



COMBATING ANTISEMITISM FOSTERING JEWISH life



BACKGROUND

2ND MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU STRATEGY ON COMBATING ANTISEMITISM AND FOSTERING JEWISH LIFE

BRUSSELS
1 – 2 June 2022

Introduction

On 5 October 2021 the European Commission adopted the first-ever EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life. In full respect of national competences, the strategy sets out the policy framework for the Commission for the period 2021-2030.

*In the Council Conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism of 4 March 2022, adopted under the French Presidency, Member States once more committed to developing national strategies against antisemitism, and endeavour to do so by the end of 2022. **The 2nd meeting of the Working Group aims to further support the development of these national strategies and focus on relevant topics that Member States are encouraged to cover in them.***

*The recently adopted Conclusions and the EU Strategy amongst others call for developing a **common methodology to record antisemitic incidents** and to increase the efforts to ensure the **security of Jewish communities**, as well as around religious institutions, places of worship and confessional schools, including during cultural or religious events. Furthermore, during the working group an update will be provided on the **situation of the Jewish community in Ukraine**, and the efforts of Jewish organisations to help the refugees.*

Combating antisemitic narratives and disinformation used by Russia to justify its unprovoked invasion of Ukraine

In this session speakers will discuss the antisemitic narratives and disinformation used by Russia as justification for its unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Russia has falsely claimed that it sought to “denazify” Ukraine, and that the Ukrainian government is committing a genocide in Russian-speaking regions. This rhetoric has been widely used in official discourses and in Russian media. The misuse of terminology by Russia fuels hatred and antisemitism and has a corrosive effect on the collective historical memory and on the resilience and cohesion of our democratic societies. This narrative has emerged in a time that Holocaust denial, distortion and trivialisation were already on the rise. Speakers will reflect on ways to effectively combat the false narratives and disinformation used to justify the war, and the impact they have on antisemitism and Jewish communities worldwide. Furthermore, an update of the situation of the Jewish community in Ukraine will be provided. Ukraine is home to up to 200,000 Jews, making it the fourth largest Jewish community in Europe and the eleventh largest in the world.



Session I. Tour-de-table with updates from Member States and Jewish communities on national strategies and other actions

During this session all Member States will be asked to give an update on the developments of national strategies and other actions in their country to combat antisemitism. Member States committed in the 2018 and 2020 Council Declarations on combating antisemitism to “preventing and fighting all forms of antisemitism through new national strategies or measures under existing national strategies and/or action plans on preventing racism, xenophobia, radicalisation and violent extremism.” In the Council Conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism of 4 March 2022, adopted under the French Presidency, Member States promised to develop national strategies against antisemitism by the end of 2022.

Session II. The security needs of the Jewish community

This session will focus on the security needs of the Jewish community and on what the EU and Member States can do to meet those needs. According to the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, 71% of Jewish people avoid carrying or displaying items that could identify them as Jewish. 38% of Jews have considered emigrating because they do not feel safe as Jews in the EU. Protecting and fostering Jewish life is a key pillar in the EU Strategy and in the recently adopted Conclusions, Member States committed to increase the efforts to ensure the security of Jewish communities, as well as around religious institutions, places of worship and confessional schools, including during cultural or religious events.

Session III – Developing a common methodology on recording antisemitic incidents

The recently adopted Conclusions and the EU Strategy amongst others call for developing a common methodology to record antisemitic incidents. On 18 and 19 May, Austrian Federal Minister for EU and Constitutional Affairs, Ms. Karoline Edtstadler, hosts a high-level meeting of Special Envoys and Coordinators Combating Antisemitism and experts in the field of antisemitic hate crime recording. During this session results of the conference will be shared and it will be discussed how we can further cooperate towards a common methodology on recording antisemitic incidents.