



# National Report Card on Government Measures to Counter Antisemitism and Foster Jewish Life

## BELGIUM



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## ABOUT THE NOA PROJECT

NOA – Networks Overcoming Antisemitism offers a pioneering approach to tackling the problem of rising antisemitism in Europe. With its unique partnership of major Jewish networks, it benchmarks EU Member States' policies across areas and helps them to develop holistic national action plans to address and prevent antisemitism and foster Jewish life. For more information, see: [www.noa-project.eu](http://www.noa-project.eu).

## ABOUT CEJI - LEAD PARTNER, NOA PROJECT

CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe stands with people of all backgrounds to promote a Europe of diversity and respect. A Jewish voice at the European level, our activities include delivering diversity education and enhancing interfaith and intercultural dialogue while advocating in the EU against antisemitism and discrimination of all kinds. For more information, see: [www.ceji.org](http://www.ceji.org).

## NOA PARTNERS

[Association for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage and Culture](#)

[B'nai B'rith Europe](#)

[European Union of Jewish Students](#)

[European Union of Progressive Judaism](#)

[World Jewish Congress](#)

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## FOREWORD FROM THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION COORDINATOR ON COMBATING ANTISEMITISM AND FOSTERING JEWISH LIFE

We at the European Commission are proud to support the NOA-Networks Overcoming Antisemitism project, a unique partnership of six European Jewish organisations that came together in 2019 with the aim of supporting holistic policy and practice to overcome antisemitism and foster Jewish life. Its pragmatic approach pairs security, education, and support for Jewish life with preventive and interventive measures at transnational and national levels. The NOA partners bring complementary expertise, tools, and engagement techniques, drawing on hundreds of affiliate members as well as their own networks. Their vision is to advance an inclusive and democratic Europe where Jewish communities thrive.

The NOA project echoes and contributes to the European Commission's objectives to end antisemitism and foster Jewish life, as specified in its first-ever EU Strategy on the topic, presented on October 5, 2021.

NOA's long-term goals include mapping efforts to combat antisemitism; equipping educators with training and teaching tools; diffusing positive narratives through socio-cultural educational activities; garnering commitments from sporting authorities to ensure the creation of inclusive environments; and evaluating impact to improve and sustain the project's activities over time.

This Belgian National Report Card is the first in a series and provides a nuanced snapshot of the current policy landscape in the selected areas and highlights the existing gaps as well as opportunities for further responses, which will no doubt evolve over time.

It is our hope that this benchmarking tool will aid in the development and implementation of National Action Plans to counter antisemitism.

I would like to thank the partners and stakeholders who contributed to this report for their openness, expertise, and valuable contributions. I am confident that it is an important step along the journey to countering antisemitism and fostering healthy and dynamic Jewish life.

Europe celebrates its diversity. Europe thrives when its Jewish communities thrive.



**Katharina von Schnurbein**

European Commission Coordinator on  
Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish life

## A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF CEJI – A JEWISH CONTRIBUTION TO AN INCLUSIVE EUROPE

For the past thirty years, CEJI has stood with individuals and organisations of diverse religions, cultures and backgrounds to promote an inclusive and democratic Europe. Our activities, including training, education, dialogue and advocacy, are based on a human rights framework that has guided intergovernmental institutions since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. This framework was established by the United Nations, affirmed by the Council of Europe and the Organisation for the Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), reinforced and enforced by the European Union, and transposed into national law by all EU Member States as a guarantor of Jewish life present and future.

Every European Union country has its own unique story of Jewish life, dating back to ancient Greece and the Roman Empire and continuing through centuries that saw the emergence of Christianity, colonisation and development of the nation-state and democracy. The Jewish diaspora moved across the continent through waves of persecution from the Inquisition to the pogroms of the Middle Ages and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and, in the still living memory of some, the Holocaust.

Despite periods of greater or lesser persecution, European Jewish communities have shown themselves to be resilient, capable of regeneration and integration. From craftspeople to merchants, artists and educators to philosophers and scientists, the history of Judaism in Europe is intertwined with the history of the region itself.

Today there are systems in place to monitor antisemitic attitudes, hate speech and hate crime, which is essential for responding to the warning signs of escalating anti-Jewish sentiment with measures of protection and prevention. The NOA project is doing something complementary but different and unique. We are monitoring what countries are doing to prevent antisemitism through their government institutions.

This research is a tool, perhaps not yet a perfect one, to help provide a realistic sense of the opportunities to strengthen policies and ensure governments are accountable to their international human rights commitments, reinforcing structural changes to break vicious cycles of hate. We hope that this policy-benchmarking mechanism will prove useful not only for preventing and addressing antisemitism but also in developing national action plans against racism and all other forms of discrimination as a flourishing life for marginalised communities is an indicator of safety and freedom for all.

We would like to thank our partners from across Europe: the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage (AEPJ), B'nai B'rith Europe (BBE), the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS), the European Union for Progressive Judaism (EUPJ), and the World Jewish Congress (WJC), in collaboration with their local affiliates and networks.

We express our great appreciation for the trust and support we have received from the European Commission for this work, which is a natural extension of the multiple initiatives taken by the European Union on antisemitism and racism in recent years.



**Alain Philippon**  
President, CEJI

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NOA-Networks Overcoming Antisemitism project, launched in 2019, is an innovative effort to develop new public-civil society partnerships and enhance collaboration within the nongovernmental sector to support the European Council's Declarations on fighting antisemitism and fostering Jewish life on the continent.<sup>1</sup> This report showcases the current policy landscape in 10 areas: culture, education, hate crime, hate speech, Holocaust remembrance, intercultural dialogue, media, religious freedom, security, and sport. The research demonstrates that there is still much the Belgian government can and should do to combat antisemitism. Moreover, there appears to be resistance amongst policymakers to pass specific measures or to honour commitments made at the national or European Union level.<sup>2</sup>

## KEY FINDINGS

1. The country is strongest in legislation addressing the more serious and escalated forms of antisemitism, such as laws concerning security, hate crime, and hate speech. It is weakest in implementation measures aimed at preventing discrimination that targets Jewish people and communities.
2. The policy area that scored the lowest—by a substantial margin—is undoubtedly the most important: education. This indicates a considerable opportunity for positive growth and development with long-term impact.
3. The five policy areas that received the highest scores are: security, religious freedom, hate crime, Holocaust remembrance, and hate speech. This demonstrates that on basic safety and security issues, the country is doing relatively well.
4. The only areas to receive a 100% score were related to Holocaust denial and distortion in hate speech and hate crime legislation. This highlights a disparity between the treatment of past trauma and current challenges.
5. Overall, the State has done little to address

antisemitism as a specific type of racism worthy of targeted interventions alongside greater public efforts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BELGIAN POLICY MAKERS

1. Appoint a National Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life and provide the necessary support for policy implementation.
2. Set up an inter-ministerial working group to facilitate communication and cooperation within the government to implement a holistic approach to systemic and cultural change.
3. Set up a national stakeholder roundtable to facilitate communication and cooperation with civil society organisations to implement national action plans combatting racism and antisemitism.
4. Establish an interdisciplinary research consortium that will generate knowledge to inform policy developments to contribute to preventing and addressing antisemitism and fostering Jewish life.
5. Provide funding and human resources to ensure the sustainable implementation of these general measures as well as specific measures mentioned within policy areas and to support new initiatives which may emerge from these structures. Invest in employment in the field, hard hit by the pandemic, by augmenting funds available through the public authority Maribel and other similar mechanisms.<sup>3</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Antisemitism is a structural pillar of racism, and racism will not be eradicated without overcoming antisemitism. This can only be accomplished by recognising and understanding its specific nature and manifestations. By acknowledging existing gaps and opportunities in current national policy and making a concerted, coordinated effort to prevent, address and eradicate antisemitism, a clearer path can be opened towards a more inclusive and democratic Europe.

<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/12/06/fight-against-antisemitism-council-declaration/> and <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/02/antisemitism-council-declaration-on-fighting-antisemitism/>

<sup>2</sup> The Belgian Senate essentially laid out a first National Action Plan against antisemitism in its 2018 Resolution and called for a national coordinator on the matter.

<sup>3</sup> See: [https://emploi.belgique.be/fr/themes/emploi-et-marche-du-travail/mesures-demploi/baisse-generale-du-cout-salarial/maribel-social#toc\\_heading\\_3](https://emploi.belgique.be/fr/themes/emploi-et-marche-du-travail/mesures-demploi/baisse-generale-du-cout-salarial/maribel-social#toc_heading_3)



# INTRODUCTION

The NOA-Networks Overcoming Antisemitism project is an effort to innovate and develop new public-civil society partnerships and enhance collaboration within the nongovernmental sector. Backed by European Union funding<sup>4</sup>, a consortium of six European Jewish organisations came together to develop concrete and effective initiatives to combat antisemitism. NOA developed a series of work streams that range from creating training and teaching tools to developing socio-cultural activities to promoting inclusion in sport. The project takes a holistic approach that marries policy and practice, security and education, and transnational and national actions.

