



HIGH REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE UNION FOR  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND  
SECURITY POLICY

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**JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE  
COUNCIL**

**No place for hate: a Europe united against hatred**

*The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.*

*These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.*

Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union

## **1. STEPPING UP ACTION AGAINST HATRED**

The values set out in the EU treaties are neither theoretical nor optional: they are the essential conditions upon which our democratic and pluralist societies are founded. They must apply to everyone in the EU. Every individual, every community, every faith deserves equal respect. The cohesion of our society is undermined when pressure mounts against particular groups.

Recent weeks have seen scenes in Europe which we hoped would never occur again. Violent criminal attacks on the Jewish community have acted as a shocking reminder that we can never be complacent about the resurgence of hatred. It is unacceptable to see Jewish communities feeling insecure and people fearful of going about their daily lives, of sending their children to school, of life on university campuses, or of going to work. It is unacceptable that security concerns have been partially responsible for a decline in the Jewish population in the EU in recent years, with scores of people preferring to migrate outside the EU. Europe's Jewish communities are an intrinsic part of our history, our culture and our society, and antisemitism is incompatible with all the European Union stands for. The situation today is incompatible with human rights, with our values and with our European way of life.

The same is true for all forms of hatred. We see a rise in anti-Muslim hatred, with Muslims facing intimidation, harassment and discrimination. All the different aspects that make Europe such a uniquely diverse society demand respect<sup>1</sup>. This is part and parcel of our diversity as Europeans.

There is clear evidence that recent weeks have seen a more general surge in hatred. Hatred leads to more hatred: it is a destructive force not just for particular communities, but for us all. Hate is a risk for our society and democracy. We cannot accept that people are prevented from playing their full part due to how they look, what they believe, whom they love or where they come from. European history shows that standing by and watching in silence leaves a space for hate to grow. Language that belittles fuels a sense of impunity against attacks on specific communities or individuals. Disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference is used by those wishing to undermine our democracies to stoke conflict. It exploits other social tensions such as social exclusion and poverty to single out groups for stigmatisation. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right and a cherished value, but human rights law acknowledges that it must not be exploited to incite hatred and violence. And there should be no impunity for those who cross the line.

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<sup>1</sup> On 6 November 2023, Special and Coordinators on Combating Antisemitism issued a [joint statement](#) on combating antisemitism hatred. On 29 November 2023, the Coordinators, Special Representatives and Ambassadors dealing with anti-Muslim hatred and racism issued [an international statement on combating all forms of hatred and in particular anti-Muslim hatred](#).

Our history and our shared values come with the responsibility to protect and stand united in solidarity with Jewish communities in Europe – **and to combat hatred, scapegoating, and the denigration of any person due to their racial and ethnic origin, their faith, their gender or their sexuality.** The violence and hatred seen in recent weeks – both in direct acts and in incitement – is unacceptable and requires a strong and determined response.

**This Communication is a call for action, for all Europeans, to ensure that Europe is a place where our founding values are enjoyed by everyone, on an equal basis.** Indifference or ignorance is not only a threat to the people facing discrimination, but to an open and diverse society, to democracy and the European way of life. Inaction is not an option. We must stand up and stand together.

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Hatred can manifest itself in many forms: bullying, harassment, verbal abuse or insults, disinformation, threats or calls for violence, all the way to violence proper. Its prevalence across the social and political spectrum calls for a comprehensive response.

Over recent years, **the Commission has worked with the European Parliament and the Council to develop a set of legal instruments and policy initiatives to promote and protect the EU common values and fundamental rights set out in our Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.**

The core EU framework for a strong **common response to racist and xenophobic hate speech and hate crime** is the 2008 Framework Decision on combatting racism and xenophobia<sup>2</sup>. This sets a **criminal law framework to ensure that serious manifestations of racism and xenophobia are punishable by effective, proportionate and dissuasive criminal sanctions across the EU.** In particular, it requires Member States to criminalise hate speech – the public incitement to violence or hatred, on grounds of race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin<sup>3</sup> – and to duly take into account racist motives when sentencing perpetrators of criminal acts. National authorities must investigate, prosecute, and try cases of alleged hate-motivated crime or speech, including public condoning, denial and gross trivialisation of the Holocaust.

Important efforts have been made to ensure that the Framework Decision is fully and correctly transposed, in particular through the launch of infringement proceedings against thirteen Member States since October 2020. This has led to action by ten Member States. More action is needed by the other Member States for the effective implementation of these rules in full force.

In December 2021, the Commission proposed to **extend the current list of ‘EU crimes’ set out in the Treaties to hate speech and hate crime**<sup>4</sup> to address the current divergent and fragmented criminal approaches of Member States and to ensure consistent protection of victims across the EU. This requires a unanimous Council Decision, with the consent of the European Parliament, which would then allow the Commission to make a legislative proposal to strengthen the existing legal framework on tackling hate speech and hate crime across the EU. Recent events underline the **imperative for rapid adoption of this Council Decision**, to

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<sup>2</sup> Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combatting certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law, OJ L 328, 6.12.2008, p. 55–58.

<sup>3</sup> Article 1 of the Framework Decision.

<sup>4</sup> ‘A more inclusive and protective Europe: extending the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime’, [COM\(2021\) 777 final](#), 9.12.2021. This initiative is one of the deliverables announced in 2020 in the European Democracy Action Plan.

protect our common EU values, which are undermined by all forms of hate speech and hate crime, regardless of the persons and groups targeted.

## 2. PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES

*“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”*

*Nelson Mandela –President of South Africa (1994-1999)*

The **2020-2025 Security Union strategy<sup>5</sup> underlined the need for security for everyone in the EU, in line with EU values and principles.**

Europe today is experiencing an alarming increase in hate speech and hate crime<sup>6</sup>. This includes both physical<sup>7</sup> and online<sup>8</sup> attacks and comes on top of existing racial discrimination. Evidence suggests that hate speech and hostility is affecting Jewish and Muslim communities in particular<sup>9</sup>. Security concerns, as well as a perceived lack of determination to address antisemitism, have played an important part<sup>10</sup> in earlier action taken, which must now be stepped up.

### - *Protecting against physical threats*

**Law enforcement has a particular responsibility to spearhead action against the risks that hate speech and hate crime pose to personal security.** The High-Level Group on combating hate speech and hate crime<sup>11</sup> helps Member States to develop training and capacity building for law enforcement, improve hate crime recording and data collection, as well as to encourage victims to report hate crime. It is working with EU agencies to improve hate crime

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<sup>5</sup> EU Security Strategy, [COM\(2020\) 605 final](#), 24.07.2020

<sup>6</sup> Data produced by the EU funded project ‘European Observatory on Online Hate’ shows that out of eight million online messages analysed in the EU, the level of hateful toxicity since the start of 2023 has increased by 30%. The levels are higher in French, Russian, Slovak and Spanish languages. <https://eoooh.eu/>

<sup>7</sup> Whilst public authorities are yet to compile statistics, numerous examples have been cited by civil society or the media. Civil society organisations in Germany marked sudden rises in both antisemitic (source: RIAS) and anti-Muslim (source: CLAIM) incidents. Press reports recorded major increases in antisemitic attacks in France (source: Le Monde), Austria (source: euractiv) and the Netherlands (source: jta.org).

