



# THE EU COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY TO COMBAT ANTISEMITISM

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“We make a great mistake if we think antisemitism is a threat only to Jews. It is a threat, first and foremost, to Europe and to the freedoms it took centuries to achieve.”

---Rabbi Jonathan Saks (2016)

“the EU came out of the ashes of the Shoah, thus making the EU and national governments’ and civil societies’ role in combatting antisemitism of exceptional importance.”

--- Katharina von Schnurbein, European Commission  
Coordinator on combating antisemitism (2018)





Commission President Ursula von der Leyen “Our fight against antisemitism is more urgent than ever, antisemitism is on the rise across Europe...Antisemitism is a poison for our democratic values and an attack on our way of life.”

*- June 2020, speech to the American Jewish Committee Global Forum*

# Definition of Antisemitism



- Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel

# Why Focus on Antisemitism?

- the canary in the coal mine of undemocratic practices
- symptom and tool of undemocratic forces at work in Europe
- puts Europe's democracies in danger
- violates ideals of anti-discrimination and religious freedom enshrined in the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights

# New Antisemitism

\*Not state sponsored antisemitism like in the 1930-40s

- **Far Right:** Traditional Hatred of Jews; Jew as the "other" or "corrupt elite" –Feeds into populism

Examples: Radical Right Parties: Freedom Party--Austria; Fidesz—Hungary; Law and Justice Party—Poland, National Front (National Rally)-France

- **Far Left:** Blaming European Jewish Citizens for actions taken by Israel. Holding Israel to a higher standard than any other democracy and denying the existence of Israel.

- **Muslim Immigrants** (and second and third generation): holding both the political left and rights views on Jews

# Why Now?

- 1) the concern over the rise of far-right parties in Europe and democratic backsliding
- 2) very public and violent attacks in Europe against Jews (and other related targets) across member states,
  - *2012 (Toulouse) attack at Jewish School*
  - *2015 Charlie Hebdo attack at kosher market*
  - *2015 February attacks less than a month later in Copenhagen*

# Why Now? -Continued

- 3) strong political leadership devoted to addressing antisemitism-particularly from political leaders in certain member states and key EU officials
  - *Frans Timmermans, Ursula von der Leyen, Katharina von Schnurbein*
- 4) influence of international or regional NGO/civil society organizations and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) to define antisemitism and present data highlighting the importance of addressing antisemitism
- 5) EU treaties and directives created the legal underpinnings to deal with antidiscrimination, within which antisemitism is protected and could be addressed at the EU level



# Signs of Increased Antisemitism

- rise in antisemitic acts
- Increased use of antisemitism as a political tool (ADL report)
- Covid has brought an increase in Jewish conspiracy theories
- EU 2018 survey showed Jews feel unsafe in Europe (many are leaving)

# What has the EU done to address antisemitism?



- December 2015 appointment of Katharina von Schnurbein as the first European Commission Coordinator on combating antisemitism.
- 2016 “Code of Conduct”
- 2017 European Parliament adopting a resolution on combatting antisemitism
- 2018 the Council of the EU published a “declaration on the fight against antisemitism and the development of a common security approach to better protect Jewish communities and institutions in Europe”.
  - *Adoption of IHRA definition of antisemitism*
- 2020 Council declaration on fighting antisemitism

# 2021 Comprehensive Strategy to Combat Antisemitism



There are three main pillars to the comprehensive strategy

(1) Preventing and combating all forms of antisemitism

(2) Protecting and fostering Jewish life in the EU

(3) Education, research and Holocaust remembrance

# (1) Preventing and combating all forms of antisemitism

- the Commission has made the Working Group on combating antisemitism a permanent structure, bringing together member states, Jewish communities' representatives, and other stakeholders.
- **need for national strategy creation a high priority**, and made the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) a resource to provide assistance and expertise to member states, as well as provide oversight following strategy implementation.
- **Enhance training on understanding antisemitism for justice and law enforcement professionals,**
- **To address online hate speech and spreading of misinformation**, the EU will expand, strengthen, and further fund its “code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online.”
- push to get member states to transpose EU anti-discrimination laws related to antisemitism into national law.

## (2) Protecting and fostering Jewish life in the EU

- **funds to protect public spaces and places of worship, research radicalization trends and ways to respond, and support member states and Jewish communities by providing training on security measures.**
- **member states will cooperate with Europol to address incitement online of antisemitic terrorism and violent extremism.**
- **an awareness-raising campaign in close cooperation with Jewish communities, utilizing intercultural and interreligious dialogue and activities.**

### (3) Education, research and Holocaust remembrance

- Education, research and Holocaust remembrance funds to create a “European research hub on contemporary antisemitism and Jewish life and culture”
- Education programs to teach about Jewish life and traditions as well as the tragedy of the Holocaust are central to this pillar.