This is the first publication in a series of five NOA National Report Cards<sup>5</sup> which support the European Council's Declarations on the fight against antisemitism.<sup>6</sup> Through these Declarations, EU Member States committed to mainstreaming the prevention and countering of antisemitism in all its forms across policy areas, recognising that antisemitism is a pan-European challenge. Further, they make clear the need to engage in policy formation at local, national, and European levels. An initial Declaration was published in 2018, revised and refined in 2020, and confirmed again in March 2022,<sup>7</sup> at which time a slightly broader scope was approved to include "countering antisemitism and fostering Jewish life" in order to create a diverse and inclusive Europe where Jewish communities thrive.

The National Report Cards have been created to serve as a benchmarking tool to aid in the development and implementation of National Action Plans to counter antisemitism in

Member States. They take the measure of how well European countries are doing compared to the goals set by the Declarations. This Belgian National Report card reflects a multi-year project of stakeholder engagement to achieve the highest standard of research to evaluate the level of governmental compliance. This report should therefore assist Belgium in developing and implementing new policies by highlighting current strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the research provides a wealth of socio-cultural educational resources that will contribute to combatting antisemitism.

Nine areas of life are included in the Council Declarations and serve as the basis for NOA's scoring process. The research team added an additional area, "religious freedom," because some partners felt this has a direct bearing on Jewish communities' ability to thrive.<sup>8</sup> The ten policy areas that the researchers assessed are: culture, education, hate crime, hate speech, Holocaust remembrance, intercultural dialogue, media, religious freedom, security, and sport. In addition, other policy areas are touched upon within these ten areas, such as youth, discrimination, and integration policies; they each merit further attention in possible future iterations of this monitoring tool.

As this report's main focus is the state's role and obligations, measures taken by civil society organisations (CSOs) and local communities are mentioned only in as much as they are relevant to the state's role. Further, researchers primarily examined the existence of state policies and practices and did not undertake a qualitative assessment of their measurable impact.

This brief report does not include the full scope of evidence gathered to inform the researcher's assessments of the key indicators. A detailed description of evidence is available upon request through the NOA website contact form.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The project was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020).

<sup>5</sup> The other countries to be assessed are Hungary, Italy, Romania and Spain.

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/12/06/fight-against-antisemitism-council-declaration/> and <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/02/antisemitism-council-declaration-on-fighting-antisemitism/>.

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/04/council-adopts-conclusions-on-combating-racism-and-antisemitism/>.

<sup>8</sup> The EU cannot take a position on this topic because it is a national competence.

<sup>9</sup> See: <https://www.noa-project.eu/report-cards/>.

The 2018 European Council Declaration on the fight against antisemitism was the starting point for the development of NOA's research methodology. The Declaration briefly mentions its expectations in multiple policy areas. Building on this, the NOA project partners—each experts in their field—explored how these broadly-worded directives could translate into measurable indicators. First, existing standards were compiled in order to set up a framework for assessment. Then a scoring system was developed to evaluate the key indicators. NOA's lead researchers gathered information to support these assessments through several methods. These included desk research, interviews, and focus groups to gain a holistic picture of the national policy landscape as they relate to the established indicators.

This project is a first foray into establishing a new set of European benchmarking norms, and every effort has been made to respect the highest ethical standards in this research. The researchers endeavoured to avoid bias in the design, data analysis, data interpretation, and other aspects of this research and honestly report results based on the available evidence. While some risk of subjectivity remains in the interpretation of results, it is important to remember that the purpose of this Report Card is to provide a snapshot of the current policy landscape in order to strengthen government measures to prevent and counter antisemitism going forward.

**NOA Standards** inform the roles and responsibilities of national governments. They are based on international norms established through regulations, directives, resolutions and other documents adopted by inter-governmental organisations such as European Union institutions, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and UNESCO.

**NOA Indicators** are markers of relevant policies and practices related to the fight against antisemitism. Thematic experts crafted key monitoring questions to measure the presence or absence of such policies in various areas.

**The NOA Scoring System** was developed to offer an easy-to-understand numerical representation of the current state of affairs in each policy area. Thematic experts assigned a maximum value to the key indicators, then the researchers assigned a percentage score measuring how well the policies and practices in place corresponded to each, based on the information available. The scoring system is designed to:

- Enable users to easily identify existing gaps and policy areas that require significant attention from state actors
- Provide benchmarks to compare future development of policies

Assessments were made according to the experience and knowledge of the researchers in the field. In order to ensure depth and nuance, a multi-faceted approach to the final scoring was undertaken, including:

- Interviews with both government and civil society representatives
- Two advisory board meetings with a diverse range of community representatives reflecting expertise in the policy areas examined
- One stakeholder workshop with key government and civil society representatives who reviewed a detailed description of the evidence justifying the assigned scores and discussed and validated the overarching results

<sup>10</sup> For further information on the standards, indicators and scoring system, see: <https://www.noa-project.eu/report-cards/>

# METHODOLOGY

1



## STEP 1 Creation of NOA Project Partnership

NOA project partnership is created with Jewish experts and representatives to provide guidance on the topics, issues and needs to be addressed.

The 10 policy areas to be researched are determined.

2



## STEP 2 Creation of Indicators

Key research questions are developed for each policy area which are then translated into indicators, based upon existing international standards.

For each of the 10 areas, multiple indicators are assigned, with input from thematic experts for transnational consistency and sustainability.

3



## STEP 3 Collection & Analysis

Policy documents, legislation, national publications, and guidelines are collected and analysed.

A National Advisory Board is formed to give guidance on the national policy landscape from different Jewish community perspectives.

4



## STEP 4 Input & Interviews

To provide context and additional input, **72** people are consulted, including:

**22** government representatives

**18** community representatives

**22** civil society organisation representatives

**4** academics

5



## STEP 5 Scoring

Initial scoring of indicators is undertaken by the research team, given in percentages. Scoring system is developed to:

- ▶ compare national policies and practices with established standards
- ▶ enable overview for each policy area providing for future benchmarking
- ▶ assess each policy area to identify existing gaps and create points of reference

6



## STEP 6 Validation

Consultation phase/stakeholder workshop:

- ▶ a select group of representatives from civil society and public authorities give feedback and validate scoring

7



## STEP 7 Dissemination

National public events are organised to discuss findings, share good practices and provide policy recommendations.

European conference 2023



# BELGIUM BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

## GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

Every country is unique in its patchwork of cultures, and Belgium is certainly no exception. Its political system has five levels of power: federal, communal, regional, provincial, and municipal.<sup>11</sup> Federal authorities, communities, and regions are equal in law and intervene on an equal footing but in different areas. The federal level manages everything that concerns the country as a whole: justice, foreign affairs, internal affairs, the federal police, and national defence. In other words, it is responsible for all areas without linguistic, cultural, or territorial distinction. The Federal State covers the entire territory and is responsible for Belgium with regards to the European Union and NATO. The House of Representatives and the Senate constitute the legislative power while the King and the Government constitute the executive branch.

Below the federal level, there are three Communities in Belgium, constituted according to cultural and linguistic belonging. The country is divided by language, with French speakers, Dutch speakers, and German speakers. These Communities are competent in matters that concern the people living in their territory, i.e., cultural affairs, education, youth assistance, sports, tourism, health, etc. In addition, Belgium has three Regions: Wallonia, Flanders, and Brussels-Capital, which are responsible for everything that concerns the territory and the economy, i.e., housing, mobility, environment, energy, employment, training, economic development, agriculture, transport, foreign trade. There are also ten provinces in Belgium—5 Walloon and 5 Flemish.<sup>12</sup> Within their territories, the provinces manage issues which are considered to be of provincial interest. This means any area which is not a federal, regional, community or local competency. The level of power closest and most accessible to the citizen is the municipalities, known as

communes. The communes are mainly financed and controlled by the regions. Belgium has a total of 589 municipalities, 19 of which are located in Brussels.

## BELGIAN JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Jews first arrived in the territory of present-day Belgium in the first century AD. Throughout the Middle Ages, they suffered discrimination and persecution.<sup>13</sup> In the ensuing centuries, Sephardic Jews fled Spain and Portugal to settle in Antwerp. When Belgium gained independence in 1830, Judaism was given the status of an official religion. The Consistoire Central Israélite de Belgique, created in 1832, is the representative body of Belgian Judaism to the state. Its role is to support Jewish education; ensure the preservation of Jewish heritage; promote the study of the history of Belgian Judaism; and maintain the memory of the Holocaust.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the country's Jews prospered, as demonstrated by the creation in 1876 of the Great Synagogue of Brussels on Rue de la Régence, near the Royal Palace. On the eve of World War II, there were some 90,000 Jews in Belgium<sup>14</sup>, less than one percent of the total population. Most lived in Brussels and Antwerp, the two biggest cities, with smaller communities in provincial cities. The Antwerp community was visibly traditional, while the Brussels community practised a more modern form of Judaism. During the war, approximately 88,000 Belgians died, including 25,000 Jews killed between August 1942 and July 1944, mainly in Auschwitz. After WWII, some 20,000 Jews remained in Belgium. Due to post-war growth, the community now numbers between 30 000 and 40 000<sup>15</sup>, which still represents less than one percent of the country's population. The religious breakdown

<sup>11</sup> Belgium became independent in 1830 and evolved towards a federal structure between 1970 and 1993.