<sup>8</sup> One study recorded an over 50-fold increase in the absolute volume of antisemitic comments on YouTube videos about the Israel/Palestine conflict in the course of October. The overall proportion of antisemitic messages more than doubled during the same period (source: isdglobal.org, 31 October 2023). Similar research conducted on the platform X shows that the number of posts containing anti-Muslim keywords spiked during the weekend of Hamas’ terrorist attacks, with an increase of more than four times from the previous two days (source: isdglobal.org, 2 November 2023).

<sup>9</sup> ‘Being Black it the EU’, a report published by the Fundamental Rights Agency in October 2023, highlights that one third of respondents have experienced racist harassment in the 5 years before the survey and 4 % of respondents experienced racist violence.

<sup>10</sup> EU strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021-2030) [COM\(2021\) 615 final](#), 5.10.2021.

<sup>11</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-hatesccscsc-speech-and-hate-crime\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-hatesccscsc-speech-and-hate-crime_en)

training for the police and support to hate crime victims<sup>12</sup>. In all cases, it is critical to involve the communities at risk in the development and delivery of security strategies<sup>13</sup>.

Ongoing actions include:

- The EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training CEPOL is planning targeted events and e-trainings focusing more specifically on antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and more broadly anti-racism safeguards. A meeting with law enforcement agencies from the Member States in Budapest in April 2024 will focus on improving coordination and effective implementation of hate crime legislation.
- Europol will also step up support for law enforcement to use cyber investigation tools to identify offenders operating online and networks involved in hate crime.
- The European judicial training strategy for 2021-2024<sup>14</sup> includes dedicated work on training on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, including training in the context of EU action against hatred.
- Training material on anti-discrimination, including antisemitism is available on the European Training Platform of the E-justice Portal. This will be built upon for the next phase of European judicial training.

These measures are to be backed up with a **network of national law enforcement contact points specialised in criminal investigations** of hate speech and hate crime, to enhance coordination with EU level activities such as under the High-Level Group on combating hate speech and hate crime, cross-border support to investigations, and exchange of good practices and tools<sup>15</sup>.

The **2020-2025 EU Strategy on victims' rights**<sup>16</sup> highlighted the need to ensure specialist support and protection for victims of hate crime. It stressed that hate crime disproportionately affects certain communities such as Jews or Muslims. The Strategy provides for actions that encourage crime reporting<sup>17</sup>, better investigation of bias motivations and strengthened support to victims of racist and xenophobic crimes. This work is backed up by EU funding for victims of hate crime and awareness raising initiatives under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) and the Justice programmes. In July 2023, the Commission adopted a proposal for the **revision of the Victims' Rights Directive**<sup>18</sup>. A quick adoption of this revision would strengthen the protection of vulnerable victims such as victims of hate crime and provide for better identification of the specific needs of victims of hate crime and in a more comprehensive application of specialist support and protection measures.

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<sup>12</sup> Notably FRA and CEPOL, as well as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

<sup>13</sup> Since 2021 the Commission has co-organised, with OSCE/ODIHR and the World Jewish Congress, seven events between national law enforcements authorities and Jewish communities to strengthen their cooperation on security. The next event is planned for 11 December 2023 in Italy.

<sup>14</sup> 'Ensuring justice in the EU — a European judicial training strategy for 2021-2024', [COM\(2020\) 713 final](#), 2.12.2020.

<sup>15</sup> This proposal is being pursued by the Spanish Presidency in the Council.

<sup>16</sup> EU Strategy on victims' rights (2020 - 2025), COM/2020/258 final, 24.6.2020.

<sup>17</sup> Underreporting precipitates a continuation of victimisation, results in impunity for offenders and leads to a lower level of security of the entire groups affected by hate crimes. A FRA study on antisemitism found that 79 % of Jewish people who experienced antisemitic harassment did not report the most serious incidents. FRA survey 'Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism - Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU', 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Proposal for a Directive amending Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, [COM/2023/424 final](#).

A series of violent attacks across Europe have shown that **places of worship and community centres need protection**. Although it is national authorities that are responsible for protecting citizens, most Jewish communities and civil society organisations have had to invest significant funding in their own security measures. This is why the EU strategy on combating antisemitism<sup>19</sup> has prioritised support to Member States and Jewish communities in strengthening the protection of places of worship as part of efforts for the protection of public spaces. The EU has identified the protection of public spaces as a priority and has mobilised funding from the Internal Security Fund as part of its 2020 Counter-Terrorism Agenda<sup>20</sup>. Within the public spaces to be protected, specific attention was given to places of worship.

Since 2020, the PROTECT programme has been supporting a range of transnational and inter-religious projects conducting **vulnerability assessment in places of worship** and providing training to faith leaders and their communities<sup>21</sup>. This experience fed into new funding in 2022 to extend the programme and protect places of worship and communities of all faiths, with projects focusing on protecting Jewish places of worship, education and community gathering, working with organisations including the Security and Crisis Center of the European Jewish Congress<sup>22</sup>. The funding is now being further increased with the upcoming call on protection of public spaces, where places of worship such as synagogues and mosques, religious schools and community gatherings will be one of the key priorities. In view of the urgency, this call for proposals will be brought forward from its initial 2024 planning to 2023, including dedicated funding to tackle antisemitism<sup>23</sup>. In addition, the Commission supports Member States to adapt their national response, including with additional funding through the Internal Security Fund to address the immediate priorities<sup>24</sup>.

Dedicated EU Protective Security Advisor<sup>25</sup> missions are deployed on demand, drawing on a pool of expertise to support Member States with vulnerability assessments: these have been used to map both the vulnerabilities existing in places of worship and other public spaces, as well as critical infrastructure<sup>26</sup>. In 2021, the Commission published a Quick Guide to Support the Protection of Places of Worship<sup>27</sup>, which has been used at train-the-trainer events in Poland and Sweden on the protection of places of worship dedicated to the Jewish faith. This was backed up in 2022 with a Security by Design Handbook<sup>28</sup>, which serves as an inspiration for authorities to incorporate security aspects in the design of future and the renovation of

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<sup>19</sup> 'EU strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021-2030)', [COM\(2021\) 615 final](#), on 5.10.2021.

<sup>20</sup> 'A Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond', [COM\(2020\) 795 final](#), 9.12.2020.

