



# PRESS RELEASE

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## Brussels Debate on Inter-Religious Dialogue

**Brussels, 15 May 2008 – Bringing together politics and interfaith dialogue, the European Platform for Jewish Muslim Co-operation shows its commitment to a Europe-wide approach. Two members of the Platform’s Steering Group expressed their views at the Brussels Debate, “New Horizons – Active Citizenship to Bridge Inter-Religious Divides”.**

Organised by the European Commission as a part of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, the Brussels Debates are a high-level panel created to discuss pressing issues on intercultural dialogue. Wednesday’s debate, which took place at Résidence Palace, focused on Inter-religious Dialogue, and specifically on ways in which religions play a role in enhancing active citizenship.

Speakers on the panel were European Commissioner Ján Figel’, responsible for Education and Culture; Vice-President of the European Parliament Mario Mauro; Nadine Iarchy, Vice-Chair of the International Council of Jewish Women’s European Region; and Imam Abduljalil Sajid, Chair of the Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony (UK). Imam Sajid is a member of the Steering Group of the European Platform for Jewish Muslim Co-operation. Ms Iarchy is a member of the Platform’s Executive.

During the debate, Commissioner Figel’ underlined the need for dialogue not only between, but also within religious groups, to ensure they achieve a prerequisite level of preparedness for dialogue. He underlined the importance of education in achieving this, stating that education is a uniting force for good. He cited CEJI’s work as a specific example of good practice in diversity education.

Imam Sajid continued in the same vein, explaining that knowledge is crucial to dialogue, while stating that, “knowledge without action is meaningless”. He argued that religious groups, due to their inherent sense of community and responsibility, play a leading role in enhancing active citizenship, and as such are forerunners in promoting dialogue and the fight against all forms of discrimination, including antisemitism and islamophobia.

Ms Iarchy drew on her experiences in dialogue to express the need for mutual respect, trust and personal contact to ensure dialogue functions in a proactive and effective manner. She described the importance of local grassroots dialogue projects that are often not led by clergy but by religious people

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with a sense of personal responsibility. Mentioning the European Platform for Jewish Muslim Co-operation, she stated that, “There are many successful dialogue projects in Europe, which often go unnoticed by people at the European level, and the European Platform was founded to allow these grassroots activists to share experiences and show their efforts to the European institutions.”

Vice-President Mario Mauro summarised the discussion, urging the audience to participate in dialogue. He called on dialogue practitioners to ensure that dialogue creates cross-fertilisation, avoiding the lure of moral relativism.

The European Platform for Jewish Muslim Co-operation aims to support and empower grassroots dialogue and co-operation initiatives between European Jewish and Muslim communities while providing a forum to showcase good practice at a European level. Open to new members and countries, the Co-operation Platform is currently facilitated by *CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe* with the guidance of joint Jewish Muslim Steering Group. ENDS

**For additional information or to arrange an interview please contact:**

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**NOTES FOR EDITORS**

- The European Platform for Jewish Muslim Co-operation was launched on 27 November 2007 at the European Parliament.
- The full text of the Declaration of Support for Jewish Muslim Co-operation and the list of signatories can be found at <http://www.ceji.org/dialogue/declaration.php>, where it is also possible to sign the Declaration.
- Further details of dialogue initiatives in Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom can be found in the Mapping Reports of Jewish Muslim Dialogue, which can be downloaded from [http://www.ceji.org/dialogue/mapping\\_reports.php](http://www.ceji.org/dialogue/mapping_reports.php).
- For more information about the Platform please visit [www.ceji.org/dialogue](http://www.ceji.org/dialogue) or contact Co-ordinator Ruth Friedman at [ruth@ceji.org](mailto:ruth@ceji.org).

**About CEJI:**

**CEJI – *A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe*** stands with individuals and organisations of all religions, cultures and backgrounds to promote a diverse and inclusive Europe. CEJI works to combat prejudice and discrimination and to promote social cohesion through training and education, dialogue initiatives and advocacy at a European level.