



Working Group on Antisemitism

2ND MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL DECLARATION ON THE FIGHT AGAINST ANTISEMITISM

EDUCATION ABOUT JEWISH LIFE, ANTISEMITISM AND THE HOLOCAUST

10-11 December 2019

Brussels, Berlaymont building, Schuman room

Following the unanimous adoption of the ["Council Declaration on the fight against antisemitism and the development of a common security approach to better protect Jewish communities and institutions in Europe"](#) on 6 December 2018, the European Commission has created a working group on antisemitism within the existing High-level Member States expert group on Racism and Xenophobia to implement the declaration. The aim is to support Member States in the adoption of "a holistic strategy to prevent and fight all forms of antisemitism as part of their strategies on preventing racism, xenophobia, radicalisation and violent extremism", in line with the Council declaration by the end of 2020. Article 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the Council Declaration stress the need to include education, formal and non-formal, in the response and prevention of antisemitism.

According to the [2019 Eurobarometer on "Perceptions of antisemitism"](#), 68% of Europeans feel that people in their country are not well informed about the history, customs and practices of national Jewish people in their country and only 4 in 10 Europeans think the Holocaust is sufficiently taught in school. Furthermore, according to the 2019 study drawing from the [FRA survey on Young Jewish Europeans: perceptions and experiences of antisemitism](#), young Jewish Europeans report that 24 % of the most serious incident of antisemitic harassment were perpetrated by a work or school colleague.

It is essential to revisit education about Jewish life, antisemitism and the Holocaust in a holistic way. With this in mind, the second meeting will examine how to prevent, address and respond to antisemitism in and through education. An overview of different challenges and existing tools will be shared with participants in preparation for the meeting.

The aim of the meeting is to exchange best practices and share experiences to support Member States' efforts to deliver the necessary education to prevent, address and respond to antisemitism. It brings together representatives of national ministries of education and national special envoys on antisemitism, representatives of national Jewish communities and Jewish umbrella organisations, as well as relevant international organisations. Concrete tools to develop holistic strategies for education will be shared with Member States.

WEDNESDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2019

- 08:15 - 09:00** **Welcome coffee and registration**
- 09:00 - 09:15** **Opening Speech**
Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, European Commission
- 09:15 - 09:25** **Introduction of agenda**
Katharina von Schnurbein, Coordinator on combating antisemitism, European Commission
- 09:25 - 09:45** **National structures and strategies on combating antisemitism**
- 09:45 - 10:15** **EU support, resources and funding**
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10:15 - 11:45 **Panel 1: Addressing antisemitism in classrooms**

Antisemitism is on the rise in Europe and young Jewish Europeans are particularly vulnerable. Schools and universities are key places to raise citizens' awareness, prevent and combat antisemitism in Europe, yet there are many challenges to recognising and addressing it effectively. Too often, education about antisemitism remains limited to the Holocaust and neglects earlier and contemporary forms. If not done properly, education about antisemitism faces the risk to perpetuate, or worse, reinforce already harboured stereotypes without challenging them. Teaching to prevent, address and respond to the different expressions of antisemitism contributes to building-up greater resilience against all forms of extremism, often spread through conspiracy myths, offline and online. In this context, training for educational staff is essential, and it must be supported by school leaders with policies that enable detection and response that do not leave expressions of antisemitism ignored in educational facilities. All these efforts must be based on evidence-based research and anchored in thorough studies of antisemitism at higher education facilities.

11:45 - 12:15 **“Discussion under six eyes” between representatives of Member States and representatives of national Jewish communities**

Questions:

1. How can Member States address antisemitism in education systems holistically? More specifically, how should curricula, schoolbooks and teacher training address antisemitism?
 2. How can teachers and professors educate about the features and dangers of antisemitism as an historical and contemporary threat for society as a whole?
 3. How to ensure that contemporary antisemitism is being addressed in human rights and citizenship education curricula?
 4. How should schools and universities address antisemitic speech and acts occurring on their premises?
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12:15 - 13:15 **Lunch break**

13:15 - 14:45 **Panel 2: Teaching about Jewish life and culture**

Jewish communities have been part of Europe's social fabric for millennia and Jewish life and culture is an integral part of Europe's past, present and future. However, more than two in three Europeans feel that people are not well informed about the history, customs and practices of Jewish people in their country and only 3% feel very well informed. Learning is key to better understanding and as such an increased knowledge on Jewish life can contribute to reduce antisemitic stereotypes and prejudices, and help create a more inclusive society which cherishes diversity. This session will look at the different ways to teach about Jewish life and culture and how local Jewish communities and institutions can be better involved in this process.

14:45 – 15:00 **“Discussion under six eyes” between representatives of Member States and representatives of national Jewish communities**

Questions:

1. How to integrate education on Jewish culture and life in schools and universities?
2. How to teach about the contributions of Jewish communities to Europe and the diversity of Jewish identities today?
3. How to increase the visibility of Jewish culture and life in collaboration with Jewish communities (cultural activities, visits of young Jews in schools and universities, visits of Jewish cultural and religious premises for students)?

15:00 – 15:20 **Coffee break**

15:20 – 15:40 **Presentation of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure**

15:40 – 17:10 **Panel 3: Holocaust education, research and remembrance**

The Holocaust is a defining legacy of European history and its remembrance is a responsibility for the EU and its Member States to prevent similar atrocities in the future. Only 4 in 10 Europeans think the Holocaust is sufficiently taught in schools, although Jewish Europeans see remembrance of the Holocaust as a core part of their identity. The Holocaust as part of Human Rights education needs to be addressed in schools and universities, to ensure its remembrance as well as to fight against its denial and distortion. Memorial and documentation centres as well as research play a fundamental role in this process. This panel will explore how Holocaust education, research and remembrance 75 years after should adapt to the future.

17:10 – 17:30 **“Discussion under six eyes” between representatives of Member States and representatives of national Jewish communities**

Questions:

1. How to create an inclusive education on the Holocaust? How to create appreciation for the impact and lessons of the Holocaust and embed it in human rights education?
2. How to explain the Holocaust as the peak of a long-term phenomenon and not as the only expression of antisemitism in Europe?
3. How to honour future remembrance of the Holocaust in collaboration with Jewish communities?
4. How to ensure undistorted research on the Holocaust and to connect national and European research centres and archives?

17:30 – 18:00 **Conclusions and next steps**

Closing remarks

Věra Jourová, Vice-President for Values and Transparency,
European Commission

19:00 – 21:00 **Visit of the Jewish Museum of Belgium and its exhibition
"Superheroes Never Die. Comics and Jewish Memories"**

Walking dinner
