

**EUROPEAN PROJECT “A EUROPE OF DIASPORAS”
2015-2016**

“We understand “diasporas of Europe” to be enduring human networks and communities [...]. While the individuals are citizens of the European Union and consider themselves part of Europe, of its culture and destiny, they also have important formal and informal links with fellow ethnic or religious communities with whom they share a past, present and future. Diaspora communities are thus a part of several overlapping identities, alongside national, European and other layers of belonging.”

“European Citizenship should serve as a substantial link between diasporas and the European project, giving the possibility to diasporas to affirm themselves within the European context. We invite all concerned to develop projects promoting cooperation between diaspora networks, and between them and public authorities in all fields. We will in particular promote the creation of a Forum of European Diasporas in the spirit of this declaration and invite all interested to join us in this venture.”

From the Barcelona declaration on European Diasporas, 2005.

1. THE IDEA

This project is a first step towards the establishment of a network of European diasporas. We believe in working together across cultural groups to help develop, affirm and popularize the notion of European diasporas.

Europe has inherited a mosaic of identities, with more than 90 historical cultural groups on the continent, to which a large number of groups have been added over the last century. Some of these groups are European diasporas: they span several countries, or indeed the entire continent, and their members' identities are nurtured primarily by non-state institutions.

Which way are these cultures, identities, origins and religions headed? Are they destined to disappear? Are they a handicap for Europe, a threat, an anachronism, a hindrance? Or are they an asset for our societies?

In the spirit of the Barcelona declaration, we believe that diasporas are a resource for our European societies and that the idea of diasporas provides solutions that are well worth promoting.

Identities need not be tied to a territory or to a source of authority to be legitimate and valuable. The idea of European diasporas acknowledges that each one of us can belong simultaneously to different places and to different groups. It acknowledges that identities are multiple and can change from one generation to the next. This idea acknowledges, finally, that our identities, whichever they are, are rooted primarily where our present and future lies: in Europe.

We also understand that diasporas are faced with challenges. They have been viewed as a threat to the cohesion of nations and can inspire prejudice and rejection. The transmission and cultivation of specific cultural values, including language, are often inhibited by the lack of

support from state institutions. And the stories of diasporas are often silenced or distorted by ideology or by the imperatives of politics and diplomacy.

In this project, “A Europe of Diasporas”, we intend to work together to discuss these ideas, develop and flesh out the notion of diasporas and explore its wider usefulness in Europe at large. We believe the affirmation of diasporas will be important for the rest of society in Europe as well as for the groups concerned. We will also explore the opportunities which Europe may provide diasporas, and diasporas to Europe, and we will seek to develop a practical agenda as a basis for a common dialogue with the European institutions.

2. THE PLAN

The project will establish a core think-tank involving young activists, academics and leaders who will take part in the project throughout its development.

Together, they will try to provide answers to four series of questions.

- Who are we? Who are you? An introduction to the diasporas involved in the project and to the significance of identity within that group. The project will initially focus on the Jewish, Armenia and Roma diasporas.
- What is a European diaspora? How can it contribute to your country, to Europe?
- What challenges are the different groups confronted with in different parts of Europe? Which are most important? Which concerns are shared between different groups?
- What is the role of public authorities on these different issues? These are issues shared between at least some of the groups involved, which they think necessary to bring to the attention of policy-makers at European level, or at national level.

The project naturally involves communicating together the results of the project to others in their networks, to the wider European public as well as towards policy-makers at European level.

Coming together

Three seminars will take place in the course of this project, leading to one major European conference. Each seminar will focus primarily on one theme.

Dates	Location	
26-28 June 2015 in Paris (EUJF + AGBU)	Paris	Inception + Identity
15-18 October 2015	Budapest	Prejudice and commemorations
January 16-17 Week 2 , 2016	Sofia	Empowerment
6 and 7 April 2016	Brussels	General Conference (all topics)
24-26 June 2016	Warsaw	Conclusion

- The first seminar will be an initial exploration, around the notion of identity. It will also, crucially, set the agenda for the rest of the project.
- The second seminar will hold an exchange around issues relating to prejudice, denialism and discriminations.
- The third seminar will focus on education and empowerment.

Each seminar will examine how the topic of the day can be addressed through education in the wider sense, advocacy and remembrance.

Each seminar will lead to publications and to advocacy positions to be taken forward towards the conference that will conclude the project. The events will feature both members of the think tank and invited experts.

Who can participate?

The initial core think tank will be composed of a small number of invited members of some of Europe's diasporas, particularly from the Jewish, Armenian and Roma diasporas. Participation in the project as a whole, and particularly in the seminars, is limited by open. We welcome in particular expressions of interest by experienced community leaders, by young leaders and by individuals with expertise in the subject. We also welcome expressions of interest from individuals associated with different diaspora groups.

Dissemination and dialogue

We will share the results of our work with a wider audience, particularly within the diasporas themselves, to hear how they react to our work so far. In particular, we will invite those interested in this work to complete an online survey and organize meetings in different countries with interested organizations.

We will also work to make diasporas more visible. In spite of their long history, the map of Europe does not show names or border referring to them. We will seek ways to enhance their visibility, to start, by asking respondents everywhere to contribute photographs of those locations which they consider important and to place them on a sharing platform. An application for IOS and Android will also be created to gather this information and to allow anyone to find places and people associated with different diasporas on the map of Europe.