

## 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 [declined](#) from about 2 million in 1991 to 1.4 million in 2010, though it is difficult to give precise numbers as some countries do not collect ethnic data. Immigration 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 [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 of kosher supermarket customers in Paris in January 2015, four years after a deadly attack against a Jewish school in Toulouse. Many Jews are considering following his advice, although some eventually return. According to a [2013 survey](#) on anti-Semitism in eight European Union Member States, 21% of respondents experienced verbal or physical violence or harassment because they were Jews. The numbers may underestimate the reality, since [76% of victims](#) of anti-Semitic hate crime do not report it.

### 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 European Union declares in [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 [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 December [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, and the European Commission to assess the measures established by Member States. A 2014 Commission [implementation report](#) pointed to shortcoming in the implementation and the Commission committed itself to hold dialogues with Member States to ensure full and correct transposition.

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 reasons of the fight against any incitement to hatred on grounds of race, sex, religion or nationality. Discrimination on the basis of religion is currently 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), which would include areas such as social protection, education and access to goods and services, is currently being discussed by the Council of the EU.

#### *Fundamental Rights Agency*

The EU's [Fundamental Rights Agency](#) (FRA) is tasked with monitoring and researching discrimination and [anti-Semitism](#), and offering evidence-based solutions and suggestions. FRA's 2015 overview of [data on anti-Semitism](#) points to the lack of comparable data on anti-Semitism, which makes the phenomenon difficult to assess clearly, but confirms that anti-Semitism is still of concern in the EU.

### **European Union contribution to combat anti-Semitism**

Through different funding and programmes, the EU has contributed to countering anti-Semitism and has addressed religious fundamentalism and [radicalisation](#). In May 2016, the European Commission and IT companies 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.

#### *Holocaust education*

A 2006 FRA project on [education on the Holocaust](#) and human rights highlighted the role of school education on sites of remembrance, and the human rights perspective on the Holocaust. In 2010, FRA published a [handbook](#) for teachers and for Holocaust museums operators, establishing links between the Holocaust and human rights.

#### *Europe for Citizens, Creative Europe, research and education programmes against stereotypes*

[Europe for Citizens](#), an EU programme to raise citizens' knowledge of the EU, its history and diversity, has supported projects of the [CEJI \(Centre Européen Juif d'Information\) Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe](#), a Jewish non-profit international organisation promoting a diverse and inclusive Europe at EU level. Its diversity education and training targets anti-Semitism and other kinds of discrimination. In 2016 it received a two-year [research grant](#) from the Commission for the project '[Facing Facts! – make hate crime visible](#)' on reporting, and recording of [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.

[Belieforama](#)'s projects, funded from EU research and Lifelong Learning (LLL) programmes, are devoted to the study of religious diversity, including agnostic and atheist views, anti-discrimination, namely anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and ways of overcoming it, in view of adult education. The Creative Europe programme, supporting cultural funding, co-funds '[Shakespeare in and beyond the Ghetto](#)', a project on intolerance and cultural exchange which will share its findings in four participating Member States, in summer schools, symposia, artistic workshops on different media. The 2016 work programme of the [Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme](#) (budget of €439 million for the 2014-2020 period) will fund projects which prevent and [combat intolerance](#) and discrimination. Its priorities lie, among others, in grassroots projects preventing and combatting anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred and intolerance.

### **The European Parliament - recent activities**

The March 2015 EP [resolution](#) on the EU's priorities for the UN Human Rights Council in 2015 condemned the killings in a Jewish supermarket in Paris and in a Copenhagen synagogue. In September 2015 the EP adopted a resolution on the [situation of fundamental rights](#) in the EU (2013-2014), concerned with the rise of [anti-Semitism](#) and Holocaust denial, as well as the growing numbers of Jews planning to leave Europe. It [called](#) for Member States and the Commission to adopt policies to combat all forms of racism, including both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Two months later in its resolution, '[Prevention of radicalisation](#) and recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organisations' the EP considered that the fight against discrimination, particularly Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, is complementary to the prevention of terrorist extremism.

In February 2016, an EP cross-party [Working Group on Anti-Semitism](#) and the EP Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup co-organised a roundtable on the outcomes of the first annual European Commission colloquium on fundamental rights, [anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred](#). Its participants expect that the appointment by the Commission of [coordinators](#) on anti-Semitism and Anti-Muslim hatred will contribute to develop a strategy to combat hate crime, intolerance, discrimination and hate speech, not least on the [internet](#), where it is growing.