<sup>12</sup> The territory of Brussels does not represent a province.

<sup>13</sup> Evidence can be seen today in the Brussels Cathedral, where a stained-glass window depicts the 1370 Brussels Massacre when rumours of Jews stealing sacramental wafers resulted in six people being burned at the stake.

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://jguideurope.org/en/region/belgium/>.

<sup>15</sup> See: <https://www.jpr.org.uk/country?id=24>.

of the country is estimated at 57.1% Catholic, 20.2% “non-believer/agnostic,” 9.1% atheist, 6.8% Muslim (mostly Sunni), 2.3% Protestant, 2.8% other Christian, 0.6% Orthodox, 0.3% Jewish, 0.3% Buddhist, and 0.5% other.<sup>16</sup>

Brussels’ role as the home to European institutions has attracted a diverse international Jewish community. In the past 20 years, several new synagogues and community centres have been founded, and the city embraces secular Jewish movements with active cultural programming. At present, the majority of Jews in the country are of Ashkenazi origin although there is also a notable Sephardic community.<sup>17</sup>

## OVERVIEW OF ANTISEMITISM

While the country prides itself on a tradition of freedom, pluralism, and tolerance, not all communities feel safe to fully express their identity. According to a 2018 survey on antisemitism<sup>18</sup>, the vast majority of Jews in Belgium (85%) see antisemitism as a very big or fairly big problem, an 8 percent jump from 5 years earlier. Security concerns were undoubtedly magnified due to a 2014 terrorist attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels when a gunman opened fire, killing four people.

While most antisemitic incidents are not related to physical security, in 2020, they reached a 5-year record high.<sup>19</sup> The vast majority of reports concerned hate speech, hate-motivated acts, Holocaust denial, and cases of discrimination.<sup>20</sup> Complaints of antisemitism are recorded by the independent national human rights institution Unia<sup>21</sup> as well as by the Jewish community on the website [www.antisemitisme.be](http://www.antisemitisme.be).

Following the release of a 2018 EU-wide study on perceptions of antisemitism<sup>22</sup>, the Belgian Senate passed a resolution relative to the fight against antisemitism, which included 20 points of significant action to be implemented by Belgian government authorities.<sup>23</sup> Despite this resolution, no federal coordinator against antisemitism has been named in the country, and there does not appear to be any intention of doing so. Jewish communities report feeling under greater threat due to the recent banning of animal slaughter without prior stunning in both Flanders and Wallonia.<sup>24</sup> Even if kosher meat can be imported, the new laws limit access and create a sense of restriction with psychological consequences.

When it comes to state response to antisemitism, Belgium’s decentralised politics is often cited as an impediment to progress. With multiple ministers in each sector, many say it is difficult to conduct a unified national approach to anything, not only issues related to antisemitism. But for many of the experts interviewed for this research, antisemitism remains a particularly overlooked area in Belgian politics. Apart from programmes designated as “interfaith,” diversity and anti-discrimination do not generally make mention of Jewish people as a target group or antisemitism as a target issue. Jewish organisations active in this field benefit from government funding mechanisms and structures promoting social cohesion, yet the invisibility of their concerns in written programming hinders awareness of antisemitism. As an example, tensions arose in 2021 when the Brussels Parliament did not include the word “antisemitism” in the title or outline of the draft workplan of the region’s new Anti-Racism Commission.<sup>25</sup> Only after significant pushback pointing out the implications of this oversight was more effort made to ensure antisemitism received explicit attention.

<sup>16</sup> According to a December 2018 survey conducted by GESIS - Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences.

<sup>17</sup> There is a Sephardic synagogue and a Centre dedicated to Jewish-Moroccan culture located in the Jewish Museum of Belgium.

<sup>18</sup> See: Fundamental Rights Agency, Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism Second Survey, 2019, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/experiences-and-perceptions-antisemitism-second-survey-discrimination-and-hate>.

<sup>19</sup> See: Fundamental Rights Agency, Overview of Antisemitic Incidents in the European Union 2010 – 2020, 2021, pp. 26-29, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2021/antisemitism-overview-2010-2020>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Unia is an independent public institution that fights discrimination and promotes equal opportunities, recognised by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. In Belgium, it is active at the federal level as well as the level of the regions and communities. For more information, see: <https://www.unia.be/en>.

<sup>22</sup> See: Fundamental Rights Agency, Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism Second Survey, 2019, p 34.

<sup>23</sup> See: Proposition de résolution relative à la lutte contre l’antisémitisme, Sénat de Belgique, 6-437/5 (14/12/2018), <https://www.senate.be/www/?Mlval=/dossier&LEG=6&NR=437&LANG=fr>.

<sup>24</sup> See: <https://perma.cc/WU8K-QQGS>.

<sup>25</sup> Assises Contre le Racisme du Parlement Bruxellois, Inventaire Préparatoire, version draft du 17/02/2021, <http://www.parlement.brussels/assises-de-lutte-contre-racisme/>.

# BELGIAN SENATE RESOLUTION RELATIVE TO THE FIGHT AGAINST ANTISEMITISM 2018 – EXCERPT<sup>26</sup>

1. Guarantee the security of Jewish citizens, buildings, educational and cultural centres, and in cooperation with civil society organisations
2. Designate a “coordinator on fighting antisemitism” and provide the necessary instruments and support to do their job effectively
3. Systematically and publicly condemn antisemitic hate speech
4. Engage social and educational organisations in the prevention of hate
5. Train law enforcement on antisemitism
6. Install online reporting mechanisms of antisemitism directly to the police, permitting victims and witnesses to denounce incidents and get the protection and support needed
7. Establish an efficient and comprehensive system to collect data on antisemitic incidents and provide an annual report to parliamentary authorities
8. Promote intercultural and inter-religious dialogue at all social and political levels, in particular in schools
9. Ensure Shoah education in schools and training for teachers to do Shoah education and address diversity issues in classrooms
10. Develop partnerships with civil society partners and encourage exchanges and common activities between youth and children of different backgrounds
11. Cooperate closely in the fight against antisemitism with international organisations including UNESCO, OSCE, and Council of Europe
12. Proclaim officially the 27th of January as International Holocaust Memorial Day
13. Put in place the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism and use it as a practical instrument including in education and training, recognising that it is not legally binding and cannot be used against the legal limits of free speech as defined by the Constitution and the European Convention of Human Rights
14. Conduct multi-institutional studies on the rise of antisemitism, the motivations of its perpetrators, and the effectiveness of legislation and law enforcement measures to address it
15. Include an antisemitism module in policies addressing integration and citizenship as well as those addressing citizenship education, in cooperation with Jewish community representatives
16. Resuscitate the Security Cell (cellule de veille) with meetings twice/year with public reports
17. Facilitate the application of Circular COL13/2013 on discrimination and hate crime
18. Finalise a cooperation protocol amongst federal entities to fight against antisemitism and negationism in sport
19. Put systems in place to interrupt the diffusion of hate speech online
20. Map existing initiatives at all levels of power which aim to prevent racism, antisemitism discrimination and hate crimes and coordinate their efforts

<sup>26</sup> See: Proposition de résolution relative à la lutte contre l'antisémitisme, Sénat de Belgique, 6-437/5 (14/12/2018).

## BELGIUM – ALL POLICY AREAS



Culture and  
Heritage

47%



Intercultural  
Dialogue

48%



Education

31%



Media

49%



Hate Crimes

66%



Religious  
Freedom

71%



Hate Speech

54%



Security

81%



Holocaust  
Remembrance

55%



Sport

53%

## KEY GENERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Appoint a National Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life and provide the necessary support for policy implementation.
2. Set up a sustainable inter-ministerial working group to facilitate communication and cooperation within the government to implement a holistic approach to systemic and cultural change.
3. Set up a sustainable and participative national stakeholder roundtable to facilitate communication and cooperation with and amongst civil society organisations to implement national action plans combatting racism and antisemitism.
4. Establish an interdisciplinary research consortium that will generate knowledge to inform policy developments that contribute to preventing and addressing antisemitism and fostering Jewish life.
5. Provide funding and human resources to ensure the sustainable implementation of these general measures as well as specific measures mentioned within policy areas, and to support new initiatives which may emerge from these structures.

## BREAKDOWN OF POLICY AREAS



## CULTURE AND HERITAGE

47%

## KEY INDICATORS

[illegible]

## Culture and Heritage

## OVERVIEW

Overall, Jewish cultural organisations are treated on an equal basis to other Belgian cultural institutions. This includes providing funding to the Belgian Jewish Museum, monuments to Jewish martyrs and immigration, and some heritage sites. Yet most major museums contain little about Judaism or Belgian Jews. There is no reference to Jewish culture and heritage promoted by the Wallonia Tourism office<sup>27</sup>, for instance, and many heritage sites receive no funding and have fallen into disrepair. On the other hand, there are some recent examples of Jewish culture being digitised and local festivals garner support from government officials.

