



COMBATING ANTISEMITISM FOSTERING JEWISH life



SUMMARY REPORT

5TH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU STRATEGY ON COMBATING ANTISEMITISM AND FOSTERING JEWISH LIFE

BRUSSELS, 22-23 January 2024

The 5th meeting of the European Commission Working Group on the implementation of the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life took place in Brussels on 22-23 January.

It was the first meeting of the Working Group after the terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel on 7 October 2023. The situation in Gaza magnified polarisation in society which tremendously impacted on the security and well-being of Jews in the diaspora. Across Europe, we have seen scenes which recall the darkest chapter of European history. We witnessed overt Jew-hatred in schools and universities, Jewish people were harassed and bullied on the street, synagogues vandalised, hate speech, fake news, Holocaust distortion and distortion of the attacks of 7 October spread online at worrying speed. Recorded violent criminal attacks against Jewish people increased between 300-800% in EU Member States. This remains a shocking reminder that we can never be complacent about the resurgence of hatred, that we must step up our actions and ensure that Jewish life in Europe remains safe and part of the public square.

The first day of the working group primarily focussed on the impact of the attack on Jewish communities in the EU and actions taken on European and national level to address it. On the second day, the working group focussed on the development and implementation of the national strategies in line with the [Council Conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism](#) of 4 March 2022 in which Member States committed to “developing national strategies against antisemitism, and endeavour to do so by the end of 2022”. Member States national authorities and Jewish communities were invited to provide updates on the developments in their countries. In line with the [EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life](#), the European Commission will present a progress report on the fight against antisemitism mid-2024 which will draw on best-practices from national strategies.

To mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, this session was followed by the presentation of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Charter for Safeguarding Sites, and a discussion on how to best preserve Holocaust places and sites for future generations.

In summary, the fifth meeting of the working group addressed the following topics:

- 1. Impact of the Hamas terrorist attack on Jewish communities**
- 2. Countering online antisemitism – the impact of the Hamas terrorist attack**
- 3. Updates on the development and implementation of national strategies**
- 4. The IHRA Charter for Safeguarding Sites**



MONDAY, 22 JANUARY 2024

Opening Session – in chronological order

Katharina von Schnurbein, Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life, European Commission

Welcomed the participants and started the meeting with a moment of silence. She emphasised that the explosion in antisemitic incidents since the attacked by Hamas on Israel on 7 October led to a situation for Jews which is reminiscent of the darkest chapter in Europe's history. However, the difference this time is that the EU and Member States stand with the Jewish communities.

Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President, European Commission

The Vice-President opened the meeting with a key note speech in which he emphasized that the EU stands "shoulder to shoulder" with Israel and other Jewish communities around Europe since the attacks, which "remind us of the darkest chapter of our history book here in Europe." He specially highlighted that it is crucial that all Member States ensure the resources to protect Jewish communities and institutions, and he highlighted that the Commission made available 5 million Euro specifically to protect Jewish places of worship through a new call of the Internal Security Fund. In addition he announced a new open procurement call of 3 million Euro to establish a secretariat for the development of the Europewide Network of places where the Holocaust happened. The Vice-President urged Member States that did not yet develop a national strategy on combating antisemitism to do so as soon as possible.

Jonathan Rosenzweig, Deputy Head of Mission of Israel to the EU and NATO

Mr Rosenzweig stressed that more than 1100 people were murdered in the attack, and thanked President Von der Leyen and President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, for visiting Israel soon after the attack had taken place. He stressed the attack is antisemitic as Hamas teaches generations of children to hate Jews and the slogan 'From the river to the sea' is now not only heard in Teheran, but also in London, Washington, European cities and universities and campuses.

Maram Stern, Executive Vice-President and CEO, World Jewish Congress

Mr Stern called for the unconditional release of all hostages, and urged the Commission and Member States to condemn all forms of antisemitism in a more consistent and vocal way. The attack was an attack on all Jews around the world and on humanity at large. 2024 is an important year, which marks 30 years since the attack in Buenos Aires and 5 years since the attack in Halle. Furthermore, there will be elections for the European Parliament, in the US and in many other countries.

Raya Kalenova, Executive Vice-President and CEO, European Jewish Congress

Ms Kalenova expressed gratitude that the Commission understands the security needs of the Jewish communities, and stressed that the danger of hate and violence does not only concerns Jews, but is a danger for all minorities and democracy at large. She welcomes that the Security and Crisis Centre by EJS was specifically mentioned in the 6 December Communication 'No place for hate: A Europe united against hatred' as a good example and emphasized that they work closely together with other communities, such as Muslims and Buddhists to share knowledge and expertise on security.



Session I: Impact of the Hamas terrorist attack on Jewish communities

The Hamas terrorist attacks on 7 October in Israel reverberates among the Jewish communities in Europe, of which many people have family and friends in Israel, and experience a daily increase of antisemitic incidents in public and online. Although many Member States have stepped up security measures since the attack, Jewish communities remain worried. Community members reported not being able to go out on the streets without being insulted and harassed, and antisemitism in schools and universities is spiking. This eruption of antisemitism based on the attack follows on an already existing increase in antisemitism in recent years based on the economic crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic and the unjustified war of aggressions of Russia against Ukraine.