<sup>21</sup> The 2020 PROTECT call amounted to EUR 14.5 million for projects on the protection of places of worship, out of a total of 22.7 million. In the call of 2022, projects on the protection of places of worship received EUR 8.3 million out of the total budget of EUR 17.8 million. Under these calls, eleven projects on the protection of places of worship were selected. Six have Jewish partners and one is fully focused on enhancing the protection of Jewish communities, [EUCARE](#). Five of the projects have Muslim partners within their consortia.

<sup>22</sup> This project, which was completed this year and whose funding amounted to EUR 2.5 million, enabled to equip 1000 places of worships in Europe with emergency tablets.

<sup>23</sup> The new PROTECT call will be launched by the end of 2023; the total budget will amount to 30 million and include an increase of 5 million to address the threats arising from the rise in antisemitism.

<sup>24</sup> Additional funding of EUR 3 million is foreseen.

<sup>25</sup> EU Protective Security Advisors (PSA) is an initiative under the Counter-terrorism Agenda.

<sup>26</sup> The Commission's practical guide on the protection of places of worship has been backed up with meetings focused on protecting Jewish sites in Poland in 2021 and in Sweden in 2022.

<sup>27</sup> [EU quick guide to support the protection of places of worship \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>28</sup> <https://counterterrorism.ec.europa.eu/book.php>

existing public spaces. The anti-Muslim hatred database developed by the Fundamental Rights Agency should be used to further address this form of hatred<sup>29</sup>.

The Commission will:

- Strengthen the **PROTECT programme** under the **Internal Security Fund**, with increased funding and adding a priority on the protection of notably Jewish places of worship, religious schools and community gatherings;
- **Accelerate** the forthcoming call for proposals.

The Commission urges:

- The Council to decide to **extend the current list of ‘EU crimes’** set out in the Treaties to **hate speech and hate crime**;
- The European Parliament and Council to swiftly adopt the revised **Victims’ Rights Directive**.

The Commission calls on/will cooperate with:

- **CEPOL** to organise dedicated events and e-trainings focusing more specifically on antiracism, antisemitism, and anti-Muslim hatred safeguards;
- **Europol** to step up support for law enforcement to use cyber investigation tools to identify networks involved in hate speech and hate crime.

#### - *Protecting against threats online*

The online environment has developed into a core vector for our democracies but also gives space for illegal content, for hate speech, and for insidious attempts to spread and foment hatred and violent extremism<sup>30</sup>. Concern about antisemitism in particular and hate speech more generally has been a major driving force to step up action.

The EU has developed a range of laws and initiatives to tackle the different threats involved in the digital sphere. **The Digital Services Act<sup>31</sup> (DSA) has the safety of users at its heart.** It includes new **obligations for online platforms to counter illegal content**. Those platforms designated as very large online platforms or search engines have the obligation to assess and mitigate systemic risks inherent to the dissemination of illegal content, and negative impact on fundamental rights, democratic processes, civic discourse and electoral processes, including the risks of disinformation as well public security. For the very large online platforms and very large online search engines, the Commission has direct supervision and enforcement powers<sup>32</sup>. The DSA allows the Commission to challenge platforms to provide data to demonstrate that they are living up to their own commitments. The Commission was swiftly in contact with the most relevant tech companies underlining the risks triggered by the current conflict and sending formal requests for information on the risk assessments and

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<sup>29</sup> The database provides findings of national human rights bodies related to anti-Muslim hatred incidents, such as violence, property offences, incitement to violence or hatred, other forms of hate speech, discrimination, harassment - <https://fra.europa.eu/en/databases/anti-muslim-hatred/>

<sup>30</sup> See report from the FRA Online content moderation - ‘[Current challenges in detecting hate](#)’

<sup>31</sup> Proposal for a Regulation on a Single Market For Digital Services (‘Digital Services Act’) and amending Directive 2000/31/EC, [COM\(2020\) 825 final](#), 15.12.2020.

<sup>32</sup> The Commission has recently adopted a Recommendation on coordinating responses to incidents in particular arising from the dissemination of illegal content. This encourages Member States to respond in a coordinated and consistent manner to incidents.

mitigating measures required. A new incident response mechanism was first activated by the Irish authorities following violent incidents in Dublin on 23 November 2023<sup>33</sup>.

One of the measures to mitigate the risk of illegal content under the DSA is to join recognised codes of conduct. Codes of conduct are key parts of the DSA enforcement framework to mitigate the risk of specific types of illegal content. Since 2016, the Commission has been working with major platforms under the **Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online**. One of the key commitments made by participating platforms under the Code of Conduct is to assess illegal hate speech notified to them in a majority of cases within 24 hours, and to swiftly remove illegal content. The negotiations on a **new Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online**, under way since March 2023, are being swiftly finalised and the new code will become a formal code of conduct under the DSA<sup>34</sup>. A main objective of the revision of the Code is to improve its preventive capability and turn it into a tool that can help anticipate a rising threat of hate speech before content has gone viral.

The DSA specifically recognises the role of **trusted flaggers to identify and flag hate speech online and to allow action against it**. A wide network of trusted flaggers is already active under the Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online, and it has been one of its most striking successes. In the current context, the role of trusted flaggers in identifying illegal antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate speech online is particularly important. The Commission will **reinforce funding to support the network of trusted flaggers**<sup>35</sup>. This will include a dedicated strand to establish and support a network of trusted flaggers on antisemitic hate speech, as foreseen in the EU strategy on combating antisemitism. A hackathon will be organised to develop new innovative ways to address antisemitism in the online and digital environment. Under the DSA, notices submitted by trusted flaggers will have to be treated with priority and decided upon without undue delay by providers of online platforms.

An effective and evidence-based response to online hate speech relies on understanding its origins and how it is spread. The Commission will take forward funding for studies on ‘ecosystems’ of hatred online under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme by prioritising the fight against hate speech and hate crimes. As stated in the EU strategy on combating antisemitism, the Commission will also conduct a comprehensive data analysis to better understand the spread of antisemitism online, how it travels and expands.

**Terrorist content, which is closely related to the most serious forms of hate speech, is one of the most obviously dangerous forms of content found online.** The Terrorist Content Online Regulation<sup>36</sup> provides a powerful legislative framework for Member States to ensure that terrorist content is removed from the web within one hour. Providers for online platforms are required to act as soon as they receive removal order from national authorities<sup>37</sup>. The Commission and Europol will step up support to Member States and hosting service providers of online platforms to overcome practical obstacles and to ensure a strong and smooth application of the Regulation. For that purpose, a workshop took place on 24 November 2023

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<sup>33</sup> By the Coimisiún na Meán ([www.cnam.ie](http://www.cnam.ie))

<sup>34</sup> This requires the full governance of the DSA to be in place with the Board For Digital Services to be established by February 2024, made up of Digital Services Coordinators in the Member States and the Commission.

<sup>35</sup> Additional EUR 2.5 million in 2024.

