> *"Encourage clear and firm dissociation from terrorism and use of violence."*

"Deepen the relationship between religions and schools in a cultural and objective, non-denominational sense."

"If such an organization is created, it must express its views on daily events, clarifying principles and dispelling misconceptions."

"Establish public communication channels through TV so that society knows the positive aspects of both religions, including through good examples in education. We must establish as soon as possible an organization that allows Islamic and Jewish religious guides to minister to prisoners."

"Muslims who seek dialogue should clearly and publicly condemn theocracies and violence perpetrated in their faith's name and emphasize the illegitimacy of religion as imposition. Religion, all religions, is a personal choice and should not be coercion."

"In Italy, Islamic and Jewish festivities don't receive sufficient media coverage."

"New meetings in this area can help eliminate ignorance about this subject."

"It should arise from the grassroots, from local communities embedded in their territories, and not be a top-down operation or institutional window dressing."

3.6.   Closing Remarks

The survey underscores the urgent need for interfaith coalition building to combat anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism. Although awareness exists, efforts require significant reinforcement. Respondents emphasized:
- The importance of safe spaces for worship and dialogue.
- Educational programs targeting stereotypes and promoting shared values.
- Collaboration between religious and civic leaders to counter systemic biases and foster mutual understanding.

Convergences Across Faiths:
- All groups (Christian, Muslim, and Jewish) emphasized education as key to combating prejudice.
- Safety in places of worship was a shared concern.
- Interfaith dialogue was recognized as essential for bridging gaps and promoting mutual respect.

Divergences:
- Jewish participants cited concerns about antisemitism tied to global tensions.
- Muslim participants reported workplace discrimination and challenges with visible religious practices.
- Christian participants highlighted a growing need to address misconceptions about their faith in an increasingly diverse society.

Convergences and Divergences Across Faiths
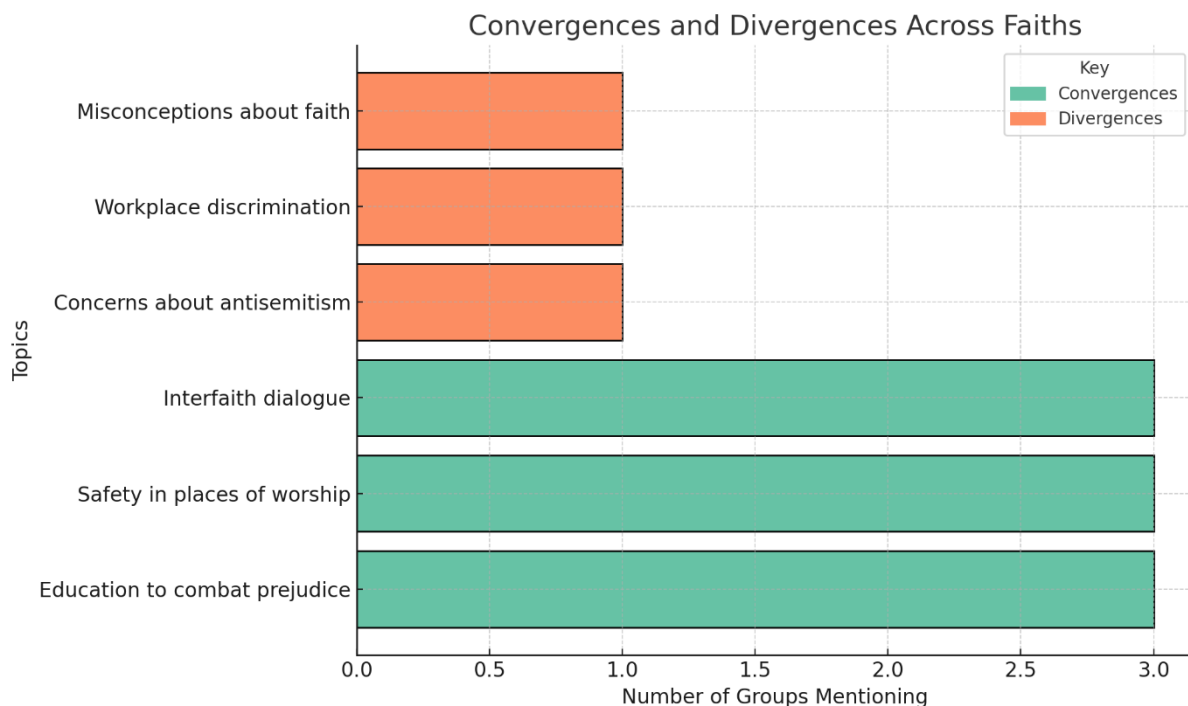
Respondents stressed the necessity of continuous engagement through:

- **Educational Campaigns:** To inform the public about shared religious values and dispel misconceptions.
- **Support Networks:** For affected communities, ensuring incidents of discrimination are reported and addressed.
- **Institutional Partnerships:** To foster consistent progress through collaboration with educational institutions and local governments.