Panellists further highlighted the explosion of antisemitic incidents across the EU, in particular Israel-related antisemitism. In France 1500 incidents were recorded since 7 Oct 2023 five times more than in the entire year 2022. Recorded incidents increased by 1000%. In Denmark a 2300% increase took place. In Antwerp alone 100 incidents were reported in the two months after the attack. According to the communities, 80-90% of incidents currently originate in leftwing and Arab/Turkish quarters.

Beside providing concrete security, voicing support and understanding for the Jewish communities was seen as key. Intersectionality was seen as challenging, in particular for university students, as Jews are increasingly excluded from left or feminist circles. Several expressed that they see the use of the word “genocide” as misuse to describe the war in Gaza, which is fought in Israel’s self-defence and that using the term should be interpreted as Holocaust trivialisation (the term genocide itself was coined by Jews after the Holocaust). Regarding the available EU funding it was pointed out that successfully applying for small Jewish communities is a huge challenge.

Session II: The impact of the Hamas terrorist attack - Progress on countering online antisemitism

The online environment has developed into a core vector for our democracies but also gives space for illegal content, for hate speech, and for insidious attempts to spread and foment hatred and violent extremism. Online antisemitism, including the glorification of terrorism, calling for the killing of Jews and the destruction of the State of Israel are amplified by the online environment and have increased significantly since the terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel. In the weeks directly after the attack, a 2.4 times increase in the overall proportion of antisemitic messages took place online, and as an example an over 50-fold increase in the absolute volume of antisemitic comments was found on YouTube videos about the Israel/Palestine conflict, following Hamas’ attacks. Concerns about antisemitism in particular and hate speech more generally have been a major driving force for the European Commission to step up action.

The Commission informed about the DSA enforcement and the infringement procedure against X. Jewish organisations were invited to apply for becoming trusted flaggers with regards to the trusted flaggers and fact checkers network to be created under the upcoming hate speech call. The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) informed about its work on collecting cases of disinformation, including antisemitic ones, and creating a database to serve as evidence to ensure the correct implementation of the Code of practise on disinformation. NL informed that the Special Envoys and Coordinators Combating Antisemitism (SECCA) forum is starting a subgroup on online antisemitism, to strengthen the dialogue with IT companies on the issue.



TUESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2024

Session III: Updates by Member States on the development and implementation of national strategies

In line with the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, Member States committed in the Council Conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism, adopted on 4 March 2022, to develop national strategies on combating antisemitism by end 2022. During this session all Member States were invited to give an update on the developments of national strategies and other measures taken in their country to combat antisemitism. In line with the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, the European Commission will present a progress report on the fight against antisemitism in the first half of 2024 which will draw on best-practices from national strategies. Member States and Jewish communities are therefore also invited to highlight specific best practices from their respective countries.

Katharina von Schnurbein explained the methodology of the upcoming progress report on the implementation of the EU Strategy that will be presented mid-2024, and will include monitoring of progress at national level and draw on best-practices from national strategies. She also mentioned that the Commission recently published a new report: 'The legal framework in the EU to combat antisemitism'. Katrzyszyna Janicka-Pawłowska, the EC Victims' Rights' Coordinator, encouraged special envoys to engage in the current revision of the Victims' Rights Directive, given its relevance for victims of antisemitic incidents. So far 19 Member States have either a stand-alone strategy or included measures in broader strategies against racism. Luxembourg, Bulgaria, Latvia, France, Lithuania, Hungary, Greece, Sweden, Spain, Romania, Finland, Denmark, Belgium, Austria, Netherlands and Ireland provided updates on the implementation and/or development of their national strategies. The Commission encouraged Member States that do not yet have adopted a national strategy to do so as soon as possible so that this can be recognised in the progress report.

Amb. Dani Dayan, Chairman of Yad Vashem, Presenting possibilities of cooperation between EU Member States and Yad Vashem

Mr Dayan emphasized that is extremely important to effectively implement plans that are developed. For the Holocaust it remains important that we keep commemorating each othe 6 million vicitms. There is now a strong partnership between Yad Vashem and a number of Member States to support research and education on the Holocaust. He specifically mentioned that Yad Vashem is open to have more of such partnerships with other Member States as well.

Session IV: The IHRA Charter for Safeguarding Sites

Sites are the key to remembrance, research, and education – they hold the historical record of the Holocaust. In connection with the Commission launching a call for tenders to establish a secretariat to develop a Network of Places where the Holocaust happened, Sara Lustig (Co-Chair of IHRA), Kathrin Meyer (Secretary General IHRA), and Gilly Carr (IHRA Delegate) presented the new IHRA Charter for Safeguarding Sites. With the last survivors passing away Holocaust sites become ever more important for remembrance. Yet, 80 years after the Holocaust, not a single site is properly and entirely safeguarded. Safeguarding sites means preserving the historical record, which helps protect the facts of the Holocaust for generations to come. By properly safeguarding sites, governments can ensure that sites are not used to distort or falsify history. The IHRA has led international efforts to identify 16 challenges facing sites and how to respond to them, these efforts led to the development of the IHRA Charter for Safeguarding Sites. The IHRA Charter for Safeguarding Sites is the first expert informed Holocaust-related heritage charter. It identifies common threats to sites. Identifies good practices in safeguarding sites. Outlines mitigation measures. Endorses site management plans. And, calls upon governments to assume ownership of their history.