<sup>36</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/784 addressing the dissemination of the content terrorist online, OJ L172, 17.5. 2021, p. 79-106.

<sup>37</sup> Based on the information available to the Commission, at least 100 removal orders of terrorist content online related to the situation in the Middle East have been issued since early October 2023.



gathering national competent authorities and hosting service providers, and three projects are now being implemented to help small hosting service providers comply with the rules<sup>38</sup>.

The **EU Internet Forum is a Commission-led and voluntary initiative to work jointly with the tech industry and other relevant stakeholders to counter hate, extremism and terrorist content online**<sup>39</sup>. It provides guidance to Member States and tech companies to address the challenges posed by malicious and illegal content online, including content that is harmful but still protected by the right of freedom of expression and that therefore cannot be addressed with removals. For example, in 2023, the Forum published a handbook on ‘borderline content’ to guide tech companies to identify such content. In respect of hateful content this could include speech that is inflammatory, divisive and feeds stereotypes about groups or minorities potentially leading to radicalisation, but does not reach the bar of inciting to racist and xenophobic violence or hatred which Member States needs to criminalise under EU law. The handbook contains a set of categories including legal but harmful antisemitic content, borderline content related to the Covid-19 crisis, the anti LGBTIQ Bratislava attack and anti-LGBTIQ content in general. A chapter on anti-Muslim borderline content will be added in the revised version in 2024 in cooperation with the Commission’s Coordinator combatting Anti-Muslim hatred. The Forum will advise on how to navigate borderline content, and continue to raise awareness about this content that might lead to radicalisation and to support tech companies in their content moderation efforts.

In addition, the EU Internet Forum developed an **EU Crisis Protocol** (in 2019 revised in 2023) following the terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand. The Protocol is a voluntary mechanism to help **coordinate a rapid, collective and cross-border response to the viral spread of terrorist and violent extremist content online in response to real world incidents**. The EU Internet Forum and Europol’s EU Internet Referral Unit will organise a tabletop exercise in early 2024 to test the implementation of this Crisis Protocol alongside relevant obligations and operational procedures under the Terrorist Content Online Regulation and take into account the impact of the situation in the Middle East on the online environment.

The EU has been working in recent years to help Member States to counter radicalisation, a breeding ground for terrorism<sup>40</sup> but also for hate speech and hate crime. The **Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)**<sup>41</sup> brings together expertise and experience on prevention and countering of violent extremism. The RAN is currently researching how the online information ecosystem in Europe is responding to the recent developments in the Middle East. The results will be discussed with Member States in December 2023 to support their strategic communication efforts and work to counter hateful narratives online.

Online platforms’ algorithmic systems have been found to be misused to amplify the spread of illegal speech, violent extremist and terrorist content. In the EU, the DSA specifically requires very large online platforms to assess the impact of **algorithmic amplification** on their systems and take measures to mitigate possible risks of negative effects on democratic processes, civic discourse and electoral processes, as well as public security. As online content dissemination does not stop at physical borders, it is key to raise awareness with partners and stakeholders beyond the EU. Work is ongoing building on the Christchurch

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<sup>38</sup> ALLIES, FRISCO and TATE.

<sup>39</sup> [European Union Internet Forum \(EUIF\)](#).

<sup>40</sup> ‘A Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond’, [COM \(2020\)795 final](#), 9.12.2020.

<sup>41</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) .

Call's workstream on algorithmic amplification and the Commission is organising a meeting with the Christchurch Call on 7 December 2023<sup>42</sup>.

Finally, particular attention to the risk of hate speech for children is given in the 2022 update of the European strategy for a better internet for children<sup>43</sup> and in the enforcement of the DSA. To tackle misogynous hate online, the proposal for a Directive on violence against women criminalises the cyber incitement to violence and hatred based on sex or gender and facilitates the removal of such content<sup>44</sup>.

The Commission will:

- Finalise with the online platforms a **reinforced Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online** before February 2024;
- **Extend networks of trusted flaggers** on social media working on all grounds of incitement to violence and hatred, to support and anticipate enforcement of the DSA, including a dedicated network of trusted flaggers specialised on antisemitism;
- Step-up with the EU Internet Forum to **detect illegal hate speech** and to help address borderline content, **including by identifying antisemitic and anti-Muslim hatred content**, as well as supporting **incident response** by law enforcement and tech companies;
- Work with Member States and hosting service providers to overcome practical obstacles to the **application of the Regulation on Terrorist Content Online**;
- Reinforce strategic communication efforts with the **Radicalisation Awareness Network**.
- Reinforce cooperation with the **Christchurch Call's workstream on algorithmic amplification** with a meeting on 7 December.

### 3. ENGAGING SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

*“Indifference is more guilty than violence itself. It is the moral apathy of those who turn away from others: it also happens today with racism and other horrors of the world”.*

*Liliana Segre, Italian Senator for life, Holocaust survivor*

- *Standing together through education, culture, media and sport*

**Knowledge and awareness are key to mutual respect and tolerance, and lack of awareness is one of the underlying conditions allowing the growth of hatred.** Ignorance offers a vacuum which can be exploited by disinformation, extremism and foreign information manipulation. Understanding of the different communities and traditions increases resilience against those who seek to present diversity and difference as a danger to our social fabric.

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<sup>42</sup> The Christchurch Call is a community of over 130 governments, online service providers, and civil society organisations acting together to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online.

<sup>43</sup> ‘A Digital Decade for children and youth: the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+)’, COM(2012) 196 final, 11.5.2022.

<sup>44</sup> Proposal for a Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence, [COM \(2022\) 105 final](#), 8.3.2022.

The Commission has launched an **EU-wide survey on antisemitic prejudices** in the general population of all Member States, including among young people. The Commission will also create a European research hub on contemporary antisemitism and Jewish life and culture, in cooperation with Member States. Horizon Europe also supports research projects to deepen understanding of hatred, its causes, consequences and how to address it, while the Technical Support Instrument offers Member States the opportunity of help in the design and implementation of strategies to combat hatred.

General **public awareness campaigns at EU or national level**, such as the awareness-raising campaign about Jewish life foreseen in the EU strategy on combating antisemitism or the 2023 “Eyes Open”<sup>45</sup> campaign to raise awareness about victims’ rights including victims of hate crime, can stimulate interest and debunk false claims.

The most powerful vectors for building awareness and knowledge are those integrated in everyday life – such as the media, education and training, culture and sport. Such work must always be carried out in close cooperation with the different communities themselves, which in turn calls for a deeper intercultural and interfaith dialogue. Opinion leaders in these areas have a responsibility to society as a whole, and to its cohesion. There are powerful examples in **sport**, notably football, where some national federations and clubs are already calling out antisemitic and racist behaviours and incidents. Major sporting events in Europe can be opportunities to raise awareness against hatred and to promote European values and these should be used. More **influential figures from the worlds of culture, media and sport should stand up for diversity**. Key moments of public attention such as the Olympic Games, international championships or high-profile cultural events should be used to the full.

