

## Jewish communities in the European Union

The Jewish population in the EU has been diminishing in recent decades, and has witnessed an increase in acts of anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish violence in recent years. In defence of its values, including respect for minorities, the EU undertakes and funds actions to counter anti-Semitism.

### Diminishing Jewish population

The EU's Jewish population is shrinking, having [dropped](#) from around 1.12 million in 2009 to 1.08 million in [2016](#) (though keeping a precise count is difficult, as some countries do not collect data on ethnicity). In a similar fashion, 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 – the key factor shaping this trend – has intensified in recent years, among other things due to [harassment](#), discrimination and hate crimes against Jews.

### Escalating violence against Jews

Centuries ago, Jews were persecuted on religious grounds; in the 20th century, the belief that they were a threat to the state was the 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 generations. 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 sparked by Israeli policies. It includes verbal and physical violence; threats; insults to 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.

After still another act of anti-Semitic violence, the killings at a Paris kosher supermarket in January 2015, three years after a deadly attack on a Jewish school in Toulouse, Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, encouraged [French Jews](#) to come to Israel. Many considered following his advice, and some did follow it.

### Legal provisions to combat discrimination and xenophobia at 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 the common founding values of the EU. The EU [Charter of Fundamental Rights](#) 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 2008 Council [Framework Decision](#) on combating certain forms and expression of racism and xenophobia called upon Member States to make public incitement to violence or hatred on grounds of race, religion, descent, or ethnic or national origin a criminal offence. The [2013 Council conclusions](#) on combating hate crime in the EU called upon the Member States to fully transpose the framework decision into their national legislations and to implement it. In a 2014 [report](#), the Commission identified flaws in the decision's implementation and committed to holding dialogues with the Member States on its full and correct transposition. In December 2018, the Council adopted a [declaration](#) on the fight against anti-Semitism, and a common security approach to ensure better protection for Jewish communities and institutions in Europe.

The [Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#) states that Member States shall ensure that audiovisual media services provided under their jurisdiction do not contain any incitement to hatred based on race, sex, religion or nationality. Under the [Directive on Electronic Commerce](#), Member States may take measures to derogate from freedom to provide information society services for reasons of the fight against incitement to hatred on grounds of race, sex, religion or nationality. In a similar vein, the [Employment Equality Directive](#) prohibits religion-based discrimination in the sphere of employment. Since 2008, when the Commission

*This is a further updated version of an 'at a glance' note published in January 2019.*

proposed its introduction, a legal framework aimed at addressing discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief beyond employment ([Equal Treatment Directive](#)) has been under discussion in the Council.

### EU Fundamental Rights Agency

The [FRA](#) monitors and researches discrimination and [anti-Semitism](#), and offers evidence-based solutions. After its first-ever survey ([2012](#)) on Jewish people's perceptions and experiences of discrimination and hate crimes, in 2018 the FRA conducted a [second survey](#) on the same topic among 12 Member States. The survey report says that adequate official data are lacking due to gaps in the recording of incidents, and that anti-Semitism continues to be of concern in the EU, given that 28 % of Jews experienced harassment at least once in the 12 months before the survey, 70 % considered efforts to counter anti-Semitism ineffective, and 38 % felt insecure. For this reason, 34 % avoided Jewish events and sites, and considered emigrating. For 89 %, manifestations of anti-Semitism on the internet, including social media, were the most problematic.

### EU contribution to combating anti-Semitism

The EU funding programmes have contributed to countering anti-Semitism and addressed religious fundamentalism and [radicalisation](#). In her speech honouring victims of the attack on the [Halle synagogue](#) the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced the creation of a team entrusted with the fight against anti-Semitism under the leadership of the Vice-President Margaritis Schinas together with the Commission [coordinator for combatting anti-Semitism](#), appointed in December 2015.

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

In May 2016, the Commission, together with Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube, announced a [code of conduct](#) on countering online hate speech, in order to protect freedom of speech while also putting in place barriers to hate speech and terrorist propaganda. An [evaluation](#) carried out in June 2017 showed 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' establishing links between the Holocaust and human rights. In November 2018, the [Council](#) discussed the major role of education in combating 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 - A 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 for 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, in which it voiced concern, among others, over the rise of anti-Semitism and acts of Holocaust denial, as well as the growing number of Jews planning to leave Europe. It called on the 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 in the form of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, is complementary to the prevention of terrorist extremism. In 2019, a pilot project '[Muslims against anti-Semitism](#)' implemented by Austrian NGO Muslimische Jugend Österreich, came third in the competition for the EP [European Charlemagne Youth Prize](#). A June 2017 [resolution](#) on combating anti-Semitism called on Member States to combat anti-Semitic hate speech in the 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. With a view to facilitating Member States' law enforcement, Parliament called 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 Parliament's **Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI)** and 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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