

## Jewish communities in the European Union

Europe's Jewish population has been diminishing in recent decades, and a growing number of anti-Semitic acts and anti-Jewish violence have been occurring in recent years in the EU. In defence of its values, including respect for minorities, the EU undertakes and funds actions to counter anti-Semitism.

### Diminishing Jewish population

The Jewish population in the EU has been declining. It [dropped](#) from around 1.12 million in 2009 to 1.08 million in [2016](#), though it is difficult to give precise numbers as some countries do not collect ethnic data. The Jewish population in France, the largest in the EU, declined from about 500 000 in [2002](#) to 456 000 in [2017](#). Emigration, mainly to Israel, is the main factor behind the trend, which has intensified in recent years, among other things due to [harassment](#), discrimination and hate crimes against Jews.

### Growing violence against Jews

Centuries ago, Jews were persecuted as a religious minority, while in the last century the belief that Jews were a threat to the state was a driving force behind the Holocaust. Today Jews are targeted mainly because of events in the Middle East, although some anti-Semitic sentiments also revolve around the Holocaust. According to a 2015 [report](#) by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the main perpetrators of anti-Semitic incidents are neo-Nazis, far-right or far-left sympathisers, Muslim fundamentalists and the younger generation. The report states that anti-Semitic behaviour is mainly characterised by denial and trivialisation of the Holocaust, glorification of the Nazi past, anti-Semitic sentiment due to property-restitution laws and hatred because of Israeli policies. It includes verbal and physical violence; threats; insults of Jews going to synagogues; harassment of rabbis; repeated attacks on Jews wearing symbols of their religion; hate speech; anti-Semitic bullying in schools; and damage to property, including arson.

Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, encouraged [French Jews](#) to come to Israel after the killings in a kosher supermarket in Paris in January 2015, three years after a deadly attack on a Jewish school in Toulouse. Many have considered following his advice, although some eventually return. According to a [2018 survey](#) on anti-Semitism in 12 EU Member States, 28 % of respondents experienced a form of anti-Semitic harassment in 12 months before the survey. The numbers may underestimate the reality, since eight in ten respondents (79 %) of victims [do not report](#) anti-Semitic hate crime.

### Legal provisions to combat discrimination and xenophobia on the EU level

Article 2 of the [Treaty on European Union](#) sets human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, and the rights of persons from minorities, as EU common founding values. The [Charter of Fundamental Rights](#) of the EU declares in its Article 1 that human dignity is inviolable and must be respected and protected. Its [Article 21](#) prohibits any discrimination in the EU on ethnic or religious grounds.

A Council [Framework Decision](#) on combating certain forms and expression of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law was adopted in 2008, calling upon Member States to ensure that public incitement to violence or hatred on grounds of race, religion, descent, or ethnic or national origin are punishable. The [2013 Council conclusions](#) on combating hate crime in the EU called upon Member States to fully transpose the framework decision into their national legislation and implement it. A 2014 Commission [report](#) on the decision's implementation identified shortcomings and committed to dialogues with Member States on full and correct transposition. In December 2018, the Council adopted a [declaration](#) on the fight against anti-Semitism and a common security approach to better protect Jewish communities and institutions in Europe.

The [Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#) states that Member States shall ensure that audiovisual media services provided by media service-providers under their jurisdiction do not contain any incitement to hatred based on race, sex, religion or nationality. Equally, under the [Directive on Electronic Commerce](#), Member States may take measures to derogate from freedom to provide information society services for

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reasons of the fight against any incitement to hatred on grounds of race, sex, religion or nationality. Discrimination on the basis of religion is forbidden in the field of employment, under the [Employment Equality Directive](#). A comprehensive legal framework to address discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief beyond employment ([Equal Treatment Directive](#)) was proposed by the Commission in 2008; it is still being discussed by the Council of the EU.

### **EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)**

The [FRA](#) (Vienna) is tasked with monitoring and researching discrimination and [anti-Semitism](#), and offering evidence-based solutions. In 2018, the FRA conducted a [second survey](#) on discrimination and hate crimes (first survey in [2013](#)), and gathered [data on perceptions of discrimination](#) of Jews in 13 Member States. It states that adequate official data are lacking due to inadequate recording of incidents. It confirms that anti-Semitism is still of concern in the EU, where 28 % of Jews experienced harassment at least once in the last year, 70 % consider efforts to counter anti-Semitism ineffective, and 38 % feel insecure. For this reason, 34 % avoid Jewish events and sites, and consider emigrating. For 89 %, internet and social media are the most problematic in this context.

### **EU contribution to combatting anti-Semitism**

Through different funding and programmes, the EU has contributed to countering anti-Semitism and has addressed religious fundamentalism and [radicalisation](#). In December 2015, the European Commission appointed a [Coordinator on Combating Anti-Semitism](#).

### **Code of conduct on hate speech on the internet**

In May 2016, the Commission and four major IT firms (Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube) announced a [code of conduct](#) on hate speech on the internet, to protect freedom of speech while putting in place barriers to hate speech and terrorist propaganda. An [evaluation](#) carried out in June 2017 shows significant progress. Dailymotion, Instagram, Google+ and Snapchat joined the code of conduct in [2018](#).

### **Holocaust education and anti-Semitism**

A 2006 FRA project on [education on the Holocaust and human rights](#) resulted in a 2010 [handbook](#), 'Excursion to the past – teaching for the future', for teachers and Holocaust museum operators, establishing links between the Holocaust and human rights. In November 2018, the [Council of the EU](#) discussed the major role of education in combatting anti-Semitism.

### **Europe for Citizens against stereotypes**

[Europe for Citizens](#), an EU programme on the EU and its history, has supported projects of the [CEJI - Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe](#), a Jewish organisation promoting a diverse and inclusive Europe. In 2016, it received a two-year [research grant](#) from the Commission for the project '[Facing Facts! – make hate crime visible](#)' on reporting on [hate crime](#) and speech, and training on these issues. The '[Engaging Jewish communities](#)' project focuses on monitoring hate crime against Jewish, Roma, and homosexual minorities.

### **The European Parliament**

In September 2015, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on fundamental rights in the EU, concerned with the rise of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial, as well as the growing numbers of Jews planning to leave Europe. It called on Member States and the Commission to adopt policies to combat all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism. Two months later, in its [resolution](#) on the prevention of radicalisation, it considered that the fight against discrimination, particularly Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, is complementary to the prevention of terrorist extremism. A June 2017 [resolution](#) on combating anti-Semitism calls on Member States to combat anti-Semitic hate speech in social media, to provide appropriate training for enforcement bodies, to promote education about the Holocaust and to collect reliable and comparable data on hate crime. In order to facilitate law enforcement in the Member States, Parliament calls on them and the EU to adopt the [working definition of anti-Semitism](#) provided by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. In February 2016, a [roundtable](#) on the outcomes of the first annual Commission colloquium on fundamental rights, anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred was organised by the Parliamentary **Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup** and a cross-party **Working Group on Anti-Semitism (EP-WGAS)**. The latter devoted a [November 2017 roundtable](#) to the implementation of the June 2017 resolution on combatting anti-Semitism.

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