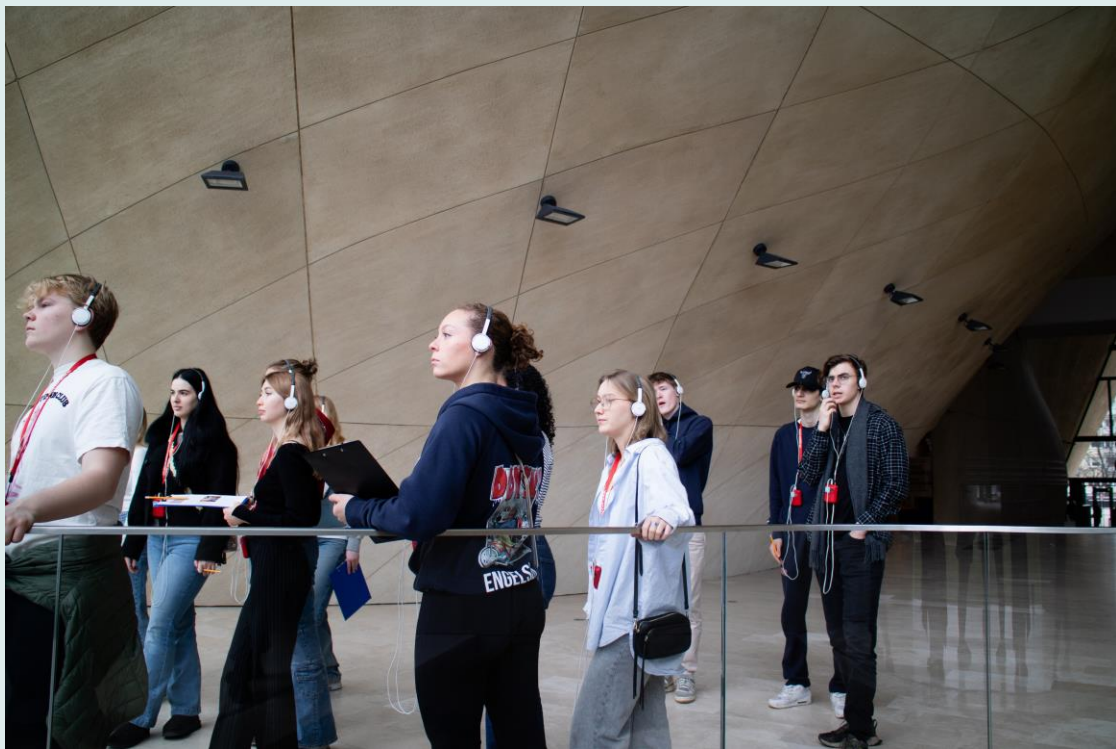


# Fighting antisemitism, racism and xenophobia now!



## Result report for 2021-2024



# Summary

Across Europe, democracy is challenged. There has been a surge in support for populist and anti-democratic movements in recent years. In some countries, these movements have already seized power, while in others, similar forces have gained traction both within and outside the political arena. Witnessing such developments, the project “Fighting antisemitism, xenophobia and racism now” was developed to address these rising challenges.

Through participatory activities and discussions, students from upper secondary schools have been empowered to be active citizens of today's diverse society. The project has strengthened the participants' willingness and skill to combat hate speech, racism and xenophobia, and to promote respect and inclusion.

In addition, conducting the workshops on the historical sites of the 2011 terror attacks in Norway

and the Warsaw Ghetto, has enabled participants to reflect on the links between historical events and contemporary challenges.

The project has brought together students and teachers from Poland and Norway. Structured as an in-school program, each cycle spans a school year, beginning with comprehensive workshops held in Oslo and at Utøya. Subsequently, participants continue with local project activities, before convening in Warsaw in the spring. Each year, six upper secondary schools have participated in the program.