## ASSESSMENT OF KEY INDICATORS

- 1. Preservation of Jewish Heritage:** There is a willingness to preserve and protect Jewish monuments, archives, and other forms of heritage, but there does not seem to be a system-wide strategy in place.
- 2. Promotion of Jewish Culture:** The state supports various initiatives by local Jewish cultural organisations and museums, such as the “Let’s Meet a Jew” workshop<sup>28</sup>.

- 3. Promotion of Jewish Heritage:** Promotion is inconsistent across and within regions.
- 4. Recognition of Jewish Culture:** There is a general lack of visibility of contemporary Jewish culture in state-sponsored media, educational curricula, and Belgian cultural institutions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve coordination across Belgian culture ministries in cooperation with tourism, education, and youth authorities, with a clear view of the role this sector can play in overcoming antisemitism and fostering Jewish life.
2. Increase funding and support for endangered heritage sites and contemporary cultural events.
3. Encourage intercultural initiatives through funding and other incentives, such as awards, visibility, and opportunities to grow. Invest in employment in this sector, hard hit by the pandemic, by augmenting funds available through the public authority Maribel.
4. Mainstream Jewish topics and themes by highlighting cultural contributions in national art and history museums, festivals, and official heritage websites.

<sup>27</sup> See: <https://walloniabelgiumtourism.co.uk/>.

<sup>28</sup> See: <https://www.mjb-jmb.org/workshops-lets-meet-a-jew/>.





31%

Topic	Percentage
Civil Society Partnership	50%
Classroom Teaching and Assessment	17%
Curriculum	31%
Higher Education	8%
Holocaust Education	46%
Incident Response	17%
School Leadership/Governance	53%
Teacher Training (Pre-service and In-service)	53%
Textbooks	0%

## ASSESSMENT OF KEY INDICATORS

1. **Civil Society Partnerships:** Several CSOs collaborate with schools and teachers to provide education on antisemitism and/or the Holocaust.
2. **Classroom Teaching and Assessment:** Other than Holocaust education, there is no evidence of guidelines or assessment of teachers on the classroom instruction related to addressing antisemitism. Some general resources exist for addressing “difficult” topics.
3. **Curriculum:** No national curriculum is imposed. The country’s various Ministries of Education provide guidelines on general discrimination and diversity but without specific or explicit mention of Jews or antisemitism, except in Holocaust education or some religious education classes.
4. **Higher Education:** Institutes for Jewish Studies offer diploma programmes at some Belgian state-funded universities in Flanders and Brussels. Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino courses are also taught at the university level. Although universities prohibit discrimination, antisemitism is not mentioned or defined in codes of conduct, nor is there clarity about policies on religious accommodation or mechanisms for reporting antisemitism.
5. **Holocaust Education:** Though not mandatory, Holocaust education is supported by public authorities with points of contact, guidelines, pedagogical resources, and funding grants. High schools are encouraged to organise trips to Holocaust museums or memorials in conjunction with Holocaust Remembrance Day.<sup>35</sup> Despite these efforts, the extent of Holocaust education across the country is inconsistent.
6. **Incident Response:** No clear guidance, support, or incident reporting mechanisms seem to exist for schools besides national anti-discrimination legislation and Unia. School staff can access training on how to address discrimination, sometimes including antisemitism.
7. **School Leadership/Governance:** Policy guidance on diversity and anti-discrimination provides entry points for school leaders and governing councils to prevent and counter antisemitism, although it seems to be a rare occurrence.
8. **Teacher Training:** Teachers may receive training on intercultural classrooms, but there is no evidence of any pre-service training to confront antisemitism in their compulsory or voluntary coursework. In-service professional development offers more options through third parties on a voluntary basis. Public authorities provide guidance for Holocaust education, but that often is the extent of coverage of Jewish history and culture.
9. **Textbooks:** No compulsory textbooks exist, although a 2019 Circular from the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles expresses commitment to non-discrimination in schoolbooks.<sup>36</sup> Recommended resources on discrimination generally overlook Judaism and antisemitism. Books about the Holocaust are available, but it is difficult to ascertain their use in classrooms.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Specify the need to address antisemitism in existing curricula objectives that address citizenship and diversity. Provide guidance and resources to implement in practice.
2. Set up research, evaluation, and assessment mechanisms to better understand and improve the current educational practice towards existing policy objectives.
  - a. Concerning citizenship, diversity, and anti-discrimination approaches, ensure that Jews are represented as part of Belgian and European diversity in classroom content.
  - b. Recognise that contemporary forms of antisemitism exist and should be included in the treatment of human rights issues.
  - c. Concerning genocide education, ensure the consistency and quality of Holocaust content and provide more support in exploring contemporary forms of antisemitism, which often emerge when teaching about the Holocaust.

<sup>35</sup> See: <http://www.democratieoubarbarie.cfwb.be/index.php?id=8200>.

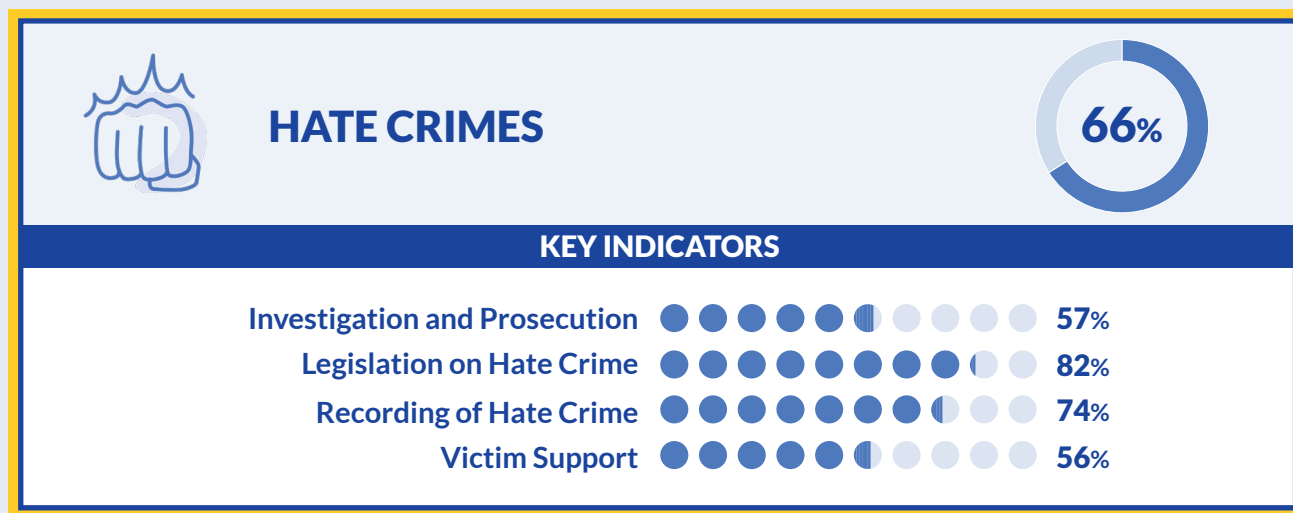
<sup>36</sup> See: [http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=26823&do\\_numero\\_id=7760](http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=26823&do_numero_id=7760).

Ensure no student graduates secondary school without basic knowledge of the Holocaust as a defining part of European history.

4. Set up a formal channel to review and influence the content of recommended textbooks and workbooks to better reflect Belgium's cultural diversity, including Jewish culture and contributions.
5. Discriminatory incidents can occur within schools and should be monitored, whether they are antisemitic, racist, homophobic, or other. A policy should be put in place to guide schools and teachers through effective responses that provide support to victims and prevent further escalation.

6. Increase training for teachers on how to prevent and address prejudice and discrimination in general and include antisemitism in its specificity. Translate and facilitate the integration of the new UNESCO and OSCE/ODIHR<sup>37</sup> teacher training curricula into pre-service training at higher education institutes and include the ODIHR Teaching Aids on the 10 Challenges of Antisemitism in Classrooms on the various Education Ministry websites. Expand and reinforce existing in-service training while providing incentives to schools for new initiatives.

<sup>37</sup> See: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/441146>.



## Hate Crimes

### OVERVIEW

A federal law concerning hate crimes was passed in 1981 recognising discrimination based on 19 criteria, including Jewish ancestry.<sup>38</sup> Despite this, data on antisemitic hate crimes in Belgium is difficult to ascertain.<sup>39</sup> Belgium does not distinguish between discrimination, hate speech, and hate crime in the data it provides.<sup>40</sup>

In Unia's 2020 Annual Report<sup>41</sup>, a section is dedicated to antisemitism, negationism, and Nazi symbolism, observing that Holocaust denial and distortion increased in the context of Covid-19.<sup>42</sup> Recent figures show that, according to L'Institut National de Criminalistique et de Criminologie (INCC), there has been a marked improvement since 2018 in the prosecution of

<sup>38</sup> See: <https://www.unia.be/en/grounds-of-discrimination/grounds-of-discrimination>.