**The media have an important role to play in bringing reliable information to citizens.** Under the European Democracy Action Plan, the EU’s efforts to protect media freedom and counter disinformation are two sides of the same coin. Actions strengthening the positioning of professional journalism, as well as training for journalists on upholding and developing media standards, includes recognising all forms of antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and broader racism, as well as on uncovering biases and negative stereotypes in reporting, and will be taken forward under media programmes. Actions strengthening the basic digital competences of citizens, in particular media and digital literacy, are key to ensure public awareness and critical thinking, supporting citizens to recognise and avoid spreading disinformation, and advance a trustworthy digital environment where pluralistic public debate can thrive.

**Education must contribute to raising pupils’, students’ and teachers’ awareness and their readiness to react** against prejudices, extremist narratives, conspiracy theories, negative stereotypes and ideologies that drive discrimination and hatred. Each Member State is responsible for its curricula, but this is an area where mutual learning and experience can be very valuable. The European Education Area<sup>46</sup> and the Digital Education Action Plan<sup>47</sup> bring forward a number of initiatives that can help combat hatred in and through education and training. The Commission will take forward the new Council conclusions<sup>48</sup> on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and

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<sup>45</sup> Keep your eyes open to the different forms of violence. | Victims Rights (europa.eu)

<sup>46</sup> “Achieving the European Education Area by 2025”, COM (2020) 625 final, 30.09.2020

<sup>47</sup> “Digital education Action Plan 2021 – 2027: Resetting education and training for the digital age”, COM(2020) 624 final.

<sup>48</sup> [Council conclusions on the contribution on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship](#), 23 November 2023.

democratic citizenship<sup>49</sup>, giving a specific focus in early 2024 to the theme ‘No Place for Hate’. Support for mutual learning and good practice exchange should have a particular focus on anti-hatred educational resources and pedagogical approaches, targeted to cover different levels and types of education. Also important is to address face-to-face hatred in schools by combatting bullying and violence in schools<sup>50</sup>.

The **Erasmus+**<sup>51</sup> and **European Solidarity Corps** programmes<sup>52</sup> offer funding opportunities in the area of education and training, culture, youth and sport, including to address these topics. “Inclusion and diversity” is a priority and both programmes support many projects promoting inclusion, diversity, intercultural dialogue, fighting against intolerance and racism, including antisemitism<sup>53</sup> and anti-Muslim hatred. This priority will continue to be boosted, in particular via additional efforts by implementing bodies in Member States to encourage applications of anti-hatred projects.

In 2022 the Commission published a set of **Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training**<sup>54</sup>. The Guidelines help teachers to empower children and youth facing online challenges such as hate speech. During the review of the Digital Education Action Plan in 2024, the Commission will look at the uptake of the Guidelines and explore how to build on this work across the education and training community<sup>55</sup>.

In 2023, the Commission launched a project to **address antisemitism through education**, in cooperation with UNESCO and OSCE, with in-person trainings in 12 Member States. This project will be extended in 2024-25 to cover all Member States and train EU educators and policy makers on addressing contemporary antisemitism in the classroom.

Participation in common community activities can be a powerful way to build new social bonds and deepen understanding<sup>56</sup>. The Commission supports the role that *sport* plays in the promotion of a tolerant and inclusive society and in addressing violence and racism in society. Cooperation with the Council of Europe on the joint project ‘Combating Hate Speech in Sport’ can be built on to develop innovative approaches to address hate speech in sport, including the online dimension. Erasmus+ can also help to promote inclusion, equality and non-discrimination through sport. The current Arrangement for Cooperation between the

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<sup>49</sup> In 2023, the European Education Area strategic framework Working Group on Equality and Values in education and training published two issue papers on [tackling different forms of discrimination in and through education](#) and on [citizenship education](#).

<sup>50</sup> See Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success.

<sup>51</sup> Regulation 2021/817, OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 1–33.

<sup>52</sup> Regulation 2018/1475 laying down the legal framework of the European Solidarity Corps, 02.10.2018.

<sup>53</sup> As example, through its Erasmus + Programme, the Commission funded the project ‘Football History for Inclusion’, coordinated by the European Association of History Educators partnering among others with the Anne Frank Foundation, the football museum of the Eintracht Frankfurt and the Romanian football federation. The objective was to help educators who witness instances of exclusion and who wish to help their pupils engage in meaningful conversations about inclusion and develop social and civic competences through the use of football history.

<sup>54</sup> Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training - <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a224c235-4843-11ed-92ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

<sup>55</sup> Combatting hatred through quality requirements of digital education content should be a theme of follow up to the recently adopted Council Recommendation on key enabling factors for digital education, 23 November 2023.

<sup>56</sup> This was one of the lessons learnt from the EU preparatory action “Culture for Health” (2021-2023)

Commission and the Union of European Football Associations<sup>57</sup> provides a frame to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, fighting all forms of discrimination, underlining how football can help in the fight against racism and antisemitism in Europe<sup>58</sup>.

**Arts and culture also have a crucial role in building tolerance and in maintaining dialogue in democratic, diverse and open societies.** The Commission’s 2023 report “Culture and Democracy – the evidence”<sup>59</sup> illustrates how art and culture strengthen citizens’ tolerance, empathy for people from different backgrounds, solidarity, and social cohesion, and can help reduce hate crime. It includes evidence from an Italian 2022 study<sup>60</sup> showing how a 1% increase in cultural consumption related to a 20% reduction in hate crime events.

The **Creative Europe** programme breaks down barriers and combats stereotypes in European society and will put in place an action to support **an award for an outstanding Jewish cultural heritage project** to promote and expand understanding of Jewish cultural heritage.

Art and culture can also play an important role in **citizenship education**. The **EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026**<sup>61</sup> seeks to develop cross-sectoral synergies between schools, cultural organisations, civil society and other actors, to harness the transformative potential of culture for enhancing democracy<sup>62</sup>. The Commission is currently collecting concrete examples and knowledge on how to build effective civic-oriented synergies between schools and cultural agents. The results will be shared with stakeholders and Member States to support their efforts to enhance pupils’ citizenship education, their awareness and their readiness to react against prejudice, extremist narratives, conspiracy theories, and ideologies that drive discrimination and hatred<sup>63</sup>.

One of the ways to increase awareness is to leverage **commemorative days** which can be further disseminated on media, in schools and universities, by political organisations and others to reflect on the importance of combatting hatred. Efforts should be stepped up to use existing moments of commemoration to more powerful effect, such as International Holocaust Remembrance Day (27 January), the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day (2 August), the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March), the International Day for Countering Hate Speech (18 June), or the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia (17 May). The more and higher profile the engagement, and the broader the involvement of different communities, the more powerful the message sent by such events. The European Parliament and the Council could promote a wider resonance for such commemorations.