Finally, sustained action is required beyond initial meetings or declarations. Clear, measurable objectives and regular evaluations are vital to fostering trust and maintaining dialogue, paving the way for a more inclusive and harmonious society.

4.   Interview Results in Italy

4.1.   4.1 Presentation of Participants

In Italy, 21 interviews were conducted, involving six representatives of Jewish communities, nine from Christian communities, and six from Muslim communities. The participants included chief rabbis, imams, clergy members responsible for interreligious and ecumenical dialogue, academics, educators specializing in radicalization prevention, youth activists, cultural mediators, historians, and public figures engaged in promoting inclusive policies at local and European levels. This wide range of profiles ensures a comprehensive perspective on interreligious dialogue, community relations, and strategies to counter religious prejudice, including anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism.

Jewish representatives bring decades of experience in interreligious dialogue, emphasizing historical memory and investing in youth educational initiatives. Christian voices combine theological reflection, pastoral care, academic expertise, social engagement, and political advocacy. Muslim participants highlight the global dimension of Islam in Italy, stressing trust-building, religious freedom, and intercultural education. Together, these perspectives offer historical depth and contemporary relevance, providing a 360-degree view of the challenges, opportunities, and practical approaches to strengthening interreligious relations and mitigating prejudice in Italy.

4.2.   Awareness and Understanding

All communities—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim—share a nuanced awareness of how antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and religious intolerance emerge at the crossroads of historical legacies, global tensions, national political discourse, social inequalities, and media narratives. They unanimously recognize that religious illiteracy and sensationalist media can reinforce simplistic stereotypes, conspiracy theories, and prejudices, hindering empathy and respect.

Key themes include:

• Religious and cultural illiteracy: Without basic understanding of different faiths, distorted narratives persist, hindering meaningful engagement.

• Geopolitical instrumentalization: International events, particularly in the Middle East, cast shadows on local relations, fueling mistrust and complicating open religious expression.

• Media influence and misinformation: Sensationalist media coverage, hate speech, and online disinformation exacerbate tensions, obscuring positive stories of coexistence.

• Internal community reflection: Communities recognize the need to address internal biases, promoting ongoing education and intergenerational dialogue to ensure genuine openness.

While these insights are broadly shared, some nuances emerge. Jewish leaders emphasize the lasting historical impact of antisemitism, while Muslim representatives focus on how local socioeconomic issues intersect with global conflicts. Christian voices may highlight the role of domestic political rhetoric and cultural shifts. However, these differences do not detract from the general consensus: a complex interplay of

forces fuels intolerance, and education, critical thinking, and introspection remain essential remedies.

4.3.　Current Situation and Existing Practices

How different religious communities experience prejudice in Italy
Although overt acts of hostility are not frequent, subtle and persistent forms of prejudice remain. Jewish communities face deep-rooted antisemitic stereotypes and become more cautious in welcoming visitors or participating in events without careful screening during times of heightened global tension. Muslim communities encounter anti-Muslim hatred linked to politicized media portrayals, experiencing discomfort in openly practicing their faith or attending public meetings without assurances of safety and transparency. Even Christians, despite being the majority, acknowledge the existence of biases against religious minorities, influenced by historical legacies and politically instrumentalized narratives.
A central issue is fear and uncertainty surrounding in-person encounters. Jewish representatives note that previous openness—such as welcoming visitors to synagogues—has diminished, replaced by the need for transparent communication about identities and event purposes to ensure a safe environment. Similar concerns affect Muslims and Christians, sometimes leading them to rely more on online formats considered safer. While virtual meetings provide controlled environments, they cannot fully replicate the authenticity and transformative potential of face-to-face encounters. Parents and educators face the delicate challenge of explaining these insecurities to children, balancing pride in religious identity with caution inspired by global tensions and historical traumas. Some leaders favor a gradual and empathetic approach, while others prefer direct discussions to provide young people with a realistic understanding of the complexities involved. These differing approaches highlight subtle variations in how communities convey resilience and awareness to younger generations.