<sup>39</sup> This is due to technical limitations in police recording systems.

<sup>40</sup> See: <https://www.osce.org/odihr>.

<sup>41</sup> See: <https://www.unia.be/en/publications-statistics/publications/annual-report-2020>.

<sup>42</sup> In 2022, Unia plans to release a report on antisemitic incidents over the last two years.

hate crimes<sup>43</sup>, which some stakeholders have credited to local awareness-raising initiatives by law enforcement. In 2020, a new federal-level working group was established to address difficulties in systematically registering cases.<sup>44</sup>

## ASSESSMENT OF KEY INDICATORS

- 1. Investigation and Prosecution:** Although the Antwerp Police are provided with a comprehensive list of indicators to identify hate crimes, antisemitic abuse is not specifically addressed. Prosecutorial and judicial recognition of antisemitic motives is viewed by many as weak.<sup>45</sup>
  - 2. Legislation on Hate Crimes:** National legislation prohibits hate crime and Holocaust denial and distortion. Unia defines discrimination according to 19 different criteria, including religious beliefs and Jewish ancestry.
  - 3. Recording of Hate Crimes:** Police training on hate crime is gradually increasing with an emerging network of reference officers and magistrates who are specialised in discriminatory incidents and assigned to corresponding cases. Yet many antisemitic hate crimes still go unreported or unrecorded as the way they are recorded by police does not allow for easy differentiation between types of bias motivations.
  - 4. Victim Support:** Police officers are supposed to inform victims about support groups (e.g., Unia, antisemitisme.be, LBCA), but that information is not always provided. Protection of victims and their families varies case by case.
- Identify the gaps and opportunities to strengthen cooperation, improve reporting, enforce the law and provide victims of antisemitic hate crime the justice and support they need, including specialised support.
  - Improve the technical capabilities of the police data collection system for hate crimes so that bias motivations and types of crimes are recorded with their specificities and ensure that multiple bias motivations can be recorded as intersectional hate crimes.
  - Make hate crimes and antisemitic bias indicators part of mandatory training for police, prosecutors, and the judiciary, with advanced training for the reference people for each precinct. The emerging network of reference officers and magistrates could potentially become a best practice example for Europe, with adequate investment and systemic reinforcement.
  - Take action to ensure that racist and xenophobic motivations are taken into account by national courts as aggravating factors, as required by the 2008 Framework Decision, including through legal and policy measures, and systematic training of the prosecution and judiciary.
  - Increase the capacity of Jewish organisations to provide support services to victims of antisemitic hate crime, through funding, training, and a cooperation framework that functions as a referral mechanism between police and service providers.

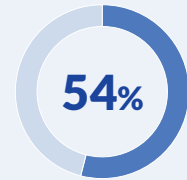
## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Gather the various stakeholders involved in hate crime recording and the resulting responses into a facilitated process to

<sup>43</sup> See : Mahieu, V. and Van Praet, S., Une analyse des dossiers judiciaires classés sans suite comprenant une prévention liée à la discrimination, KBF/Unia/INCC, 2020, [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglcle-findmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.unia.be%2F-files%2FDocumenten%2FPublicaties\\_docs%2Frapport\\_44\\_FR-nov2020.pdf&clen=2244093&chunk=true](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglcle-findmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.unia.be%2F-files%2FDocumenten%2FPublicaties_docs%2Frapport_44_FR-nov2020.pdf&clen=2244093&chunk=true).

<sup>44</sup> It is unknown to what extent antisemitism will be specifically addressed in recording and prosecuting crimes.

<sup>45</sup> See: <https://www.lesoir.be/413019/article/2021-12-17/lettre-ou-verte-dun-juif-la-justice-de-son-pays>.



Legislation on Hate Speech	62%
Partnerships with CSOs	38%
Reporting and Monitoring	85%
Role of the State in Challenging Antisemitic Attitudes in the Media	20%

## 17



3. In cooperation with Jewish CSOs, ensure appropriate training for frontline police officers, prosecutors, and judges involved in the hate speech reporting system so that antisemitic hate speech can be recognised,

4. Designate dedicated police officers to maintain relationships with the Jewish communities, in order to build trust and encourage reporting.



In 2004, Belgium designated January 27 Holocaust Remembrance Day, and in 2013, the Senate unanimously acknowledged the “responsibility of Belgian authorities” for the persecution of Jews in Belgium during the Second World War.<sup>48</sup> Holocaust denial laws are strict, and memorials exist across the country, although several have been vandalised, leading to the installation of better lighting and increased patrols. In 1995, the Flemish government established the Kazerne Dossin Memorial, Museum, and Documentation Centre on Holocaust and Human Rights.<sup>49</sup> As noted previously, the way the Holocaust is addressed in educational systems is inconsistent. Some students in the French-speaking community are

## ASSESSMENT OF KEY INDICATORS

- 1. Culture and Conscience:** Government-commissioned studies and restitution have helped to reckon with the state's role in the Holocaust. Organisations promoting remembrance, such as the Kazerne Dossin Memorial, Fondation Auschwitz, and

<sup>53</sup> See: <https://www.lalibre.be/belgique/2006/05/03/une-presence-plus-digne-a-auschwitz-BDW75NBR75DRNEIFETNE2UHZIY/>.

L'Enfant Caché receive government funding.

2. **Dialogue:** The Brussels-Wallonia government funded an interfaith trip to Auschwitz in 2018 with religious leaders and young people.<sup>54</sup> The state has facilitated or participated in occasional interfaith commemorations for Holocaust Remembrance Day.
  3. **Education:** Though not yet mandatory, Holocaust education is supported by public authorities with points of contact, guidelines, pedagogical resources, and funding grants. School trips to Holocaust museums are not uncommon. But the extent of Holocaust education is inconsistent across the country, and its effectiveness has not been assessed.<sup>55</sup>
  4. **Hate Crime:** Public authorities condemn the desecration of Holocaust memorials and fund their renovation.
  5. **Hate Speech:** Holocaust denial or justification has been illegal since 1995. Legislation against cyberhate, including trivialisation or denial of the Holocaust, was strengthened in 2013, and incidents of Holocaust denial online can lead to fines and prison sentences.
  6. **Media:** The law against Holocaust denial applies to media and social media content. Holocaust Remembrance Day receives media coverage.
3. Ensure all pre-service teachers receive some training on the Holocaust, including guidance on how to deal with contemporary expressions of antisemitism that might emerge during lessons. The OSCE-ODIHR Teaching Aids<sup>59</sup> can be translated and offered as a resource for teachers on Education Ministry websites.
  4. Encourage the observance of Holocaust Remembrance Day at the commune level with intercultural and interfaith engagement. This can be an opportunity to nurture relationships amongst community leaders and generate more cooperation to address contemporary issues linked to intolerance of any kind.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Clarify the position of Education ministries on including remembrance education in curricula and carve out a mandatory space for “trauma-sensitive” subjects including, but not exclusive to, the Holocaust so that all graduating students have similar exposure to these topics.<sup>56</sup>
2. Strengthen and expand nationally the work of the Flemish Special Committee on Remembrance Education (BCH), which provides policy guidance, curriculum development support, and pedagogical materials for schools.<sup>57</sup> A working group dedicated to advancing and improving

<sup>54</sup> See: [http://www.clav.be/prod\\_Auschwitz.html](http://www.clav.be/prod_Auschwitz.html).

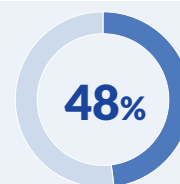
<sup>55</sup> See section on Education for further details.

<sup>56</sup> In the future, a mandatory course on the Nazi era, which will include information on the Holocaust, will be integrated into the curriculum.

<sup>57</sup> See: <https://herinneringseducatie.be/>.

<sup>58</sup> See: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/world-remembers-holocaust>.

<sup>59</sup> In particular, Addressing Antisemitism Through Holocaust Education and Holocaust Denial, Distortion and Trivialization. See: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/441146>.

[illegible]

## OVERVIEW

Out of 1.2 million residents of Brussels, more than half were born in a foreign country, and many people express appreciation of the city's multicultural richness. But even with this diversity, intercultural dialogue is not always self-evident. The natural tendency for many groups is to congregate in familiar subcultures, creating a mosaic of parallel communities that co-exist but do not necessarily interact. This dynamic is further enabled by Belgium's highly decentralised governmental system with no official state body empowered to lead initiatives. In 2017, the government worked with different faith groups on a protocol to stimulate dialogue between federal authorities and leaders of religious and secular groups.<sup>61</sup> The protocol created an interfaith council, which hosts meetings twice a year with representatives of religious groups, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice. Regional initiatives have had mixed results. In 2014, seven religious groups, including the Consistoire, signed a charter for inter-religious dialogue with the Flemish Parliament,<sup>62</sup> but similar initiatives in Wallonia and Brussels were short-lived. In the absence of

government-run programmes, private CSOs and community groups attempt to fill the void. The state does subsidise some diversity initiatives, especially ones aimed at youth.

