



COMBATING ANTISEMITISM FOSTERING JEWISH life



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1st MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU STRATEGY ON COMBATING ANTISEMITISM AND FOSTERING JEWISH LIFE

VIA VIDEO-CONFERENCE
14 – 15 December 2021

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, which is comprised of three pillars:

- 1 – Preventing and combating all forms of antisemitism**
- 2 – Protecting and fostering Jewish life in the EU**
- 3 – Education, research and Holocaust remembrance**

The strategy also seeks to place the EU firmly in the **lead of the global fight against antisemitism**, complementing measures within the EU with international efforts along all the three pillars.

As stated in the strategy “To support the implementation of this strategy and help coordinate Member States’ efforts the Commission will formalise the ad hoc ‘Working Group on combating antisemitism’ as a permanent structure that brings together Member States, Jewish communities’ representatives and other stakeholders.”

The strategy includes key actions the Commission will take and actions the Commission encourages the Member States to take, including the development of national strategies by the end of 2022. **The 1st meeting of the Working Group on the implementation of the EU strategy will focus on the development of the national strategies and how this will be supported through the EU strategy.**

Focus will be on areas Member States can cover in their national strategies and (targeted) actions they can include, exchanging best practices between Member States and on facilitating dialogue between the Member States and Jewish organisations and communities.

The sessions of the meeting cover the topics described below.



Session I. The new EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life

This session will outline the strategy and its main actions and address how Member States, Jewish communities, civil society organisations and international organisations can support its implementation and use it as a basis for the development of their national strategies and actions by 2022. The strategy addresses preventing and combating all forms of antisemitism; protecting and fostering Jewish life in the EU; and education, research and Holocaust remembrance. Amongst others, the strategy proposes measures to step up cooperation with online companies to curb antisemitism online, to better protect public spaces and places of worship, to set up a European research hub on contemporary antisemitism and create a network of sites ‘where the Holocaust happened’. Member States are, amongst other, encouraged to prosecute online antisemitic hate speech, support civil society organisations combating antisemitism, work with EU agencies such as Europol and CEPOL, raise awareness about Jewish life and traditions, safeguard Jewish heritage and raise awareness against Holocaust denial.

Session II. Developing national strategies by 2022

This session will provide an overview of where Member States stand with the development of national strategies, discuss the links between strategies to combat antisemitism and anti-racism strategies, and exchange best practices of strategies that have been developed or are currently under development. Member States have 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.” As stated in the EU strategy, these national strategies should be adopted by the end of 2022 and will be assessed by the Commission by the end of 2023.

Breakout sessions: “Discussion under six eyes”

This session will provide Member State representatives and representatives of national Jewish communities from the same country the possibility to discuss the design and development of national strategies and how actions included in the EU strategy and in the pledges made at the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism can feed into that.

Session III. In depth discussion on the main pillars of the strategy

The three sessions will focus on the key actions the Commission will take and the specific actions the Commission encourages the Member States to take and which should be included in their national strategies. The EU strategy takes a holistic approach through its three pillars that together aim to cover all aspects relevant for combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life. In this session, the pillars will be discussed in more depth, to see how the policies and actions, such as setting up a network of trusted flaggers and Jewish organisations, improving the recording of antisemitic incidents, cooperate with equality bodies, and create a network of sites ‘where the Holocaust happened’ can be relevant and inspiring for the development and implementation of the national strategies.

Pillar 1 - Preventing and combating all forms of antisemitism

This pillar firstly addresses a number of prerequisites to develop an effective strategy, such as ensuring and mobilising funding, appointing a special envoy/coordinator and adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism. Secondly, it focusses on the policies aimed at combating antisemitic hate crime and hate speech offline and online, fighting antisemitic discrimination, and on how organisations themselves can lead by example.

Pillar 2 - Protecting and fostering Jewish life in the EU

In the second pillar, security is identified as the prerequisite for fostering Jewish life in the EU. In this session, the focus will be on policies and actions to actively foster Jewish life in the EU and increase knowledge and understanding about it. Lastly, the pillar focusses on protecting Jewish heritage, which due to the extermination of Jewish communities during the Holocaust was often left unattended or unused.

Pillar 3 - Education, research and Holocaust remembrance

The third pillar sets out actions for Holocaust remembrance as well as research and education about Jewish life and antisemitism in Europe. Taking into account necessary changes in the coming years and the need of finding new forms of remembrance, in an age where the last survivors of the Holocaust are passing away, and make sure their stories are not forgotten and retold accurately in a digital age and multicultural society. Finally, the pillar touches upon combating Holocaust denial, distortion and trivialisation.