Strategies, actions, initiatives, and programs to combat anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism
Despite uncertainties, various positive initiatives demonstrate the potential for respectful dialogue: interreligious conferences, educational workshops in schools, cultural and artistic events celebrating pluralism, and volunteer projects supporting refugees or marginalized groups. These activities showcase the feasibility of empathy and mutual respect. Jewish communities often collaborate with museums and academic institutions, Christian networks invest in teacher training and intercultural seminars, while Muslim leaders emphasize distinguishing universal religious values from politicized agendas, engaging in humanitarian activities and promoting youth participation.
Although all communities agree on the value of these measures, some differences emerge in assessing their effectiveness. Some leaders argue that without long-term funding and permanent platforms, these initiatives remain episodic. Others contend that even modest local successes can inspire incremental change, especially when online training modules and preparatory sessions accompany carefully managed in-person dialogues. Thus, while there is a strong common thread in favor of educational and cultural strategies, opinions vary on the speed and scope with which these interventions can reshape public attitudes.

4.4.   Challenges and Obstacles

Obstacles and challenges in building interreligious coalitions to address and combat anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism

All communities face interconnected obstacles, including entrenched stereotypes, distorted media representations, geopolitical interference, and a lack of stable institutional support. Ensuring safe environments and credible interlocutors is essential, especially for Jewish communities hesitant to invite unknown participants. The fear of hidden biases or extreme ideologies discourages in-person events without transparent protocols.

While all recognize these core challenges, some participants emphasize the need for institutional reforms and official political support, while others believe grassroots efforts can still yield significant results. Some Muslim leaders prioritize socioeconomic integration and daily interactions, while Jewish and Christian voices tend to focus on educational reforms and political support.

The impact of external events, such as the COVID-19 crisis or current political crises, on relationships within and between local religious communities

The COVID-19 pandemic limited in-person meetings, pushing towards online platforms. Opinions differ on the temporary or lasting nature of this digital shift. Some see online formats as a compromise solution, while others believe virtual tools can serve as a long-term complement—especially for training, preparatory engagement, and initial trust-building—ultimately enhancing future face-to-face meetings.

Political and international crises intensify anxieties, complicating the maintenance of open dialogue. All agree that such events overshadow local progress, although some stress the urgent need for stable institutional frameworks, while others focus on local adaptability and creative solutions to address these challenges.

The role of women in existing efforts for intercultural and interreligious dialogue and cooperation

Female participation is widely recognized as valuable for creating empathetic and inclusive environments, reassuring families about participation in interreligious activities. Women often excel in building relational trust, ensuring more cautious communities feel comfortable engaging in cultural exchanges and, over time, transitioning from safer online interactions to carefully managed in-person dialogues. While all communities acknowledge their potential impact, some participants see women primarily as key figures in family education and community mediation, while others advocate for a more formal role in policymaking and institutional structures. These differing views do not detract from the consensus on the importance of female involvement but reflect varying opinions on how best to harness their capabilities, whether in online training sessions or live cultural events.

4.5.   Suggestions and Recommendations

Participants propose an integrated and well-coordinated approach focused on education, institutionalization, media accountability, family support, and the careful use of online platforms as complementary tools:
• Strengthened and Systemic Education: Integrate religious literacy, historical

awareness, and critical media skills into curricula. Train teachers, religious leaders, and cultural mediators to address stereotypes constructively. While agreeing on such measures, some communities emphasize top-down educational reforms, while others prioritize bottom-up intercultural activities.

• Institutionalizing Dialogue, Ensuring Safe Environments, and Leveraging Online Opportunities: Create permanent platforms at national and European levels for interreligious cooperation, with stable funding and institutional recognition. Develop guidelines for event safety, transparent participant selection, and clear communication of objectives. This reassures hesitant communities and encourages the transition from virtual to in-person meetings. Opinions diverge on the speed of this transition, but all recognize that hybrid approaches—online preparatory sessions paired with carefully planned physical meetings—can gradually restore trust and authenticity.

• Empowering Women, Youth, and Community Leaders: Women, with their empathetic approach, reassure participants; young people, skilled in digital tools, can bridge online training with in-person meetings. Some advocates call for formal roles for women and youth, while others value their informal yet influential community positions. These differences do not weaken the consensus on their essential contributions.

• Responsible Media and Transparent Communication: Journalists and communicators should provide balanced, fact-based coverage and highlight success stories of coexistence. Event organizers must clarify purposes, participant identities, and safety measures in advance, encouraging cautious communities to move from online training modules to more confident in-person interactions.

• Supporting Families and Grassroots Initiatives: Equip parents and educators with tools to explain global complexities and local insecurities to young people. Organize cultural festivals, volunteer projects, or small-scale artistic workshops with clearly defined conditions and credible participants. While some leaders see broad institutional frameworks as indispensable, others trust gradual cultural shifts initiated from the bottom up.

Although all communities positively embrace these integrated strategies, they slightly differ in emphasis on top-down reforms versus bottom-up solutions and the long-term role of online environments. However, the goal remains consistent: to alleviate fears, foster trust, and combine digital training and human encounters in a transformative continuum.

