

Presenter: Doron Rabinovici, Vienna

Title: **“The Jewish Response to Antisemitism in Austria. Prior to the Anschluss”**

Panel: Modern History

In the monarchy as well as in the First Republic, Anti-Semitism belonged not only to the silent basic consensus but to the loudly proclaimed creed of most parties. In my lecture I shall describe the political strategies of the Jewish factions against hatred and discrimination and I will talk about the social and cultural reactions of Jewish organizations to the anti-Semitic atmosphere. For decades, the “non-Jewish-national” politically bourgeois liberal-minded „Union of Austrian Jews“ had been the strongest fraction in the Viennese Jewish Community the so-called Israelitische Kultusgemeinde. The Union tried to counter Antisemitism at the court or through appeals to politicians. In the attempt to come to terms with discrimination and prejudice it trusted in the institutions of the state. It believed in Jewish emancipation and patriotism. In 1932, the Union lost supremacy in the Kultusgemeinde to the Zionist factions. The Zionist parties refrained from striving for recognition as part of the state’s nation. They insisted on civic equality, but demanded a turn-back to Jewish identity. Several cultural and social Jewish organizations tried to challenge the prejudice against Jews. They tried to prove strength and courage.

But no Jewish strategy was able to overcome the anti-Semitic furor, to stop the anti-Jewish discrimination and propaganda of the Austrian dictatorship since 1934, let alone to prevent the rise of National Socialism.