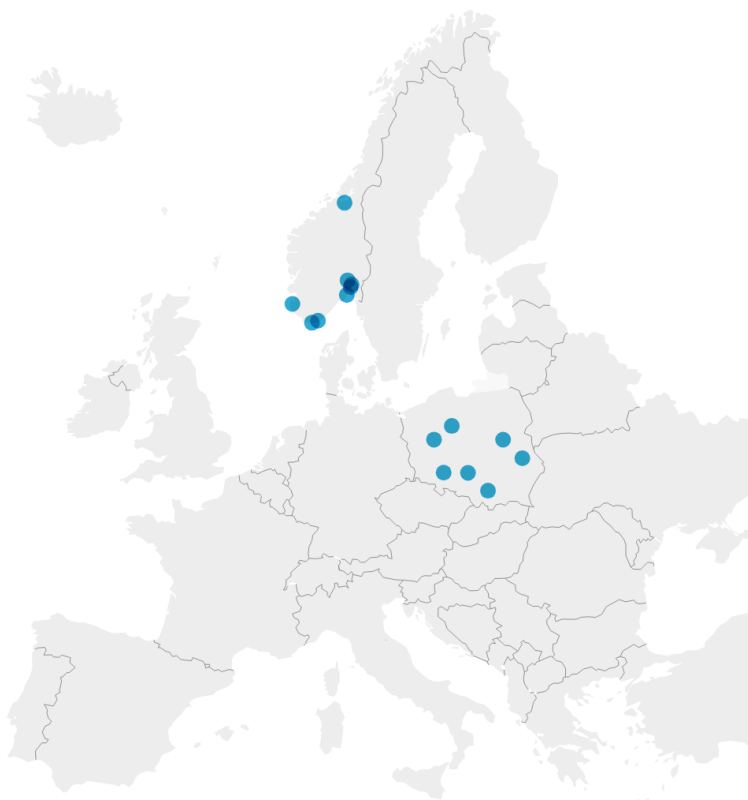
The project “Fighting antisemitism, xenophobia and racism now” has been designed and implemented jointly by The European Wergeland Centre and POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. The project, which has lasted from 2021-2024, is funded by the EEA and Norway Grants.



**I have learned so many new things about democracy, racism and xenophobia through this project!**

Hannah (17)

## Participating schools



17

SCHOOLS



3

PROJECT CYCLES



2

PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

# RESULTS

## Students empowered to address racism and antisemitism in their local schools and communities

Throughout three project cycles, **64** students have been trained in combatting antisemitism, xenophobia, and racism. In particular, students have participated in workshops on hate speech, minority and majority challenges, stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination, 22. July and Jewish history.

The project rests on non-formal learning methods. Participatory activities, sharing of experiences and interactive workshops lie at the heart of this approach.

In between the workshops at Utøya and POLIN, students have developed and implemented local projects in line with the topic of the program. These include e.g. survey on racism and discrimination at the school, “democracy week” and discussion clubs on controversial issues.

Through these local projects, participants estimate they have reached approximately **2840 students** and **253 teachers**, hence having a positive effect on their schools and local communities.

In total, 33 teachers have participated in the project. The teachers have not only supported students in developing and implementing the local projects, but also participated in parallel workshops on how to teach controversial issues, cooperative learning, democracy labs and how to prevent hate speech.



6

Youth exchanges



64

Students trained



33

Teachers trained



2840

Students reached

## What are the experience of the students?

“I have started to reflect over my choices and standings in life. I have changed my perspective on what democracy is and which factors that are important for making a democracy” Elisabeth (18)

“Due to what we learned in the project we managed to build a “discussion culture” at our school. Now it's easier to bring up controversial issues and combat prejudice.” Kristian (17)

“Nowadays, I have bigger knowledge about many current social problems like discrimination, hate speech, prejudice, antisemitism, xenophobia and racism than before.” Patryk (17)



Participants, expert trainers and coordinators at Utøya. 28. September 2023

# Creating an impact – one local project

Inspired by the workshops at Utøya from the first part of the 2023/2024 project, participants from Vågsbygd upper secondary school developed and implemented the concept "We discuss" – a dialogue and discussion arena on controversial topics.

The goal was to create an arena where students would feel safe to express their beliefs and arguments and where disagreement was to be encouraged. The local project has generated significant engagement within the school.

"The project involves inviting students from the school to an event in the lunch break where we discuss current societal issues", explains Aron Fosseli Mørkestøl, a student at the school.

"We aim to carry out this project to strengthen democracy in our school. Many are afraid to voice their opinions, and we're working to change that. We will fight for democracy!", Aron continues.

The students facilitated a discussion once a month. The inaugural edition of "We Discuss" took place in November where the conversation

centred around a heated topic: the war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas. Building on the experience from the successful first edition, students led sessions on other controversial issues such as abortion, woke, religion and science.

While the project "Fighting antisemitism, xenophobia and racism now" project is coming to an end in the spring of 2024, "We discuss" lives on and continues to facilitate discussions at Vågsbygd upper secondary school. New members are invited to the event committee.

Aron mentions that the workshops at Utøya provided significant motivation and knowledge to work on the project.

"At Utøya, we learned that we must fight for democracy and not take it for granted. We must not let events destroy democracy. With our project, we aim to influence others in our age group to fight for democracy."



*The students from Vågsbygd upper secondary school onboard the boat M/S Thorbjørn, taking them to Utøya.*



# RESULTS

## Strengthening of democratic competences

After the workshops at Utøya and POLIN, students are asked about the most significant change they experienced in the project. Underneath, the answers from 2023/24 are analysed and assigned into five thematic areas.



**STRENGTHENING  
DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCES**

### (1) Increased knowledge

Students report to have gained deeper knowledge about hate speech, racism, discrimination, prejudice, Jewish history and the 22 of July.