Overall, the responses emphasized that inter-religious cooperation is an essential and continuous effort that demands a comprehensive and enduring commitment from all parties to combat religious hatred and foster a more inclusive society. Below are some of the highlighted responses:

> *"The establishment of an interreligious coalition is essential: it allows the religious authorities of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to meet, respecting doctrinal, theological, and ritual specificities, to preserve an authentic religious heritage to pass on to future generations. This approach can provide tools to combat ignorance, manipulation, and prejudice."*

> *"I believe that religious illiteracy is a central issue. Education in interreligious dialogue is necessary, especially for younger generations, with adequate investments in human and economic resources."*

> *"It is fundamental to create coalitions to counter ignorance, which lies at the root of Islamophobia and antisemitism. In Italy, prejudice often stems from decades, if not centuries, of misconceptions. By building groups that*

address these effects and promote education, we can improve societal health and ensure a better future."

"Trust and honesty are fundamental. Without these core values, it's impossible to achieve meaningful dialogue. Building trust among individuals and communities is the first step toward cooperation."

"The Bosnian Islamic Community has coexisted with Jews for over 500 years. Historical memory gives us excellent examples of combating Islamophobia and antisemitism. Such cooperation is crucial for fostering stable societies and normal relations, particularly between Jews and Muslims."

"A coalition based on dialogue and mutual understanding is essential. Opening up to others is the best way to break down prejudices."

"We must educate ourselves about history and culture. Only by knowing the past can we judge correctly and build bridges for dialogue."

"Religious dialogue is built through relationships of respect and friendship that foster an ever-growing desire for understanding. Daily interactions come first, followed by institutional relationships."

"Ignorance is the main obstacle. Only proper knowledge of differences and affinities can prevent prejudices and build bridges for dialogue."

"To build an effective interreligious coalition, it is crucial to educate new generations to have a broader perspective and to plant the seeds today for a future of dialogue and peace."

"Differences among religions should not be seen as obstacles but as a wealth that enriches our identity when approached with respect and a willingness to dialogue."

4.6. Future Plans and Further Involvement

All communities express openness to greater involvement in structured initiatives, supported by adequate resources and clearly oriented—like the InterMu-Se project—provided that such efforts link local successes to national and European frameworks, integrate activities into educational and cultural institutions, and ensure safe yet dynamic contexts.

While some insist that progress will remain limited without solid political frameworks and institutional support, others believe that local success can organically influence policies. Divergences also emerge regarding the speed at which predominantly in-person formats should resume: some prefer a gradual reintroduction after adequate online preparation, while others aspire to restart face-to-face contacts more quickly.

Nonetheless, all agree on the need to evaluate impact, refine strategies, and ensure continuity. As trust-building measures, safety protocols, and transparent communication become standard practice, reliance on virtual environments as protective substitutes may diminish, allowing online sessions to complement in-person activities as tools for training and enrichment rather than the primary element of interreligious dialogue.

4.7. Closing Remarks

Interviews with Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders in Italy highlight broad consensus on the importance of interreligious dialogue, education, and carefully managed engagement while revealing nuances in priorities and approaches. All communities aim to dismantle prejudices, restore trust, ensure transparent conditions, and ultimately enable enriching and safe in-person meetings. They agree that education, institutional support, media responsibility, and family involvement are fundamental, while acknowledging that online platforms can serve as complementary tools for training and preparatory phases without replacing the uniqueness of human contact.

At the same time, slight divergences add depth to the overall picture. Some leaders emphasize historical traumas more strongly, while others focus on contemporary socio-political factors. Some stress top-down institutional reforms, while others trust gradual grassroots experiments. Opinions differ on the speed and extent to which reliance on online platforms can shift back to predominantly in-person formats, as well as on the formal integration of women and youth into leadership roles.

These variations do not fragment the general consensus but rather enrich the available strategic repertoire, suggesting multiple paths toward the same goal. By embracing a range of methods—combining digital training with live events, empowering women and youth, balancing immediate actions with long-term reforms—communities can flexibly adapt to evolving conditions. Through sustained dialogue, careful planning, and transparent, safe interactive frameworks, religious communities in Italy can collectively advance toward a more inclusive, trusting, and respectful pluralistic society.

5.   Final conclusions and suggestions

The results of this report were obtained through a comprehensive methodology that included a detailed literature review, the identification of successful interventions and good practices, and the analysis of both survey responses and interviews. Specifically:

- The literature review provided a foundational understanding of the current situation regarding antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and religiously motivated hate.
- Two good practices were identified.
- Responses from the online survey were analyzed, with 72 participants contributing, representing diverse religious backgrounds including Christian (44,4%), Muslim (26.4%), and Jewish (18,1%).
- In-depth interviews were conducted with 21 individuals, offering nuanced perspectives from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities.