## ASSESSMENT OF KEY INDICATORS

- 1. Financing:** Most initiatives are privately organised. The state vocally supports interfaith initiatives but often does not follow up with funds to sustain them.
- 2. Frameworks:** Although interfaith charters and councils exist, engagement in interfaith initiatives fluctuates according to the political party in power.
- 3. Religious and Cultural Literacy:** Civil servants receive little to no information about the country's religious diversity. However, some locally or regionally subsidised CSOs provide workshops or trainings on these topics in an ad-hoc fashion.
- 4. Representation:** Religious leaders receive no sustained interfaith training. Although Catholic schools and some universities promote dialogue and teach about other religions, joint projects between religious leaders are small scale, limited to high level official representatives or primarily symbolic in nature.

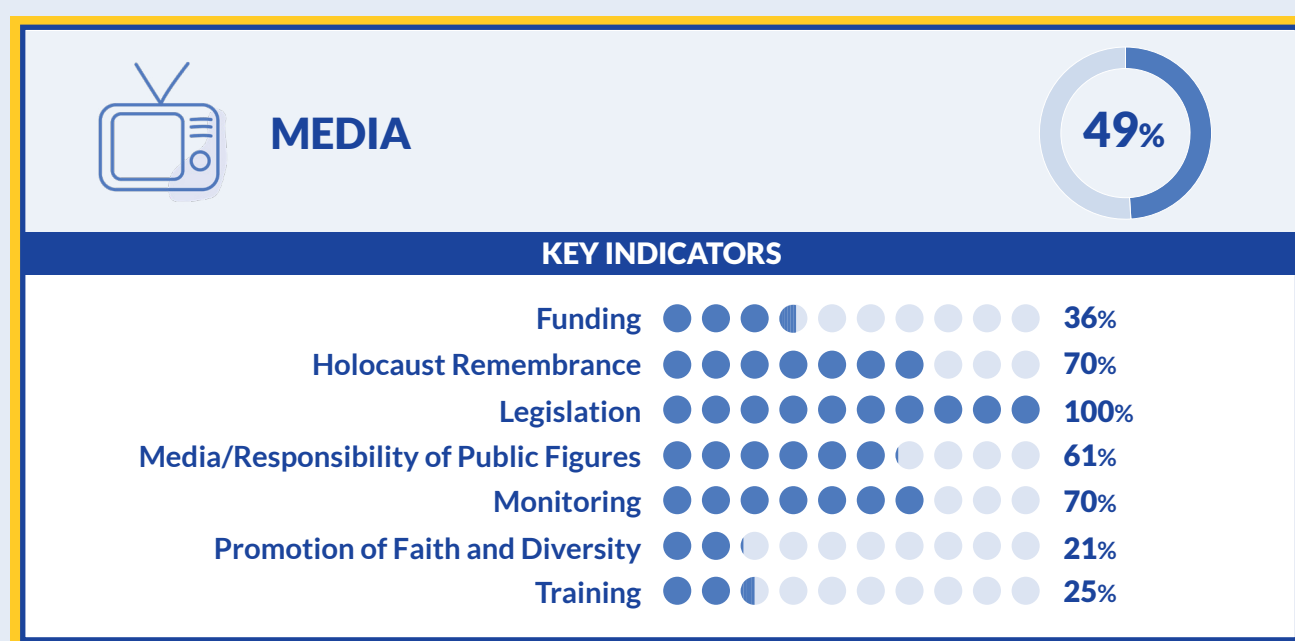
<sup>60</sup> For the purposes of this report, Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue are used interchangeably. The term Inter-convictual is used to include people who are not of "faith" but are part of the community.

<sup>61</sup>See: <https://www.laicite.be/magazine-article/etat-favorise-t-il-le-dialogue-interconvictionnel/>.

<sup>62</sup> See: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.orbitvzw.be%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2020%2F04%2FVILD-covid19-persmededeling-1.pdf&clen=117823&chunk=true>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Appoint government representatives who can generate and support more systemic intercultural and inter-convictional dialogue processes.
2. Create permanent inter- or multi-convictional structures for dialogue and consultation on policy developments across a range of issues.
3. Fund impact assessment research which can inform more efficient strategies to facilitate mutual understanding and social cohesion.
4. Ensure that inter-religious literacy and dialogue skills are incorporated into the training of religious leaders and educators; public school leaders and teachers; and health and social workers.
5. Establish religious and cultural literacy as a knowledge competence within school curricula and provide educational resources to support teachers.
6. Provide more sustainable funding, as part of regional and local policies, for intercultural and interfaith dialogue and cooperation projects, in cooperation with CSOs.



## Media

### OVERVIEW

Belgium's media landscape reflects the country's complicated political structure. There is no single national media market, but several, each with their own brands and characteristics. Both public and private operators receive government subsidies, including Jewish outlets. There do not appear to be any government incentives to develop diversity or inclusion policies in the media corps, with the exception of general non-discrimination and anti-hate speech frameworks. Little is done to enhance public awareness of contemporary Jewish

issues as coverage of Jewish life is limited and often emphasises negative events, stereotypes, and over-simplifications.

### ASSESSMENT OF KEY INDICATORS

1. **Funding:** The government provides financial support to the Centre Communautaire Laïc Juif David Susskind (CCLJ) and to the Institut de la Memoire Audiovisuelle Juive (IMAJ) to produce magazines and podcasts, yet Radio Judaica does not receive public funds.
2. **Holocaust Remembrance:** International Holocaust Remembrance Day is covered

by Belgian media with special reports and retransmissions of international memorial events attended by the royal family and/or members of the government.

3. **Legislation:** Freedom of the press is guaranteed by the Belgian constitution. Belgium has one of the world's most robust freedom of press laws.
4. **Media/Responsibility of Public Figures:** Unia reports that there were 12 incidents of antisemitism in the press and audiovisual media in 2020.
5. **Monitoring:** The Francophone CSA<sup>63</sup> and Flemish VRM<sup>64</sup> monitor audio-visual media services. They enforce decrees prohibiting content on television and radio that discriminates against people based on their ethnicity or religion.
6. **Promotion of Faith and Diversity:** Representation of Belgian Jews in mainstream media is limited. Independent Jewish media outlets fill the gap but do not reach the general public. Public media channels consult with community representatives and broadcast religious services.
7. **Training:** History courses on Israel, Palestine and the Middle East conflict are not unusual for journalism students in universities. Topics related to Judaism or antisemitism may be included in journalism curricula, but it depends on efforts of the professor and/or students.

<sup>63</sup> See: <https://www.csa.be/>.

<sup>64</sup> See: <https://www.vlaamseregulatormedia.be/en>.

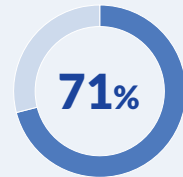
## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Journalism and media studies programmes and media outlets should be encouraged to increase their own diversity and include diversity issues and cultural awareness in their programming, expanding beyond limited and stereotyped images, and including Jews in their conception of Belgian diversity.
2. Existing incentives and support mechanisms, such as the Diversity Label, and grant and award programmes from the regions could include targeted funding opportunities for new initiatives in the media. Such incentives should also explicitly mention Jewish inclusion and/or countering antisemitism as part of their aims.
3. Fund more research into the role of the media in perpetuating and challenging antisemitic prejudice.
4. Engage media outlets in developing media and information literacy in the education system to generate more enthusiasm by younger generations as audiences and as future professionals. Intergenerational exchange could multiply efforts with a new transversal approach that involves schools, journalism training institutes, and media outlets.





## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



### KEY INDICATORS



## Religious Freedom

### OVERVIEW

The EU cannot take a position on this topic because it is a national competence. The “freedom of religion or belief” policy area was added by the research team since some partners felt it has a direct bearing on Jewish communities’ ability to thrive. The Belgian constitution provides for freedom of religion or belief, and national law prohibits discrimination based on religious belonging. Yet issues that concern Jewish communities have come under debate in recent years, including ritual slaughter, circumcision, religious dress, and religious observance.<sup>65</sup>

### ASSESSMENT KEY INDICATORS

- 1. Equal Treatment:** Rabbis receive state salaries and receive the same benefits as clergy of other religions. Teachers in Jewish schools are also subsidised by the state.<sup>66</sup> Public schools do not provide kosher food, and French-speaking schools do not recognise Jewish holidays as an official justification for absences.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Other communities are also impacted, in particular the Muslim community. For more information, see: <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2020-12/cp200163fr.pdf>; [https://www.health.belgium.be/sites/default/files/uploads/fields/fpshealth\\_theme\\_file/avis\\_70\\_circoncision.pdf](https://www.health.belgium.be/sites/default/files/uploads/fields/fpshealth_theme_file/avis_70_circoncision.pdf); and <https://www.unia.be/fr/criteres-de-discrimination/convictions-religieuses-ou-philosophiques/signes/enseignement/eleves-et-etudiants>.