As part of the EU strategy on combating antisemitism, the Commission will promote Holocaust remembrance in schools, universities and vocational and education training

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<sup>57</sup> Arrangement for Cooperation between the European Commission and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) - [C\(2022\) 3721 final](#).

<sup>58</sup> An example is the ‘Football for UNITY 2.0 project’, funded under the EU’s Asylum and Migration Integration Fund, which will be implemented by the UEFA Foundation for Childrens. The project will leverage on the popularity of football and use the platform of the EURO 2024 in order to fight discrimination and promote the social inclusion of refugees.

<sup>59</sup> Culture and Democracy – the evidence. How citizens’ participation in cultural activities enhances civic engagement, democracy and social cohesion. Lessons from international research.

<sup>60</sup> Denti, D., Crociata, A., & Faggian, A. (2022). Knocking on Hell’s door: dismantling hate with cultural consumption, in *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 1-47.

<sup>61</sup> [Council Resolution on the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026](#), OJ C 466, 7.12.2022, p. 1–18.

<sup>62</sup> The multi-annual Work Plans for Culture guide EU level policy cooperation between the Member States and the European Commission in the field of culture.

<sup>63</sup> This process is outlined in the 2024 Annual Work Programme for the implementation of the Creative Europe programme: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/resources/creative-europe-annual-work-programmes>.

institutions. It is also creating a network of sites “where the Holocaust happened”, in cooperation with local communities.

The Commission will:

- Support action to organise **training for journalists** on upholding media standards including recognising hate speech and uncovering biases in reporting;
- Focus under **Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps 2024** on promoting inclusion and diversity and combatting discrimination and hatred;
- Take forward a “**Culture and Democracy Study and Peer-Learning**” project to help schools and cultural actors to promote pupils’ citizenship education for tolerance, diversity and democracy;
- Expand the project with **UNESCO and OSCE** to address antisemitism through education to all Member States;
- Support research projects tackling hate crime and hate speech through the EU framework programme for research and innovation, **Horizon Europe**<sup>64</sup>;
- Take forward the joint project with Council of Europe “**Combating Hate Speech in Sport**”;
- Create a new award under **Creative Europe** focused on preserving Jewish cultural heritage;
- Step up work on the **awareness actions under the strategy on antisemitism**, including the network of Young European Ambassadors, the network of Holocaust-related sites, and building a new research hub as well as increase funding<sup>65</sup>.

- *Protecting democracy from hatred*

Manifestations of hatred are not just a targeted threat to individuals and communities, they undermine society as a whole and threaten the foundations of our democracies. **Disinformation, including foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), often seeks to amplify polarisation and hatred.** Moments of social and geopolitical tension can be abused to increase the spread of disinformation, and this has been evident in recent weeks, with the involvement of foreign actors. This is designed to crowd out a balanced narrative, to polarise and radicalise, trying to undermine the efforts of the many people in Jewish and Muslim communities, as well as in the population at large, who want to show their commitment to peace, respect and coexistence.

**Protecting Europe’s democracies from the threats and harmful effects of disinformation and information manipulation and interference, in particular stemming from foreign actors, has become a strategic priority for the EU.** Under the umbrella of the European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP)<sup>66</sup>, the Commission and the High Representative have developed a series of measures to tackle disinformation.

A series of initiatives have also been put in place to increase the accountability of providers for online platforms<sup>67</sup>. In particular, an important element of the **DSA is the obligation on**

<sup>64</sup> Horizon Europe will fund as of 2024 research projects on combating hate speech online and offline.

<sup>65</sup> The Commission has increased to EUR 12 million the funding available in 2024 under the Remembrance strand of the CERV including for projects to commemorate the Holocaust, counter Holocaust distortion, also through the digitalisations of archives and testimonies of Holocaust survivors.

<sup>66</sup> COM(2020) 790. A review of the actions under EDAP is forthcoming.

<sup>67</sup> Other key initiatives include the recently agreed proposal on transparency of political advertising, introducing clear rules on transparency and targeting of political advertising, and the proposal under the

**very large online platforms to assess and mitigate the risks of disinformation.** This comes on top of the long-standing strengthened **Code of Practice on Disinformation**, an agile tool committing its signatories, including all major online platforms, to quickly react to risks in cooperation with civil society, including grassroots initiatives, and the authorities<sup>68</sup>.

Fast reaction has been helped by situational awareness and **strategic communication response to disinformation**, making use of the Commission's Network against Disinformation and the Rapid Alert System managed by the European External Action Service, which connect focal points from Member States and EU institutions, as well as in the context of elections with the European Cooperation Network on Elections. This consists of active debunking and targeted campaigns (stepped up to address foreign information manipulation and interference, including disinformation over both COVID-19 and Russia's illegal aggression against Ukraine), as well as a comprehensive and constant targeted reaction to specific incidents. Intensified support to fact-checkers also has a major impact on disinformation. **The Commission and the High Representative will intensify the action against disinformation and will support independent fact-checkers, who play a major role in responding to disinformation.** This will include support to grassroots digital volunteers, by making available or developing further open-source tools – including AI tools – to enable them to fight hate speech and disinformation more effectively.

The Commission will stimulate awareness and compliance through **stepping up contacts with signatories of the Code of Practice and the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) network increase the capacity of their fact-checkers.** Rapid content moderation is critical to an effective response. Contacts will be used to remind key stakeholders about existing rules and to obtain reinforced buy-in on fighting disinformation. The intention is to use EDMO as an independent intermediary that can organise the work between the platforms and trusted flaggers and other experts. This will help the swift and effective moderation and takedown of flagged disinformation content (as well as sometimes identifying potentially illegal content).

**The EU can draw on a set of measures already in place, including the toolbox on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference. Targeted public diplomacy programmes with young opinion leaders/youth ambassadors in the Middle East and North Africa** will be used to step up outreach. An existing project to promote an Arab Fact Checkers Network will be extended to further develop fact-checking platforms and the software that helps platforms detect foreign interference and hate speech.

The Commission is preparing a set of initiatives on the 'Defence of Democracy' to support common EU standards in addressing specific threats and encouraging inclusive civic engagement and citizen participation in our democracies, building on the European Democracy Action Plan. A legislative proposal would introduce common transparency and accountability standards in the internal market for interest representation activities seeking to influence the decision-making process in the EU and carried out on behalf of third countries. The proposals will also contain recommendations on inclusive and resilient elections with measures to avoid misleading or hateful content, as well as to encourage a respectful democratic environment through civic engagement and citizen participation.

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European Media Freedom Act which, once adopted, would guarantee more effective editorial freedom and independence of media service providers.

<sup>68</sup> The upcoming Regulation on Political advertising will provide common transparency standards allowing to distinguish political advertising from other content and identify messages that seek to shape their political views and decisions. It will also limit abusive use of personal data to disseminate political advertising.

