



COMBATING ANTISEMITISM FOSTERING JEWISH life



3RD MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU STRATEGY ON COMBATING ANTISEMITISM AND FOSTERING JEWISH LIFE

SPEECH: VICE-PRESIDENT MARGARITIS SCHINAS VICE-PRESIDENT FOR PROMOTING OUR EUROPEAN WAY OF LIFE

Dear Minister,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

It is a pleasure to be with you today here in The Hague, and to finally be able to see you all again in person. This is the second time the working group is able to meet physically after the pandemic and the first time it convenes outside of Brussels – a very important moment indeed!

I would like to start by **warmly thanking Minister Yesilgöz-Zegerius** for hosting us at the Ministry of Justice and Security, and for all the efforts that the Dutch National Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism, Eddo Verdoner, and his team have invested in organising this event.

The adoption of the IHRA definition, the appointment of the National Coordinator, the publication of his work programme on 6 October this year, and the organisation of this working group show the commitment of the Netherlands to combatting antisemitism.

Minister,

your commitment to fighting antisemitism, as you just outlined in your speech – but also recently in the Ronny Naftaniel-lecture – is inspiring. I very much welcome the launch of preparations towards a new national strategy, and I am reassured that we have in the Netherlands such a strong partner in the fight against antisemitism.

I invite all of our Member States to continue working in the same direction. **Because antisemitism is unfortunately on the rise and demands a decisive response.**

The new annual overview on antisemitic incidents published by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) last month shows that thousands of antisemitic incidents take place each year.



The perpetrator of the deadly attack on 12 October at an LGBTIQ bar in Bratislava attempted to legitimise his crimes with an antisemitic manifesto.

Across the Atlantic, the public discourse has taken a very dark turn in recent weeks, after statements by celebrities and politicians with enormous influence in popular culture and social media which reproduced anti-Jewish conspiracy myths and even seemed to glorify Hitler.

The President of the United States was forced to intervene to set the record straight: ***“The Holocaust happened.”*** *“Instead of giving it a platform, our political leaders should be calling out and rejecting antisemitism wherever it hides.”* ***“Silence is complicity.”***

All this reminds us that **antisemitism is not something of the past. It is happening here and now.** And it represents a threat not only to Jewish communities and to Jewish life, but to an open and diverse society, to democracy and the European way of life.

Calling out antisemitism in all its forms is **our duty as Europeans.**

We must have the courage and the determination to **push back against hate and stand up for our values**, taking inspiration from a young girl who, 80 years ago, confined in a hidden annex a few kilometres away from here, wrote **a diary that would forever change the world.** Even in these darkest of times, **Anne stood strong**, writing: ***“I must uphold my ideals, for perhaps the time will come when I shall be able to carry them out.”***

It is in this spirit that in October 2021 we presented **the first-ever EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life.** It is our commitment to ensuring that Jewish life continues to thrive in Europe and beyond and it constitutes a turning point.

All Member States endorsed the strategy and committed in the Council conclusions of March this year, to develop national strategies and endeavour to do so by end 2022.

So far 14 Member States have adopted a national strategy against antisemitism and another 8 have indicated that it is under development. I would like to thank you all for this important progress and welcome in particular the **presentation by Germany of its National Strategy just last week – a milestone moment.** We look forward to receiving during this working group further updates on the development and implementation of your strategies.

I encourage you to **be bold and original in designing your actions at national and local level.**

On Sunday, in my hometown of Thessaloniki, Aris football club and Israeli team Maccabi Haifa joined forces in a **friendly match, with the proceeds going to the new Holocaust Museum of the city.**

Sometimes **the smallest of actions can have the greatest impact.**

Winning the fight against antisemitism is only possible if we do it together with Jewish communities and civil society organisations. Civil society organisations are the backbone of any open, free and democratic society. This is why the Commission organised on 16 and 17 November **the first Civil Society Forum on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life.** It brought together over 200 representatives from Jewish organisations and communities, museums, memorial and heritage institutions, academics and researchers. To support their efforts, I was pleased to announce **new calls for proposals** launched under our EU funding programmes by the end of this year: 20 million euros is available to fight against all forms of discrimination, racism and antisemitism and 10 million euros is available to support initiatives on Holocaust remembrance.

On 20 October, the Commission also organised a **conference Freedom of Religion with regards to religious slaughter**, in cooperation with the United Nations, the OECD and the Council of Europe. Facilitating the dialogue between national authorities and the Jewish and Muslim communities on this issue was a commitment we took in the EU strategy – and we delivered.



The Netherlands' contribution to the discussion was multi-fold, with representatives of the Dutch Jewish community, the Muslim communities and the national authorities intervening to explain the pragmatic and consensual solution found here in the Netherlands on kosher slaughtering, which can be a useful inspiration for other countries.

Dear friends,

Ensuring a future for Jewish life in Europe and beyond is an objective we all share – but it should be turned into concrete actions. Our surveys show that many Jewish people have considered leaving the EU because they do not feel safe. We all stand to lose if we don't manage to reverse this trend.

We therefore count on the Member States to develop strong national action plans to counter the rise in antisemitism. Katharina von Schnurbein and her team are at your disposal to provide advice and guidance to design and implement them.

The Commission will publish a comprehensive implementation report on the EU Strategy in 2024. The report will include the monitoring of progress at national level, taking into account the commitments made in the Council Declarations on antisemitism of 2018 and 2020, and the Council Conclusions of this year.

As stated in the final paragraph of the EU Strategy: **“Jewish life deserves not only to be protected but to be allowed to flourish in all its diversity. Europe can only prosper when its Jewish communities prosper too.”**

That is why we are here together today – and I hope your discussions over the next two days will bring us one step closer to achieving this goal.