<sup>66</sup> See: Lecture et analyse des listings de paiement mensuel du ministère de l'éducation Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles, 2021, [https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/49556\\_000.pdf](https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/49556_000.pdf).

<sup>67</sup> “Family reasons” can be used to justify an absence, depending on the school. For more information, see: [https://www.unia.be/fr/criteres-de-discrimination/convictions-religieuses-ou-philosophiques/pratiques-religieuses/jours-de-conge#:~:text=Dans%20l'enseignement%20fondamental%20et%20l'enseignement%20secondaire%20\(sp%C3%A9cialis%C3%A9, reconnue%20par%20la%20C](https://www.unia.be/fr/criteres-de-discrimination/convictions-religieuses-ou-philosophiques/pratiques-religieuses/jours-de-conge#:~:text=Dans%20l'enseignement%20fondamental%20et%20l'enseignement%20secondaire%20(sp%C3%A9cialis%C3%A9, reconnue%20par%20la%20C)

### 2. Freedom of Thought or Conscience:

Belgium recognises six religions, including Judaism. According to the Consistoire’s website<sup>68</sup> (updated in 2009), there are 10 Jewish Communities in Belgium.

- 3. Freedom to Manifest<sup>69</sup>:** Although the Belgian constitution guarantees freedom of religion, key Jewish practices such as ritual slaughter are facing restrictions.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

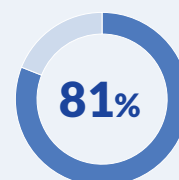
1. Facilitate inter-convictional cooperation through a regular consultative mechanism that can address common concerns on religious freedom.
2. Establish an inter-governmental committee dedicated to finding a more uniform approach to convictional diversity and ensure close collaboration with the consultative mechanism named above.
3. Protect Jewish religious practises such as ritual slaughter. Create guidelines on religious accommodation to facilitate flexibility for Belgian Jews to be able to practise their religion freely in schools, prisons, hospitals, and the public sphere (e.g., workplace and public areas).

<sup>68</sup> See: <http://www.jewishcom.be/wordpress/en/category/communities/>

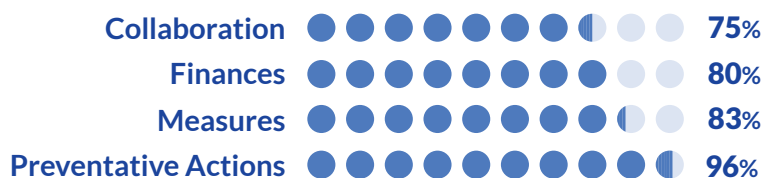
<sup>69</sup> “Freedom to manifest” is a common concept in the human rights framework on freedom of religion or belief. It includes the right to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.



## SECURITY



### KEY INDICATORS



## Security

### OVERVIEW

The last two decades saw a sharp rise in antisemitic attitudes and incidents in many countries in Europe. Belgium was not immune to this trend and did not respond quickly or firmly to the threats posed. The 2014 terrorist attack at the Jewish Museum, followed by other antisemitic and terrorist attacks in Belgium and other European countries, drove national authorities to step up their recognition of antisemitism as a problem of societal concern, intricately linked to processes of extremist radicalisation. Security was the first key policy area addressed in the face of such violence. The field of security overlaps not only with counter-terrorism policy but also with hate crime and hate speech, which makes cooperation essential between military, police, and community volunteers. In focus groups undertaken for this report, participants expressed concern about a reduction in political commitment to counter-terrorism programmes in the recent absence of completed attacks and stressed that two years of Covid-19 measures may have created a false sense of security.

### ASSESSMENT OF KEY INDICATORS

- 1. Collaboration:** The government partners with the Le Comité de Coordination des Organisations Juives de Belgique (CCOJB) and BESC on Jewish security issues. Antwerp Police collaborate well with the local Jewish community. Throughout

Belgium, police pay close attention to security risks at Jewish venues when needed.

- 2. Finances:** The state provided extra funding for the security of the Jewish community following the 2014 attack. Funds went to security hardware and infrastructure; salaries for private on-site security staff were not covered. As part of anti-terrorism strategies, the state provided military protection for civic spaces, including Jewish venues, until September 2021. Since then, the government has replaced military protection with police protection, though not to the same extent.<sup>70</sup>
- 3. Measures:** Belgium stepped up security measures after suffering an antisemitic terrorist attack in 2014. A Senate resolution to fight antisemitism in 2018 was followed in 2019 by the reactivation of the Cellule de veille contre l'antisémitisme, originally created in 2004. The unit has had a slow start in the context of the current pandemic.
- 4. Preventive Actions:** Security around Jewish buildings is increased during specific Jewish holidays or in periods of political tension in the Middle East. The main Jewish security organisation, Bureau Exécutif de Surveillance Communautaire (BESC), has a good working relationship with the police.

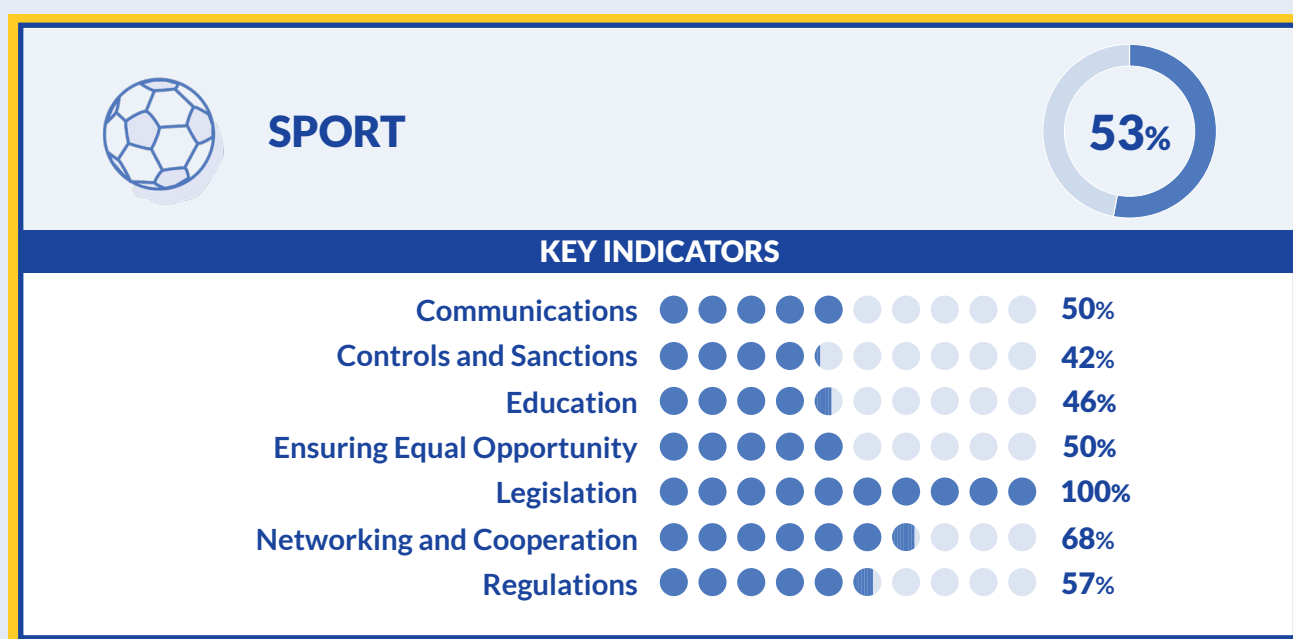
<sup>70</sup> The situation is currently being monitored by the Jewish community in cooperation with the government to determine if police protection is sufficient given the country is at threat level 3 at the time of the writing of this report.

approach to preventing security threats and ensuring the continuity and added value of the Cellule de veille contre l'antisémitisme.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase inter- and intra-government cooperation on overlapping policy areas (i.e., anti-terrorism, radicalisation prevention, hate crime, hate speech, antisemitism, integration, education, etc.). Foster more regular exchanges with Jewish communities, taking a more holistic

2. Increase funds allocated to Jewish security staff in order to relieve financial pressure on Jewish cultural institutions so they can invest more in proactive approaches that build individual, community, and societal resilience resulting in better social cohesion.



## Sport

## OVERVIEW

In 1978, the area of sport policy was changed from a federal to a regional competence. This highly decentralised approach led to a split in the majority of sports federations if they wished to continue receiving public subsidies. In 2018, more than one in five people were members of a sports club, representing a total of 2,137,521 Belgians.<sup>71</sup> Research for this report centres on football (US soccer), the country's most popular sport. Testimonial evidence suggests antisemitic incidents continue to occur when amateur clubs compete. For instance, the Maccabi

Brussels club, founded by Holocaust survivors, has long been the target of anti-Jewish hate from opposing players and spectators. Many antisemitic incidents go unreported, possibly due to ignorance about reporting mechanisms and fears of repercussions or dismissal from the club.<sup>72</sup> In professional football, the Royal Football Federation has launched several initiatives which support social development and inclusion. However, weak enforcement remains an obstacle to progress.

<sup>71</sup> See: <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/fr/2019/10/04/plus-de-20-des-belges-etaient-affilies-a-un-club-de-sport-lan-d/>.