The findings highlight the persistent challenges posed by antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and other forms of religiously motivated hate in Italy. The desk research activities, survey data, and interviews collectively reveal:

- Historical roots and contemporary manifestations of antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred.
- Entrenched stereotypes fueled by sensationalist media and political narratives.
- Variations in experiences of prejudice across religious groups, with Muslims often facing workplace discrimination and Jews expressing concerns about stereotypes and safety.

Several interventions have shown promise in addressing these challenges. These include:

- *A Sea of Letters on the Shores of the Mediterranean*: An intercultural dialogue project that uses Muslim and Christian calligraphy to foster understanding and counter stereotypes.
- *MJLC Muslim and Jewish Leadership Council Europe*: A Europe-wide initiative to train Jewish and Muslim leaders in interfaith dialogue and combating hate speech.

Survey and interview insights corroborated these findings, with respondents emphasizing the importance of educational and cultural projects.

Despite these successes, significant barriers remain, such as the following:

- Limited awareness and understanding of religious diversity within educational curricula.
- Lack of institutional support and funding for interfaith initiatives.
- Persistent cultural norms and political narratives that perpetuate intolerance and discimination.

To address these challenges, this report recommends targeted training for religious leaders, faith-based organizations, and civil society actors with a focus on topics such as effective interfaith dialogue and intercultural communication, addressing unconscious bias, and leveraging digital tools to counter hate speech. Besides, awareness and implementation of proven good practices should be expanded, ensuring they are adaptable to diverse contexts, and partnerships between faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and local governments should be encouraged in order to create sustainable initiatives. By implementing these recommendations, efforts to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue can be enhanced, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious society.

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7.   Annex 1: Good Practices

7.1.   Good Practice 1: A Sea of Letters on the Shores of the Mediterranean

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">A Sea of Letters on the Shores of the Mediterranean
Un mare di Lettere sulle Sponde del Mediterraneo</td></tr>
<tr><td>Country:</td><td>Italy</td></tr>
<tr><td>Category of good practice:</td><td>☑ Networks/coalitions
☑ Educational programs/curricula
☑ Awareness & prevention
☐ Tools, services, mechanisms
☑ Capacity-building initiatives
☐ Policy frameworks
☐ Other</td></tr>
<tr><td>Eligibility Criteria:</td><td>☑ Includes context description
☑ Has clearly defined objectives and purposes
☑ Has a clear description of the actions/activities involved
☑ Is at least one year old
☑ Is adaptable to various contexts within the EU</td></tr>
<tr><td>Additional Criteria:</td><td>☑ Measurable Impact
☑ Targeted Approach
☑ Community Involvement
☑ Capacity Building
☑ Innovation
☑ Collaborative Partnerships
☐ Accountability Mechanisms
☑ Long-Term Viability</td></tr>
<tr><td>Short Description:</td><td>This multidisciplinary project explores the art of writing in Islam, in its variety of styles and different eras, with the writing and calligraphy art developed in Europe from the Early Middle Ages onwards. The aim of the project is to stimulate dialogue and comparison between Islam and Western culture and the Christian religion.
The initiative was promoted and organized by the Diocesan Museum "Pietro G. Nonis" of Vicenza, together with the ISA Academy of Interreligious Studies and the Italian COREIS (Islamic Religious Community), and itself represents a sign of intercultural and interreligious Islamic-Christian encounter and dialogue.
The exhibition had over 2.000 visitors and dozens of schools. This is a significant number, considering the small and modest profile of the museum where it took place. The success of the exhibition</td></tr>
</table>

