

EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST

MAY 2014

1 / THE RISE OF THE EXTREME RIGHT IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

Elections results for the European parliament were announced on Sunday 25 May. As was predicted, far-right, Eurosceptic, antisemitic, xenophobic and extremist parties increased their share of the vote in many countries.

The most startling result occurred in France, where Marine Le Pen's extreme right National Front came top in the elections with almost 25% of the vote, winning 24 seats. In Greece, the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn succeeded in taking over 9% of the national vote (3 seats), improving on their previous performances despite a recent government crackdown. In Hungary, the nationalist Jobbik party took nearly 15% of votes finishing in second place (3 seats). There were gains for Austria's nationalist Freedom party who came third with a fifth of the national vote and also for Denmark's far-right People's party, which topped the poll with 27% of the vote (4 seats).

Whilst these results had been widely predicted, there has been much debate about their causes. Politicians and commentators have variously pointed to an over powerful European Union and resultant loss of national sovereignty; blaming uncontrolled immigration, globalisation, the desperate state of some economies and out-of-touch politicians.

However not all extremist parties scored as well as anticipated. In the Netherlands, Geert Wilder's anti-Islam Freedom party won 13 % of the vote, well down on a predicted 20%. Support for the Flemish far right Vlaams Belang in Belgium collapsed, as did the UK's British National Party's vote.

Underscoring her greatly strengthened position, France's Marine Le Pen has been casting around for allies in the new European Parliament and has already announced a new nationalist and anti-EU faction. It will likely include her own National Front party together with the Dutch Freedom party, Austria's Freedom party, Italy's Northern League, and Belgium's Vlaams Belang. This new group is seeking additional partners, but for the moment has ruled out working with Hungary's Jobbik party and Greece's Golden Dawn on the grounds that they are too extreme. Whether these extremist parties will work together effectively in the new parliament remains to be seen. Britain's anti-EU UK Independence Party (UKIP), after achieving their own astonishing result (they won 27% in the poll), has refused to work with Le Pen and her faction, branding it "racist".

2 / MURDEROUS ATTACK AT THE JEWISH MUSEUM IN BRUSSELS

The Jewish Museum in Brussels was the site of a shooting incident on the afternoon of Saturday 24 May. Reports indicated that the gunman parked a car outside the museum, before entering the building and calmly shooting at staff and visitors. Three people were killed – an Israeli couple and a 67-year-old French museum volunteer; a fourth victim – a 25 year-old Belgian employee of the museum – was severely injured and remains hospitalised.

A spokesman for the federal prosecutor said “From analysis of the camera footage, it appears we are dealing with a very cold-blooded, single-minded and determined killer.” “That, added to the fact that the victims were shot in the Jewish Museum, led to the determination that the killer was driven by terrorist motives.” A silent vigil was held outside the museum the following day, attended by the Belgian Prime Minister Elio di Rupo.

On Sunday 1 June authorities in Marseilles arrested a 29 year-old French national in connection with the attack. Reports suggested he returned to Europe two months ago after spending more than a year with a radical Islamist group in Syria.

JPR’s Executive Director, Dr Jonathan Boyd, commented:

“Whilst we still cannot know for certain the identity or motivation of the perpetrator, the news of the arrest adds substantial weight to the hypothesis that this was a case of Islamic terrorism. Belgium has been largely off the radar screen recently in terms of this type of antisemitism, but the study of antisemitism JPR recently conducted for the European Union indicates that we should not be surprised. Jews in Belgium have witnessed and experienced a considerably higher number of antisemitic incidents than Jews in most other European countries, and have reported noticeably higher levels of anxiety about antisemitism than those in other countries. The fact that this attack took place in the very heart of Brussels, the city that is at the heart of the European Union, makes it all the more shocking. It should serve as a clear reminder that hostility towards Jews is alive and well on the continent, and must be actively countered and condemned by any politician who wants to be taken seriously.”

Mark Gardner, CST Director of Communications and JPR Associate Fellow has written on the CST [blog](#):

“If [the arrested man] is the terrorist, then there are some blatant lessons to be learned about modern Jihadism and the security implications for Jews and non-Jews in Western Europe. The truth is that by now, after over a decade of terror attacks and plots, from Madrid to Manchester, these lessons ought merely to be confirmed: but many people are still reluctant to accept them.”