<sup>72</sup> Scheerder, Huyge and Corthouts, Recherche a méthodes mixtes sur la discrimination dans le football des jeunes en Belgique, Groupe de recherche politique du Sport & Mouvement KU Leuven, 2021, <https://lirias.kuleuven.be/3422838?limo=0>.

## ASSESSMENT OF KEY INDICATORS

1. **Communications:** The Football Federation has organised several anti-discrimination media campaigns, although these have not included Jews or antisemitism.
2. **Controls and Sanctions:** Reporting mechanisms in football have recently been simplified, but sanctions for teams remain weak. The Federation's new enforcement body is designed to give disciplinary action, independent from any criminal or civil action that might be taken.
3. **Education:** The Football Federation has increased efforts to educate against discrimination, and cooperation exists through associations such as Play4Peace.
4. **Ensuring Equal Opportunity:** The Football Federation has appointed a new Inclusion Manager and Diversity Board to inform decisions about inclusion and discrimination.
5. **Legislation:** Discriminatory behaviour, including antisemitism, is illegal in football.
6. **Networking and Cooperation:** The Football Federation engages in discussions with European partners and local and international Jewish organisations.
7. **Regulation:** The Belgian Football Federation follows FIFA's zero-tolerance policy<sup>73</sup> regarding discrimination, but responsibility for tackling offensive behaviour is mainly left to individual clubs. Complaints are also dealt with by Unia.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase government investment in sport with a coordinated long-term action plan against racism, antisemitism, homophobia, ableism, and all forms of intolerance.
2. Include antisemitism and Jewish CSOs in broader anti-discrimination and diversity campaigns as well as in internal training and recruitment strategies.
3. Increase cooperation on anti-discrimination and diversity campaigns between national federations and grassroots clubs, stadiums, and associations providing extracurricular sports in schools.
4. Encourage all sports federations to show leadership with a reporting mechanism in place for victims of discrimination or harassment in parallel to the development of inclusive diversity practices.
5. Tighten enforcement of hate speech by increasing fines imposed on clubs and strengthen penalties on offending fans.
6. Fund research and evaluations to support the desired impact and continued improvement of the role of sports in strengthening social cohesion and countering discrimination of all kinds.

<sup>73</sup> See: <https://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/organisation/news/infantino-fifa-embraces-its-responsibility-to-lead-the-fight-against-discriminat>.

# IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Jewish communities have a long history in Belgium, although many may not know the extent to which they helped shape the country and continue to do so. Recognising the past and remembering those lost in the Holocaust is important, but so is facing up to the current challenges Jews face in Belgium today. According to a 2018 survey, the majority of Jewish people in Belgium report feeling concerned about their safety and the safety of their loved ones.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, the stakeholders interviewed for this report gave a score of 84 out of 100 in the field of security. This means that despite confidence in the government to protect them, many individuals nevertheless do not feel secure.

Some of those interviewed for this research asked the question if Jewish communities even want more visibility. There is a tension between wishing to share one's culture with joy, and also wanting to be safe from potential harm. Remaining invisible, however, does not help to create the positive and contemporary narratives needed to overcome anti-Jewish bias, prejudice, and hatred.

As this NOA National Report Card has elucidated, there is still much the Belgian government can and should do to combat the antisemitism that is experienced by Belgian Jews. According to experts and government representatives interviewed for this research, there is often resistance amongst policymakers to pass specific measures on antisemitism or to honour commitments made at the national or EU level. Most significantly, despite the fact that the Belgium Senate essentially laid out a first National Action Plan against antisemitism in its 2018 Resolution and called for a national coordinator on the matter, there is as of yet no specific plan to create this position.

As Belgium develops its national action plan against racism (NAPAR), it is imperative that combating antisemitism is not merely one implicit aspect of these anti-discrimination

efforts. Rather, fighting against antisemitism and fostering Jewish life must be specifically addressed and coordinated at the federal level, in concert with its parallel and integrated efforts to address all forms of racism and discrimination. Indeed, given the multilateral and decentralised structure of the Belgium government, progress forward will be more efficient, systemic, and sustainable if lessons and insights can be shared across policy areas and governing bodies. A national coordinator can work with other specialist coordinators and facilitate community engagement as well as support policy developments in a transversal capacity, effectively putting into place a holistic national action plan against antisemitism, which may exist in parallel to or within a wider-reaching NAPAR.

As shown in this report, many opportunities exist for Belgian authorities to improve their implementation of basic measures to prevent and counter antisemitism. Over the last decade, there has been notable progress in the fields of security, hate crime, and hate speech. This is partially due to the undeniable escalation of antisemitism and other forms of hatred and partially because of the existing competences of the European Union, which has required and supported Belgium and other Member States to develop monitoring and response systems.

Unfortunately, the policy areas which have the most potential to prevent the escalation of hate are those areas in which the EU has the least authority to demand change: education, culture, dialogue, media, sport, and religious freedom. This makes it all the more important that Member States engage at the national level and honour their commitments.

In addition to the targeted recommendations for each of the ten policy areas examined in this report, some proposed courses of action apply transversally across all of them. This is notably the case for youth and anti-discrimination policy, both of which are inextricably linked to

<sup>74</sup> Fundamental Rights Agency, Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism Second Survey, 2019, p. 34.



education. These areas merit further research and possible inclusion in updates of this report. Indeed, ensuring that Jewish traditions, history, and the problem of antisemitism are addressed in schools in an age-appropriate manner consistently across regions is a key element of fostering Jewish life in a safe and inclusive Belgium.

It is also necessary to acknowledge the paucity of current research on antisemitism and strategies to address it. The Belgian government(s) should fund and cooperate with universities and CSOs to gather evidence which can better inform policy and practice that support equality, inclusion, human rights, democracy, and social cohesion.

Antisemitism is a structural pillar of racism, and racism will not be eradicated without overcoming antisemitism in the process.<sup>75</sup> This can only be done by recognising and understanding the nature and manifestations of antisemitism in all their specificity. By acknowledging existing gaps and opportunities in current national policy and making a concerted, coordinated effort to prevent, address and eradicate antisemitism, a clearer path can be opened towards a more inclusive and democratic Europe.

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<sup>75</sup> Other intersectional issues must also be dealt with in the process of dismantling racism; gender, sexual orientation, age and disability are all dimensions of identity which exacerbate peoples' cumulative experiences of discrimination and hostility.

# ANNEX – STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED FOR THIS REPORT

With gratitude to the many people and institutions who contributed to this research<sup>1</sup>

NAME	POSITION
Hassan Ahmaidouch	Ministry of Education Wallonia-Brussels
Samia Ahrouch	Mouvement Réformateur
Daniel Banet	Maccabi Football Club
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Armand Benizri	Inspector of Jewish Religious Education
Yohan Benizri*	Le Comité de Coordination des Organisations Juives de Belgique (CCOJB)
Lieven Boeve	Flemish Catholic Schools Network
Steven Brummel**	International Jewish Community Center
Camille Chiavetta**	Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities (UNIA)
Tine Claus	SPF Justice
Frédéric Crahay	Foundation Auschwitz
Barbara Cuglietta*	The Jewish Museum
Paul Dahan	Musée d'art juif marocain de Bruxelles
Robert Davits **	Antwerp Police
Bianca Debaets	Former Brussels State Secretary, current member of Brussels Parliament
Jan Deboutte **	Former IHRA Delegate for Belgium, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sabri Debrinöz	M&DIA
Serge Delander	Maccabi Football Club
Jean Jacques Deleu*	BX1
Dorian De Meeus	La Libre Belgique
Etienne Denoel	Agir Pour l'Enseignement
David Dessin**	Flemish Ministry of Education
Isaac De Vos	Federal Police
Alain De Vos**	Federal Police
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Pascale Falek**	European Commission, formerly of the Jewish Museum
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Sabina Gonzalez	Chapel of Europe
Sacha Guttmann**	Union des Etudiants Juifs de Belgique
Lahcen Hammouch	Almouwatin
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<sup>1</sup> In addition to those listed, one Belgian Politician and two Jewish Community Representative were consulted who prefer to remain anonymous.

Mihal Horemans**	Antwerp Police
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Sarah Jonet	Office of the Secretary of State for Equal Opportunities
Hoji Khosrovi	Maccabi Football Club
Julien Klener	Former head of the Consistoire
Hans Knoop	Forum der Joodse Organisaties
Joël Kotek	Université Libre de Bruxelles
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Yael Landman* **	Bureau Exécutif de Surveillance Communautaire (BESC)
Stéphanie Laurent	History teacher
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Odile Margaux**	Ligue Belge contre l'Antisemitisme
Etienne Michel	SEGECE - Francophone Catholic Schools Network
Yves Monin**	Democratie ou Barbarie
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Victor Sorensson	European Association for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage
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NOA – Networks Overcoming Antisemitism  
[www.noa-project.eu](http://www.noa-project.eu)



CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe  
[www.ceji.org](http://www.ceji.org)