	moved the organizers to renovate it for 3 times, making it last 6 months instead of 2 initially 2 scheduled. in the next three years the exhibition is planned to be repeated in nine other Italian cities, three for each year.
	The main element is an exhibition of works of Islamic calligraphy that becomes a unique opportunity for the public to get to know up close the beauty, variety and symbolic depth of this art as an expression of the sacred Science and the millenary civilization of Islam.
	There are also codices on display, antiphonaries and other Christian liturgical texts that, with their writing, from the 13th to the 18th century, show the beauty of Latin writing techniques.
	The Muslim exhibitors are living artists and artists of the past.
	As for Islamic calligraphy, the institutions involved are among the most prestigious in Islamic art in the world, including the Prince Ghazi Foundation for the Study of the Koran of Jordan and IRCICA, the Islamic Research Center for Culture and Arts in Istanbul, Turkey.
	In addition to the exhibition of ancient and contemporary works of art, the program also included a series of calligraphy workshops for adults, young people and children, in-depth conferences with experts and artists, and guided tours for schools.
	The exhibition catalogue collects the works of art and the texts of the conferences.
	The issue of anti-Muslim hatred in Italy has intensified since 2001 and found a fertile ground also because Islam is a newer phenomenon in Italy, compared with other European countries. In Italy, the first waves of immigrants happened in the late 80's / beginning of the 90's. So, for a relevant part of the Italian population, the first approach with Islam has been unfortunately mainly through mass-media superficial and negative image, after 9/11 terrorist attacks.
	Through the exhibition, people who are usually not interested in Islam had an occasion to approach the Islamic culture and spirituality through the universal language of beauty and arts.
	The involvement of young Muslim students of Italian schools was also a key success factor to promote an interreligious education of the Islamic tradition, providing them (and to the teachers as well) intellectual tools to tackle nowadays challenges in the multicultural society.
Success Factors:	Nowadays, especially in the West, the visual aspect has a great importance and this project allows people to discover aspects related to art that are almost completely unknown to Westerners.
	The effectiveness of this project that has been verified is the possibility offered to the public to experience the direct comparison between Western medieval calligraphic art and Islamic calligraphic

A Sea of Letters on the Shores of the Mediterranean Un mare di Lettere sulle Sponde del Mediterraneo	
	art. This comparison allows viewers to observe and understand both the differences and similarities in style, structure, and religious underlying principles that motivate artists to engage with and practice these forms of expression. The discovery and the possibility of seeing live unknown or little-known art forms and an artistic heritage of Islam that the public has no knowledge of. Furthermore, through the workshops, adults, young people and children had the opportunity to engage with Muslim artists who still keep this heritage alive today and learn directly from them the practical techniques of this ancient art. Another important element were the guided visits of school groups that allow comparison and dialogue between Christian and Muslim students who attend the same school with the advantage of having a mutual cultural enrichment.
Potential Weaknesses:	The project was born from an idea of the Diocesan Museum "Pietro G. Nonis" of Vicenza which involved the ISA Academy of Interreligious Studies and COREIS with the aim of increasing the experience of Islamic-Christian dialogue. The project worked well and there were no problems of management, usability, or opposition. Based on this it was clear after a few weeks that the potential of the project would have been much greater if the perspective of Jewish calligraphy had also been included. In this sense COREIS is already working to propose the project again in other cities in Italy where there is a presence of the Jewish community and museums of Jewish art. This will allow to show the affinity between Islamic and Jewish calligraphy and to also propose conferences in which it is possible to explain the profound religious affinities that exist between Islam and Judaism and that mass culture ignores and that a certain type of journalism does not take into consideration, without forgetting the important role played by Catholicism in Europe.
Recommendations for balancing Strengths and Weaknesses:	It is important to create an engaging path through calligraphic works, guiding the public step by step to discover and appreciate this art form. To achieve this, museum guides should receive appropriate training, or alternatively, individuals from the participating religious communities with a basic understanding of the subject could be involved. This approach is particularly valuable when young people are present, as community representatives can help activate existing knowledge, encouraging them to recognize and appreciate what they already know, explore new concepts, and interact with peers from different cultural or religious backgrounds. This dynamic exchange enables young visitors to share their own experiences with others, fostering mutual understanding and deeper engagement.

A Sea of Letters on the Shores of the Mediterranean Un mare di Lettere sulle Sponde del Mediterraneo	
	It is also crucial to involve much in advance the local schools, of different levels, to schedule their attendance and to prepare the students accordingly.
Transferability potential:	The interest in art and writing originates from the deep-rooted Europe and its transferability is an integral part of the planning of this project. COREIS with the ISA Academy are already contacting local Jewish and Catholic partners to propose the project again in some Italian cities. The project can also be proposed at a European level by leveraging insight of the Italian experience and engaging the local Jewish and Islamic communities and Catholic Church to draw on their heritage of museum resources and ancient texts present in their libraries. The international Islamic partners of the Italian project and possibly others can also be involved.
What are the main characteristics that make it a good practice?	This project exemplifies a good practice through its multidisciplinary approach to fostering intercultural and interreligious dialogue. By leveraging the universal beauty of Islamic calligraphy and Western medieval script, it addresses stereotypes, promotes understanding, and highlights shared values among different faiths. By leveraging the universal beauty of Islamic calligraphy and Western medieval script, the project has clear objectives, addresses stereotypes, promotes understanding, and highlights shared values among different faiths. Initially hosted by the Diocesan Museum of Vicenza, its success has led to its planned replication in nine additional Italian cities over the next three years, enhancing its impact, while fostering interfaith and intercultural collaboration, and demonstrating its potential for application across diverse European contexts. The format can be easily adjusted to fit different audiences, ensuring its continued success in varied environments. Besides, with over 2,000 visitors and dozens of school groups attending the initial exhibition, the project has demonstrated tangible success. The exhibition's duration was extended threefold due to high demand, and its reach continues to expand through its planned replication. Finally, by juxtaposing Islamic and Christian calligraphy, the project offers a unique platform for exploring similarities and differences in artistic styles and religious principles. This comparative approach is innovative, engaging, and effective in promoting mutual respect.
How does this practice contribute to the research aims of the	The project actively counters antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred by showcasing the artistic and cultural achievements of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. By highlighting the historical and aesthetic value of calligraphy across these traditions, it challenges negative stereotypes and promotes an inclusive European cultural heritage.