Independent journalism is key for citizens to make informed decisions, and to push back against disinformation and hate speech. Yet independent journalism is facing mounting pressure globally.<sup>69</sup> The EU remains deeply committed to protecting independent, quality journalism across the world, both with robust and concrete **support to independent media**. A number of EU programmes are in place globally to support independent media, provide capacity building, strengthen the protection of journalists and offer them professional development opportunities. Dedicated programmes are in place within the EU and globally, with a total amount of support beyond EUR 180 million over the last 5 years. The EU also specifically protects independent journalists at risk<sup>70</sup> and protects local inclusive democratic space in the digital age.<sup>71</sup>

The Commission will:

- Step up support to **fact checkers**, including through exploring how AI can support the work to identify disinformation, with the risk of inciting hatred;
- Adopt a new '**Defence of Democracy**' set of proposals, including proposing harmonised transparency and accountability standards for interest representation activities seeking to influence the decision-making process in the EU and carried out on behalf of third countries.

The EU will:

- Extend the project on an **Arab Fact Checkers Network** to further develop fact-checking platforms and the software that helps platforms to detect foreign interference and hate speech;
- Support targeted **public diplomacy programmes** with young opinion leaders/youth ambassadors in the Middle East and North Africa to step up outreach against all forms of hatred, including on antisemitism, and to address information sourced outside the EU.

#### 4. UNITED IN DIVERSITY AGAINST HATRED

*“If we want to achieve our goal, then let us empower ourselves with the weapon of knowledge, and let us shield ourselves with unity and togetherness.”*

*Malala Yousafzai – Nobel laureate*

**Equality and non-discrimination are core values of any democracy.** They are the foundation for ensuring that all people, whoever they are, can live together without fear. The EU is committed to building a society in which everyone enjoys an equal opportunity to flourish, is free to express their individuality, speak their mind, worship freely and love who they want. Fostering such a society is a powerful way to protect against hatred.

In 2019, a survey conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) underlined concern that **discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation**, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics was increasing in the EU. One in ten LGBTI respondents (11%) had been physically or sexually attacked in the five years before 2020 because they were LGBTI.

<sup>69</sup> According to the 2023 Freedom in the World Report (by Freedom House), media freedom is one of the indicators that has declined the most over the past 17 years. Today, as many as 85% of people live in countries where media freedom has worsened in the past five years (source: UN).

<sup>70</sup> Through the ProtectDefenders.eu mechanism, among other measures.

<sup>71</sup> Including through partnership with Denmark on the Digital Democracy Initiative.



Trans (17%) and intersex (22%) respondents experienced attacks at higher rates<sup>72</sup>. **Violence against women and domestic violence** are particularly widespread across the EU. Data shows that one in three women experienced violence against women<sup>73</sup> and one in five experienced domestic violence in the EU<sup>74</sup>. As for **Roma**, a positive development in tackling hate-motivated harassment and violence was noted in 2021 compared previous findings of 2016, but no real improvements has been recorded when it comes to tackling discrimination<sup>75</sup>.

This is why the Commission has put equality and non-discrimination at the heart of its agenda. The **Union of Equality strategies**<sup>76</sup> adopted in 2020 and 2021 set out a comprehensive approach to create the conditions for everyone to live, thrive and lead in society regardless of differences based on sex, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. To do so, the strategies put emphasis on countering stereotypes, combating structural racism and discrimination where it exists and redressing the lack of substantive equality in our societies through positive action.

**A key element in these strategies is engaging Member States and civil society** with a view to translating the EU-level objectives to the national level, including through national strategies and action plans in line with the commitments made. The **High Level Group on Non-Discrimination, Equality and Diversity** provides an important forum to exchange good practices and seeks to improve the development and implementation of policies and programmes that combat discrimination and promote equality. The EU Platform of Diversity Charters also helps organisations looking to voluntarily commits to promote diversity and equal opportunities in the workplace through the **European Diversity Charters**.

Mobilising EU funds and making sure that they reach those who need them most is also key to promote equality and combat discrimination. For this it is essential that **beneficiaries of EU funds respect EU values**.

The horizontal enabling condition on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU requires Member States put in place effective mechanisms to ensure that the programmes and their implementation comply with the Charter<sup>77</sup>. This is a precondition for related expenditure to be reimbursed.

The Commission's **Early Detection and Exclusion System** already provides the possibility to exclude entities linked to terrorist financing or offences linked to terrorist activities from receiving EU financial support<sup>78</sup>. Financial support to beneficiaries may be suspended, reduced or recovered in the event of serious breach of contractual obligations and appropriate measures may be taken in case of grave professional misconduct, including in cases of violation of EU values. Most importantly, to strengthen the principle that EU funded

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<sup>72</sup> FRA (2020) survey 'A long way to go for LGBTI equality: A long way to go for LGBTI equality' | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (europa.eu)

<sup>73</sup> FRA survey: '[Violence against women: an EU wide survey](#)', 5.03.2014

<sup>74</sup> This figure is based on administrative data and only includes acts reported to the authorities. EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs>, 2019.

<sup>75</sup> FRA (2021) survey '[Roma in 10 European countries](#)', European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

<sup>76</sup> Union of Equality strategies: 'Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025', [COM\(2020\) 152 final](#), 5.3.2020; 'EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation 2020-2030', [COM\(2020\) 620 final](#), 7.10.2020; 'Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025', [COM\(2020\) 698 final](#), 12.11.2020; 'A Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025', [COM\(2020\) 565 final](#), 18.9.2020; Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, [COM\(2021\) 101 final](#), 3.3.2021. These were complemented by the 'EU strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021-2030)' on 5.10.2021 [COM\(2021\) 615 final](#).

<sup>77</sup> Article 15 of Regulation (EU) [2021/1060](#) - Common Provisions Regulation.

<sup>78</sup> Article 135 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) [2018/1046](#) - Financial Regulation.

programmes must respect equality principles and comply with EU law, the Commission proposed to add “incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence” as a new explicit ground of exclusion, as part of the revision of the Financial Regulation. Respect for EU values already features as part of the Grant agreement every beneficiary of EU funding must sign and the Commission has worked on guidelines to set out more clearly the consequences breaches of EU values have for beneficiaries. The Commission is also rolling out pilot projects on reinforcing checks and verification procedures for budgetary programmes in relevant spending areas that entail higher risk of abuse and disrespect of EU values.

Equally important is to make sure that untransparent **foreign funding** is not used to undermine EU values. The EU will continue to combat covert and malicious foreign financing of cultural, civil and religious organisations. Transparency and accountability is the best way to guard against the potential of foreign funding to, intentionally or not, promote views and encourage behaviour contrary to our democratic principles, fundamental and human rights<sup>79</sup>. In addition, the EU maintains a strong framework for anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism.