Outrage and anger were felt throughout Jewish communities in Europe:

Robin Sclafani, director of CEJI (a Jewish Brussels-based organisation that works to combat prejudice and discrimination), said: “It is good to hear the Belgian politicians sharing their outrage at this Saturday’s attack. I hope they can finally hear the alarm this time for what is a wake-up call that has been snoozed too many times already.”

Dr. Moshe Cantor, President of the European Jewish Council (EJC), said: “How many more deadly attacks at Jewish institutions does our community need to endure until European governments get serious with a climate of increasing hate towards Jews? The time for words and platitudes is over. We demand that our communities [be] protected. It is our basic right as European citizens to go about our daily lives in full security.”

At the funeral of the Israeli victims, John Cornet, the Belgian Ambassador to Israel, promised his country “would save no means to catch the horrible murderer. This is a day of mourning for both our countries, which we share.”

3 / OTHER NEWS STORIES ABOUT JEWISH LIFE IN EUROPE YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

- Europe (general): [26% of World's Adults Are Antisemitic, Survey Finds](#)
(New York Times, May 13, 2014)
- Czech Republic: ['British Schindler' to receive Czech Republic's highest honour](#)
(Daily Telegraph, May 20, 2014)
- France: [Survey: 74% of French Jews mulling emigration](#)
(Jewish Telegraphic Agency, May 19, 2014)
- Germany: [German Probe Finds 20 Former Death Camp Guards](#)
(New York Times, May 20, 2014)
- Hungary: [Design of Nazi occupation statue etched in stone, Hungary's Orban tells Jews](#)
(Jewish Telegraphic Agency, May 1, 2014)
- Hungary: [Former skinhead elected deputy speaker of Hungary's legislature](#)
(World Jewish Congress, May 7, 2014)
- Netherlands: [Amsterdam earmarks \\$1.18m as compensation for Holocaust victims](#)
(Jewish Telegraphic Agency, May 23, 2014)
- Poland: [In first, Poland to pay pensions to Shoah survivors abroad](#)
(Times of Israel, May 28, 2014)
- Romania: [1st Holocaust Learning Centre in Romania Opens in Wiesel's Childhood Home](#)
(eJewish Philanthropy, May 19, 2014)
- Russia: [Russia makes Holocaust denial illegal](#)
(Jewish Telegraphic Agency, May 5, 2014)
- Spain: [Antisemitic Tweets as Real Madrid Beaten by Maccabi Tel Aviv](#)
(International Business Times, May 20, 2014)
- Spain: [Spanish Jews welcome village's decision to drop 'kill Jews' from name](#)
(Jewish Telegraphic Agency, May 26, 2014)
- Ukraine: [Ukraine's Jewish leaders celebrate electoral defeat of far right](#)
(Jewish Telegraphic Agency, May 27, 2014)
- United Kingdom: [One third of Britons 'admit being racially prejudiced'](#)
(BBC News, May 28, 2014)

/ ABOUT JPR

The **Institute for Jewish Policy Research** (JPR) is a UK-based research unit, consultancy and think tank that specialises in contemporary Jewish issues. Formerly the Institute of Jewish Affairs, JPR has stood at the forefront of Jewish community research for several decades and is responsible for much of the data and analysis that exist on Jews in the UK and across Europe.

JPR's research and analysis offers detailed insights into a wide range of issues, including Jewish population size, geographical density, age and gender structure, education, charitable giving, volunteering, antisemitism, Jewish practice, religious outlook and communal participation. All of JPR's publications can be downloaded free of charge from our website: www.jpr.org.uk.

/ ABOUT THE EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST

The **European Jewish Digest** is a new monthly publication that summarises some of the key Jewish-interest stories in Europe, and provides links to articles about various newsworthy items. Its purpose is simply to provide the reader with an overview of incidents and activities that have occurred across Europe in the previous month.

As this is a new service we are particularly eager to receive feedback about it. If you have any comments, positive or negative, please [email us at JPR](#).