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NOTE

From:	Presidency
On:	14 September 2020
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Draft Council Declaration on Mainstreaming the fight against antisemitism as a cross-cutting issue in all policy areas

Delegations will find attached a draft Council Declaration on Mainstreaming the fight against antisemitism as a cross-cutting issue in all policy areas.

The Presidency would be grateful for coordinated comments and replies by all delegations (if possible one reply by each Member State / institution) to WP-FREMP@consilium.europa.eu and EU2020.Combat-Antisemitism@bmi.bund.de by 7 October (COB).

Draft Council Declaration on Mainstreaming the fight against antisemitism as a cross-cutting issue in all policy areas

1. Preamble: Antisemitism is an attack on European values

The European Union is based on the dignity of every individual and the equality of all human beings. It strives for diversity and builds on solidarity. Any form of antisemitism is incompatible with the values of the European Union and its member states.

2. Reaffirming the Council declaration of 6 December 2018

The member states reaffirm that the Council declaration of 6 December 2018 on the fight against antisemitism and the development of a common security approach to better protect Jewish communities and institutions in Europe, which was welcomed by the European Council in its conclusions of 13 and 14 December 2018, provides a comprehensive basis for combining the different crucial elements of the fight against antisemitism into the necessary holistic perspective. In practice, this should be done through national strategies to counter antisemitism, for example in the framework of existing strategies to combat racism, xenophobia, radicalisation and violence-prone extremism.

3. Protecting Jewish life and making it more visible as part of Europe's identity

For almost 2000 years, Judaism and Jewish life have helped shape Europe, engendering an invaluable cultural, intellectual and religious heritage that our European identity draws on. It is quite a miracle that 75 years after the Holocaust and the liberation of Auschwitz, Jewish life is thriving in Europe. It is our permanent, shared responsibility to protect and strengthen it.

4. Combating antisemitism head-on in all its forms (zero tolerance for antisemitic conspiracy theories such as those that are being disseminated in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic)

Studies published, for example, by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and Eurobarometer 484 show that antisemitism in all its forms is increasingly prevalent in Europe. Antisemitic narratives continue to be very potent and can be communicated via the internet easily and without borders. Antisemitic attempts to explain global challenges that are inspired by conspiracy theories can be easily disseminated this way, as can be seen in the case of antisemitic conspiracy theories relating to the COVID-19 pandemic that are circulating on the internet.

It is often only a small step from conspiracy theories, hatred and hate speech to antisemitic criminal offences. Ensuring the security of Jewish communities and institutions must therefore be given utmost priority in all member states.

The law must be effectively enforced, including on the internet. We therefore support initiatives at the European level that aim to combat illegal antisemitic incitement and hate speech as well as the dissemination of antisemitic conspiracy theories online.

5. Applying useful tools in the fight against antisemitism

On 10 September 2020, the member states had an exchange in Berlin on structures, strategies, tools and best practices to be used in combating antisemitism.

It became evident that the consistent use of the working definition of “antisemitism” provided by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) can make an important contribution to ensuring that government agencies and non-governmental agencies alike will respond more sensitively and identify and address antisemitism more reliably.

For this reason, the fact that further member states have now followed the appeal contained in the Council declaration of 6 December 2018 by politically endorsing the IHRA definition as a useful guidance tool is to be welcomed. We take this declaration as an opportunity to renew this appeal.

The systematic reporting of all antisemitic incidents, including those that do not constitute a criminal offence, is an appropriate measure to obtain a comprehensive picture of the situation and be able to respond to new developments. This is the basis for developing tailored prevention strategies and education offerings, which must be accompanied by the consistent prosecution of antisemitic crimes. Such systematic reporting can be a valuable element in strategies to fight and prevent antisemitism.

6. The recommendation is to mainstream the fight against antisemitism

Preventing and fighting antisemitism is a cross-cutting issue involving different departments, government levels and policy areas both at the national and at the European level. This also means that awareness of antisemitism needs to be increased across various policy areas.

To achieve this aim, the fight against antisemitism needs to be mainstreamed and taken into account consistently in the decisions taken by European Union institutions. We expressly welcome the European Commission's decision to make the fight against antisemitism a priority as well as the strengthening of the institutional basis of the office of the Coordinator for the fight against antisemitism and for promoting Jewish life. The European Commission is invited to advance the fight against antisemitism along the same lines at European level, for example through its working group on combating antisemitism and by bringing supporting measures together in an overarching European strategy.
