



Working Group on Antisemitism

3RD MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL DECLARATION ON THE FIGHT AGAINST ANTISEMITISM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE - WEDNESDAY, 17 JUNE 2020

SUMMARY REPORT

The 3rd meeting of the working group on antisemitism was divided in two panels focusing respectively on the prevalence of **disinformation and antisemitic conspiracy myths** in the context of the COVID19 and the **use of the International Holocaust Alliance's (IHRA) definition of antisemitism**ⁱ.

Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President for Promoting our European way of life, opened the meeting reiterating his determination to fight antisemitism and encouraged Member States to proceed with the adoption of national strategies for combating antisemitism, including the IHRA definition, in line with the 2018 Council Declaration. He reaffirmed the Commission's full support to DE Presidency's initiative to make combating antisemitism a priority and announced harvesting the results in a **4th Working Group meeting** in December 2020ⁱⁱ. **Věra Jourová**, Vice-President for Values and Transparency, followed by presenting the Commission's actions in countering disinformationⁱⁱⁱ and illegal hate speech online, particularly underlining the danger of conspiracy myths and how they lead to radicalisation and physical violence.^{iv}

PANEL 1: ONLINE DISINFORMATION, CONSPIRACIES AND ANTISEMITISM

During the **first panel** experts confirmed the **significant increase of antisemitic conspiracy myths online** over the past months and the broad disinformation risk around COVID19. It was indicated that the common conspiracy myths concerning Jews are related to blood libels, the Rothschilds and George Soros, and they are coming from the far-right as well as from across the political spectrum. Speakers expressed their worries about the aftermath of the pandemic when Jews will be blamed for the economic crisis and online threats will enter quickly real life. Experts presented the various actions taken (or not) by Facebook, YouTube and Telegram to deal with disinformation on their platforms and reiterated the need for more transparency and data as well as improvement of fact checking and research.

DG CNECT informed about the recently founded **EU Observatory against disinformation**^v, platforms for fact checkers and researchers to be set up, and **EastStratComm**^{vi}, **EEAS**, presented their work against state-made disinformation. **Participants suggested** to the EEAS to focus on Iran and other Arab countries as a source of antisemitic disinformation, including content related to Holocaust denial and distortion, and proposed to use the IHRA definition as a bias indicator when monitoring antisemitic conspiracy myths and disinformation. It was also recommended to the European Commission to consider including the fight against antisemitism and racism in its upcoming European Democracy Action Plan.

PANEL 2: SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF ANTISEMITISM – DATA, TRAINING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The second panel discussed **how to deal with and respond to antisemitic incidents and hate crimes** with a victim-centred approach based on the IHRA definition. Witnesses of antisemitic attacks, experts on victims support, and researchers stressed the need to educate equality bodies, civil society organisations, schools and law enforcement authorities, about what antisemitism is and strengthen the cooperation with the Jewish community in order to better understand its specificities and gain support and solidarity with the victims. The lack of understanding and correct classification of antisemitic incidents can lead to a second victimization and further affect the reporting and data collection.

DG JUST laid down the legal obligation for Member States^{vi} according to the Victim Rights Directive^{vii} in particular for hate crime victims, and the upcoming Victim Rights Strategy^{viii}.

Participants highlighted the need for trainings on antisemitism and hate crimes to be implemented at national level, commended those organisations and bodies that carry out such trainings or projects on monitoring of antisemitic hate crimes and incidents, and asked Member States to financially support Jewish communities in building up reporting and victim support bodies.

In **24 national break-out sessions** Jewish communities, national authorities and equality bodies discussed closer cooperation on national level and agreed to follow-up nationally. **Five Member States informed about progress on their national strategies on antisemitism.**

ⁱ <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>

ⁱⁱ https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/speech-vice-president-margaritis-schinas-3rd-meeting-working-group-combating-antisemitism_en

ⁱⁱⁱ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1006

^{iv} https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/speech-vice-president-vera-jourova-3rd-meeting-working-group-combating-antisemitism_en

^v <https://www.disinfobservatory.org/the-observatory/>

^{vi} <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>

^{vii} <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1421925131614&uri=CELEX:32012L0029>

^{viii} https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_20_1169