### (2) Inclusive arenas for conversation about controversial issues

Some students have experienced that the project has helped in promoting inclusive arenas for conversation about controversial issues.

### (3) Tools for democracy

Some students emphasize how they have gained new tools to prevent discrimination and hate speech and to use the acquired knowledge in practice.

### (4) Increased self-confidence

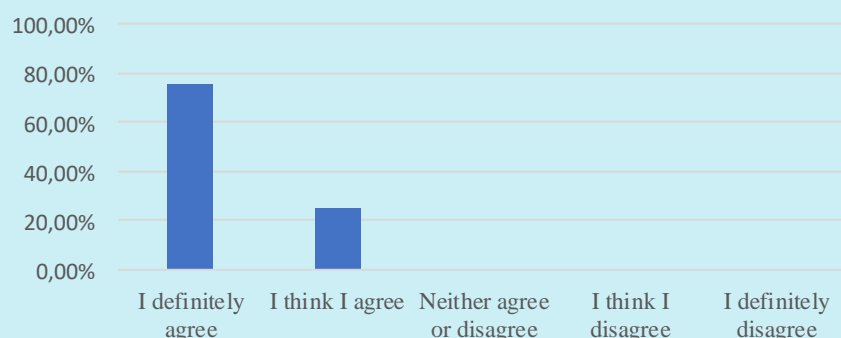
Many students have experienced increased self-confidence on topics such as political efficacy, advocacy for vulnerable groups and public speaking.

### (5) Critical reflection

Some students report about the increased ability to critically reflect about the self, society, values and democracy.

Teachers, in a post-project survey, express satisfaction with the project content and workshops. Among others, teachers report about their increased motivation to be more active in combatting antisemitism, discrimination and xenophobia.

### "I would like to be more active in countering anti-semitism, discrimination and xenophobia"



*Polish and Norwegian teachers at POLIN during one of many workshop.*

# Conclusion

- While democracy is challenged, this project has equipped young people with both knowledge and tools to combat contemporary democratic challenges such as antisemitism, discrimination, hate speech and racism.
- The project makes a positive impact on students and teachers. Thousands of young people have benefited from the project.
- Non-formal learning methods with participatory activities, sharing of experiences and interactive workshops is positively received by students and teachers.
- Competence-building parallel workshops for teachers work well and should be continued.



*Students, teachers and expert trainers in front of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.*



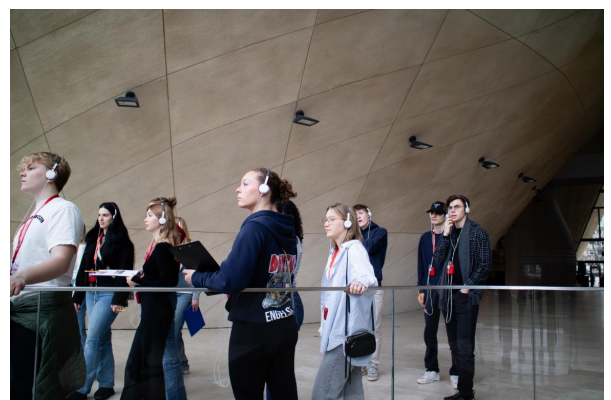
**I learned a lot about discrimination and racism (...) and got many tools that can be used when working to prevent it.**

Makda (17)

# Ideas for the future

Based on the experiences from the three program years, the following ideas could be considered:

- Continue the partnership between the EWC and POLIN.
- Based on the positive feedback from participants, continue working with the target group Upper Secondary School students and teachers from Norway and Poland.
- Use the experiences from the project to expand and include partnerships with pre-service and in-service training, to strengthen the competences of more teachers.
- Share experiences, knowledge and good practices from the project with other museums and educational institutions.



*Students got to know Jewish history and culture through both a Jewish baking workshop and a guided tour at the exhibition at POLIN.*

# PROJECT PARTNERS

THE EUROPEAN  
WERGELAND  
CENTRE



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

POLIN

Museum of  
the History  
of Polish  
Jews

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<https://theewc.org/projects/fighting-antisemitism-xenophobia-and-racism-now/>

**The European Wergeland Centre (EWC)** is a resource centre on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship.

Our work builds on Council of Europe recommendations and policies, such as the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, which was developed to make sure that the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law are promoted in and through education.

EWC's main aim is to strengthen the capacity of individuals, educational institutions and educational systems to build and sustain a culture of democracy and human rights.

**POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews** is a historical museum which presents the 1000 years of Jewish life in the Polish lands. It is a place of dialogue among those who wish to explore the past and present Jewish culture.

POLIN's mission is to preserve and recall the memory of the history of Polish Jews and to counteract antisemitism, discrimination, and exclusion by fostering mutual understanding and respect.



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