The Commission will:

- Take forward monitoring and reporting on implementation of the **equality strategies**. In 2024 this will include reports on the implementation of the EU anti-racism action plan, the EU strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life and the LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025;
- Disseminate a revised **Annotated Grant Agreement** to better set out the consequences for beneficiaries of not respecting EU values;

The Commission calls on the European Parliament and the Council:

- To swiftly conclude negotiations on the **Financial Regulation** to further strengthen the protection of EU value and the financial interests of the Union more broadly.

The Commission calls on Member States:

- To live up to the commitments made in the Council Conclusion on combating racism and antisemitism<sup>80</sup>, in particular to develop national action plans and/or strategies and to use the non-legally binding working definitions of antisemitism and of Holocaust denial and distortion adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

## 5. WORKING TOGETHER WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

*“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”.*

*Helen Keller – American author and disability rights advocate*

It is through the engagement of all Member States, all communities, and the widest range of civil society that the different initiatives at EU level reach their full potential. This is particularly true for the long-standing EU commitment to equality, with specific initiatives to promote equal rights and to facilitate the participation of the marginalised in all aspects of our society.

<sup>79</sup> Proposal for Financial Regulation recast [COM/2022/223](#)

<sup>80</sup> [Council Conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism](#), 2.3.2022.

The Commission's approach of galvanising EU support through Coordinators on combatting antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, on combatting anti-Muslim hatred and the recently created coordinator on anti-racism, has played an important part in reinforcing stakeholder engagement. This will now be **stepped up with an explicit mandate** for each. The mandate will define their designation as Envoys as well as their role, in areas to include specific EU funded projects, and to maximise the potential of EU policies to combat hatred, online and directly<sup>81</sup>. The mandates will also include annual reports on trends, good practices and policy achievements. Fostering a close relationship with a wide range of organisations will be a key part of the role, including grassroots organisations helping to promote respect and understanding and support society-wide mobilisation in promoting and safeguarding EU values and fundamental principles.

The EU agencies, and particularly the **Fundamental Rights Agency** (FRA) provide key input for action at EU level. Data collection and analysis, including reliable and comparable equality data<sup>82</sup>, are indispensable for a deeper awareness and a sharper understanding of the current threats. Another key role is its support and monitoring of national action plans on antisemitism, anti-racism, Roma equality, inclusion and participation and LGBTIQ equality. The Commission will explore how to maximise the potential of FRA to contribute to EU efforts to help in the fight against hatred, including to establish a common methodology on recording antisemitic incidents.

Faith associations can also act as powerful actors for and between communities. The **Article 17 dialogue between the EU institutions and churches, religious associations, and philosophical and non-confessional organisations** provides a well-established forum to bring together different faiths. In light of growing concerns about religious intolerance, the work of the Article 17 dialogue is even more important, as a setting to explore ways to enhance tolerance and promote respect for religious and non-confessional communities may be warranted.

Finally, promoting awareness of the importance of diversity and combatting hatred is also a goal of EU external action. **Programmes in partner countries** promoting equality, inclusion and respect for diversity supported by the EU and implemented by civil society in key partner countries include the Global Europe - Human Rights and Democracy Thematic Programme<sup>83</sup>.

**Combating hatred is a global concern and international cooperation is a necessity.** Whilst our primary responsibility is to combat hatred and protect human rights inside the EU, there is both a responsibility and an interest in reinforcing EU external action in this area. All the Union Equality strategies and the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism include dedicated actions to work on a global level against hate and discrimination. The EU is one of the most active global players at multilateral level, such as at the UN and Council of Europe, in promoting Freedom of Religion and Belief<sup>84</sup>, with a dedicated Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU. It also works through dialogues and actions in partners countries in cooperation with partner governments, local stakeholders,

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<sup>81</sup> This work will also engage the Commission Coordinator for the dialogue between the European Commission and churches, religious associations or communities as well as philosophical and non-confessional organisations set out in Article 17 of the TFEU.

<sup>82</sup> To this end, the Commission cooperates with FRA in coordinating the work of the Subgroup on equality data under the High-Level Group on Non-discrimination, Equality and Diversity.

<sup>83</sup> Joint Communication on "EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024", [JOIN \(2020\) 5 final](#), 25.3.2020. A new call for proposal aiming to promote freedom of religion of beliefs is now open for applications - [Calls for Proposals and Tenders \(europa.eu\)](#).

<sup>84</sup> See also the Rabat Action Plan on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred.

civil society organisations and faith-based actors. Working closely with those responsible for promoting rights at global, regional and country levels<sup>85</sup> reinforces the credibility and the effectiveness of EU action within and outside the Union: the Commission and the High Representative will reinforce their engagement and networks at all levels, leveraging EU diplomatic work and concrete actions and external partnerships. The participation of the EU in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance allows for closer cooperation on combating Holocaust denial and preventing racism, xenophobia and antisemitism.

Finally, **EU institutions**, their workplaces and their staff adhere to the highest standards in tackling discrimination and combatting hatred. This is a major priority for the Commission and the updated Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2024 will act as a focus for internal human resources, ethics and communication policy.

The Commission will:

- Provide **Envoys** with an explicit mandate to deepen coordination, including through specific EU funded projects, and to maximise the potential of EU policies to combat hatred, online and directly.
- Hold an Article 17 **special meeting on interfaith dialogue** on 19 December 2023.

## 6. CONCLUSION

*“What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor, but the silence of the bystander”.*

*Elie Wiesel - Nobel laureate, Holocaust survivor*

The EU was born out of determination to come together after the war to unite around the values at the core of an inclusive, diverse, and democratic society. With two wars in our neighbourhood and with daily evidence of division being imported into our homes and communities, Europe needs to show its determination to respect and promote those values.

In early 2024, the Commission will organise a high-level anti-hatred conference with high-profile participants engaged in the fight against hate and discrimination. It will open a **pan-European space of dialogue and reconciliation**, to allow moving from hatred and division to the shared enjoyment of our European values of equality and respect for human rights and dignity. With this aim, the Commission will also bring together, at European level, citizens from across the EU, in particular young people, with decision-makers, experts and members of the most affected communities. These European dialogues for reconciliation should result in recommendations on how to build bridges across fractured communities and bring to life the EU’s motto of living “United in diversity”. The Commission will encourage Member States to organise similar dialogues at national level, and beyond.

Hatred is unacceptable in the European Union and worldwide. Politicians and public figures as well as citizens from all walks of life should be ready to stand up and speak up. We must leave no doubt about our determination not only to protect our values, but to do everything in our power to put them into practice. Protecting those at risk from hatred is essential to protect

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<sup>85</sup> For example, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and its Special Representative on Anti-Semitic, Anti-Muslim and other forms of religious intolerance and hate crimes.

our society and our way of life. Acting together, the EU can be a powerful force to demonstrate this determination, to call on all Europeans to stand up against hatred and speak up for equality, inclusion and respect.