



Brussels, 20 December 2022
(OR. en)

16278/22

JAI 1732
FREMP 281
CT 233

NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Activities of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU aiming at the fight against antisemitism and at the promotion of the Jewish way of life

Antisemitism is a threat well known not only to Jews in Europe but to the European population as a whole, as it has been present in our society for centuries. Antisemitism is not just a feature on the extreme right and extreme left of the political and ideological spectrum, or a manifestation of religious radicalism. Nowadays, antisemitic attitudes often form part of other worldviews and can for example be hidden behind anti-Zionist rhetoric¹. Moreover, certain aspects of antisemitic stereotypes are intentional or unintentional features of everyday life, due to deep-rooted images and prejudices, as this latent form is still entrenched in mainstream society. Most recently, antisemitic narratives became part of many COVID-19-related discussions and they have also penetrated the discourse of the Russian Federation in its war of aggression against Ukraine, e. g. with the claims of the alleged ‘de-Nazification’ of Ukraine.

¹ EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life (2021–2030)
(https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_4990).

Worryingly, data from various surveys and reports (e.g., by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights² and Eurobarometer³) indicate that there is an ongoing increase in antisemitic incidents around the EU, compounding the insecurity felt by many Jewish people in the EU⁴. It is also important to note that this kind of hatred can have strong transnational and cross-border elements as, while the internet can facilitate the lives of Europeans, it also helps in spreading hatred, misinformation and disinformation, including that with antisemitic motives, such as conspiracy theories and myths accusing Jews of attempts to dominate the world.

Therefore, a continuing commitment to fighting antisemitism is necessary. It is of paramount importance to make sure that the Jewish way of life is not only protected, but also fostered across the EU. To that end, the activities of the Czech Presidency were horizontal, covering policy debates at various levels, international cooperation, and cultural and social events, to ensure that the activities were complementary and focused on society as a whole.

Following on from the work done by previous presidencies and ongoing work done by the EU institutions, the Czech Presidency identified four streams of work to fight antisemitism during the second semester of 2022:

- **better streamlining** of the discussions on the fight against antisemitism and efforts to foster Jewish life at the level of the Council of the EU;
- **the online dimension and the issue of the online selling of Nazi memorabilia** and its misuse for antisemitic ends;
- **gaps in reporting, proper recording, and classification of antisemitic incidents**, both illegal and otherwise;
- **securing and allocating adequate financial resources** for both prevention and security arrangements of Jewish communities.

² 'Antisemitism: Overview of antisemitic incidents recorded in the European Union 2011–2021' (<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/antisemitism-overview-2011-2021>).

³ Special Eurobarometer 484 – Perceptions of antisemitism ([Special Eurobarometer 484 - Perceptions of antisemitism \(January 2019\) | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2220) and <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2220>).

⁴ 'Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism - second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU' (<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/experiences-and-perceptions-antisemitism-second-survey-discrimination-and-hate>).

To that end, the Czech Presidency organised several separate discussions and events on how to curb certain aspects of antisemitism, as well as how to structure the work now and in the future:

The **international Terezín Declaration Conference**, organised by the Office of the Special Envoy for the Holocaust, Interfaith Dialogue and Freedom of Religion, took place from 2 to 4 November in Prague and Terezín. It aimed to support the fight against antisemitism, highlighted the role of education, called for the righting of injustices from the time of the Holocaust, and dealt with the situation of survivors of the war in Ukraine. The conference, attended by representatives of 38 states, provided an opportunity to review the commitments made in the 2009 declaration, take stock of the work that has been done since 2009, and identify the work that remains.

On 24 November, within the **framework of the FREMP Working Party**, delegates discussed the progress made under the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life one year after its publication. During this discussion, the question of possible streamlining of the discussions on the fight against antisemitism and efforts to foster Jewish life at the level of the Council of the EU has been opened. Member States' responses indicate that there is an appetite to initiate the necessary steps to discuss antisemitism, racism and other forms of hatred regularly at Council level.

In addition, **an expert meeting** (also on 24 November) **on the issue of Nazi memorabilia and misuse thereof for antisemitic ends**, organised by the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic in cooperation with the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU, highlighted both lingering and new issues in relation to combating antisemitism. These include the lack of a universal understanding of what constitutes Nazi memorabilia, different legal provisions and difficulties with cross-border enforcement, a lack of clear rules for marketplaces, and the need to cooperate across Member States and sectors to ensure sharing of good practice and effective prosecution. The Czech Presidency also presented outcomes of this event during the **3rd Meeting of the Working Group on the Implementation of the EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life**, held on 6 and 7 December in The Hague.

Further, over the **working lunch of the Ministers of the Justice at the December JHA Council**, the ministers, in the presence of the director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Michael O’Flaherty, the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Ilkka Salmi, and European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas and Commissioner Didier Reynders, identified three key areas for the work ahead: prevention, promotion, and protection. The ministers agreed that there already are tools at our disposal; there is a need, however, to find a collective response, work towards enhanced cooperation, and allocate funds effectively at national and EU levels in order to ensure effective education, support, awareness-raising, cooperation and protection. Among other things, it is also necessary to further work towards a common methodology on data collection and on data collection related to antisemitic incidents as such, to be aware of offline and online threats and address them accordingly, and to streamline discussions effectively at EU level as well as at national levels. The topic was also raised in the formal part of the agenda later in the afternoon, during which the Presidency provided a brief summary of the main take-aways from the lunch discussion.

Moreover, the **EU-Israel Association Council** took place on 3 October in Brussels after 10 years. This high-level form of political dialogue between the EU and Israel is essential for mutual dialogue and frank exchanges of views. The discussion focused on a wide range of issues, including respect for human rights and democratic principles, freedom of religion and the fight against antisemitism. As a follow-up to the **Association Council**, the **EU-Israel Subcommittee on Political Dialogue and Cooperation** took place in December together with the **Informal EU-Israel Working Group on Human Rights** (the first meeting in six years).

Finally, a number of social and cultural events, focused mainly on the Holocaust remembrance, were organised during the Czech Presidency. For example, on 28 September, an **exhibition of photographs of Jewish monuments in the Central Bohemia Region and stories of important members of the community** was presented at a Rosh Hashanah reception. On 24 November, the opening of an **exhibition ‘Album G. T.’** by Memorial of Silence Bubny took place at the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU, featuring a series of photographs from the Terezín Ghetto, followed by a **screening** of the 2019 film **‘The Painted Bird’**, along with a discussion with its director and one of the main protagonists. The Album G. T. exhibition was later also shown at the European Parliament in Brussels.