

# EUROPEAN UNION CENTRE



The EU Centre at RMIT presents

## Berlin and its Jewish Community: Great Significance, Destruction and Surprising Revival

### Event details

Thursday 7 April  
6.00 pm—8.00 pm  
RMIT City campus, Council Chamber, Building 1, Level 2

### Speaker

Dr Joseph Hajdu

*Author of 'Berlin Today' (below) and retired faculty member of political geography at Deakin University*



Free event. All welcome but please RSVP to:  
[eucentre@rmit.edu.au](mailto:eucentre@rmit.edu.au)

There had been a Jewish presence in Berlin since the 17th Century, they had been drawn to the city by its degree of religious tolerance. Its commercial and industrial growth from 1850 onwards accelerated the movement of Jews to Berlin so that by 1930 every twentieth Berliner was either fully or partially Jewish. Their role in banking, finance, retailing, law, medicine, publishing and the press, not to mention the visual and performing arts was out of all proportion to their relative number in the overall population. The members of the Jewish community were socially and culturally highly diverse in the extent to which they practiced their religion and the extent to which they sought to immerse themselves in mainstream Berlin society. The year 1933 changed everything. From the very beginning Hitler and his Nazi regime set to implementing a staged policy of excluding German Jews from public and professional life.

After the outbreak of War in 1939, overt deportation, starvation and killings led to the physical annihilation of nearly all Jews. A very small number survived the War in Berlin, and for the next four decades it appeared that

it would be only a matter of time before the Jewish presence in Berlin would be reduced to a historical memory. However the fall of the Wall, followed by German reunification in 1990 and the collapse of the Soviet Union, changed everything. There was a flood of applications by people from the ex-Soviet Union to be admitted as refugees to Germany. The presentation of evidence of Jewish identity resulted in most such applicants being given residence permits by the German authorities. Many chose to settle in Berlin.

In the decade before the year 2000 the size of the population claiming to be 'Jewish' in Berlin increased fivefold. As those who actually participate in Jewish community life is only a fraction of this total, the meaning of 'Jewishness' appears to be being interpreted in a somewhat fluid manner. Another issue has arisen: What happens when the newly arrived immigrant group to be integrated into Berlin's Jewish community is in fact the majority? Who integrates whom? It is with questions such as these that the leaders of Berlin Jewry are being confronted.

The European Union Centre at RMIT is funded through a grant from the European Union and RMIT University.

For more information, please visit [www.rmit.edu.au/eucentre](http://www.rmit.edu.au/eucentre)



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