A Sea of Letters on the Shores of the Mediterranean Un mare di Lettere sulle Sponde del Mediterraneo	
InterMu-Se project?	This aligns directly with the mission of InterMu-Se to dismantle religious prejudices and foster respect among different faith communities. Its success as an educational and cultural initiative exemplifies how artistic heritage can serve as a powerful tool for challenging discrimination and promoting social cohesion, reinforcing InterMu-Se's broader goals. Through its exhibitions and workshops, it creates a visual dialogue that fosters understanding of the shared principles underlying these traditions. The project is also a model of successful interfaith collaboration, involving key institutions, while its expansion across multiple Italian cities demonstrates its potential for long-term impact and adaptability to different contexts, reflecting the strategy of InterMu-Se of strengthening interfaith networks and building sustainable local partnerships.
Website link (if applicable) or other relevant links:	http://www2.museodiocesanovicenza.it/it/2023/10/08/un-mare-di-lettere-sulle-sponde-del-mediterraneo/ https://www.facebook.com/profile/100064152395638/search/?q=mare%20di%20lettere&locale=it_IT https://www.coreis.it/educazione/evento/mostra-di-calligrafia-islamica-a-vicenza-dal-21-ottobre/ https://www.raiplaysound.it/audio/2024/03/Babele-del-10032024-3159183b-967d-4b57-a492-71999699da0e.html

7.2.   Good Practice 2: MJLC Muslim and Jewish Leadership Council Europe

MJLC Muslim and Jewish Leadership Council Europe	
Country:	Europe
Category of good practice:	☑ Networks/coalitions ☑ Educational programs/curricula ☑ Awareness & prevention ☐ Tools, services, mechanisms ☑ Capacity-building initiatives ☐ Policy frameworks ☐ Other
Eligibility Criteria:	☑ Includes context description ☑ Has clearly defined objectives and purposes ☑ Has a clear description of the actions/activities involved ☑ Is at least one year old

MJLC Muslim and Jewish Leadership Council Europe	
	☑ Is adaptable to various contexts within the EU
Additional Criteria:	☑ Measurable Impact ☑ Targeted Approach ☑ Community Involvement ☑ Capacity Building ☑ Innovation ☑ Collaborative Partnerships ☐ Accountability Mechanisms ☑ Long-Term Viability
Short Description:	On 12 December 2016, fourteen European religious leaders - seven Jews and seven Muslims - met in Vienna, Austria to unite in a common prayer to God. With the goal of creating a union of intentions to serve the need, more urgent than ever in today's Europe, to free religious people and religions from prejudice, false claims, attacks, and violence. These negative approaches obscure the true value and contribution that each religious tradition has the right and duty to contribute to European society. The European Muslim and Jewish Leadership Council (MJLC) regards it as its prime obligation to renew in Europe a culture of respect and appreciation of religious identities, specifically Judaism and Islam, beginning with the awareness of the essential heritage which religious traditions represent for every society and civilization. This task will be inspired by the contribution that Jews and Muslims were able to give towards the blossoming of European culture in the past centuries, but also addressing the reality of our times with the intellectual and social challenges that religions are met with. The Council operates at solely a European level, while interacting with both European and extra-European (international) partnerships. This independent institution works with those public and private entities that support the Council's goals. By working together, the Council members leverage collective expertise and effectiveness, strengthening the measure the Council takes in consensus to safeguard European religious freedom and pluralism. The Council offers a unified, European, Muslim-Jewish advocacy and inter-community trust-building platform. The MJLC board members currently are: the Mufti of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chief-Rabbi of Moscow, the Vice-president of the Italian CO.RE.IS., the Chief Rabbi of Poland, the Chair of "Initiative Muslimischer ÖsterreicherInnen" (IMÖ) of Vienna, a member of Community Rabbi of Vienna. The following organizations also support the project: KAIICID, The Conference of European Rabbis (CER), CO.RE.IS. Italiana, Saïd & Lody, EULEMA, European Muslim Leadership Council, Initiative Muslimischer ÖsterreicherInnen (IMÖ).

MJLC Muslim and Jewish Leadership Council Europe	
Success Factors:	The Council's advocacy upholds common Muslim-Jewish values, defends the protection of the universal right to freedom of religion and belief, challenges stereotypes and builds inter- communal and intra-communal trust and cooperation. Furthermore, the Council's joint Muslim-Jewish educational strategy facilitates intra-community and inter-community understanding and respect for Muslims and Jews in Europe, while establishing bridges to other religious communities and secular groups that share common values embodied within the Charter of Europe and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The MJLC undertakes concrete actions in the cultural, educational, institutional and social fields are implemented in Europe to the benefit of European population.
Potential Weaknesses:	A possible weakness of this project could be that since the members come from different nations it is necessary to plan the meetings well in advance, especially if they are to be in person. Besides, since the members belong to different religious realities, although there is unity and agreement on the principles and of intents, there could be in some cases delays or situations of complexity in finding an understanding or agreement on practical issues. These two issues could create a slowdown in the work in situations that require promptness or when it is necessary to issue declarations or statements, as it would be necessary to find a meeting point between the various parties.
Recommendations for balancing Strengths and Weaknesses:	MJLC plays a crucial role in addressing the urgent need to protect religious individuals and communities from prejudice, misinformation, and violence in Europe. Its strength lies in fostering interfaith trust and cooperation by upholding shared Muslim-Jewish values, advocating for religious freedom, and implementing joint educational initiatives to combat stereotypes and promote mutual respect. The Council also actively engages with broader religious and secular groups to reinforce pluralism and intercultural dialogue. However, given the international composition of its members, logistical challenges can arise in convening meetings and ensuring swift decision-making, particularly in urgent situations requiring rapid responses or public statements. Differences in religious practices and national contexts may also lead to delays in reaching consensus on certain practical matters. To balance these strengths and weaknesses, proactive planning and structured decision-making processes are essential. Meetings should be scheduled well in advance, with a combination of in-person gatherings and virtual discussions to maintain regular communication. Establishing a rapid-response mechanism—such

	as a smaller working group empowered to issue timely statements—can enhance the Council's ability to act decisively in urgent matters. Additionally, fostering continuous intra-communal dialogue can help preemptively address potential areas of disagreement, ensuring smoother coordination. By leveraging its collective expertise while implementing more agile decision-making processes, MJLC can strengthen its impact, safeguarding religious freedom and reinforcing interfaith collaboration across Europe.
Transferability potential:	MJLC operates at a European level and the possibility of transferability lies in the fact that in each European country a council with the same characteristics could be build, made up of Rabbis and Imams of that country who can carry out at a local level the same activities carried out by the MJLC at a European level. This would be at national level a clear and important sign not only of brotherhood expressed in principle between Jews and Muslims but an organisation that includes Rabbis and Imams who can undertake concrete actions at national level to combat prejudices, falsehoods, attacks against religions and religious people.
What are the main characteristics that make it a good practice?	The European Muslim and Jewish Leadership Council (MJLC) exemplifies a good practice by fostering interreligious collaboration and addressing the urgent need to counter prejudice, stereotypes, and violence against religious groups in Europe. MJLC implements initiatives fostering intra- and interfaith dialogue. Its structure, which brings together religious leaders from different national contexts, makes it highly adaptable to various European countries. The Council's model can be replicated at national levels, with localized coalitions addressing specific interfaith challenges.
How does this practice contribute to the research aims of the InterMu-Se project?	MJLC significantly supports the goals of the InterMu-Se project by addressing discrimination, fostering interfaith dialogue, and promoting understanding between religious communities. Its actions align closely with the project's focus on combating stereotypes, building trust, and encouraging cooperation. It provides practical tools for interfaith dialogue, establishing a collaborative framework between religious leaders and public and private institutions. The Council's approach to fostering cooperation between Muslim and Jewish communities serves as a replicable model for InterMu-Se and offers a concrete example of how to implement such strategies effectively. Through its educational strategies, MJLC strengthens the capacities of religious leaders and civil society organizations, equipping them with the necessary skills to address contemporary social challenges. This approach aligns with InterMu-Se, which emphasizes capacity-building of key religious actors as a method

MJLC Muslim and Jewish Leadership Council Europe	
	to increase interreligious awareness and enhance communities' ability to respond to discrimination. MJLC actively involves religious leaders and community members in joint actions that address local needs, fostering mutual trust and providing tangible examples of cooperation. The Council is a successful example of building bridges between Muslim and Jewish leaders in Europe while expanding dialogue with Christian and secular groups, directly contributing to the goal of InterMu-Se of creating sustainable interfaith coalitions.
Website link (if applicable) or other relevant links:	https://mjlc-europe.org/