CCOA | Coalition to Counter Online Antisemitism

ISD | Institute for Strategic Dialogue

The CCOA Toolkit: Mainstreaming digital human rights in education and civic action to combat online antisemitism

About this toolkit

About the Coalition to Counter Online Antisemitism (CCOA)

The Coalition to Counter Online Antisemitism (CCOA) is a pan-European network established in 2023 and coordinated by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). It brings together experts in research, policy, and education to address the intersection of antisemitism and digital harm. Through the collection and exchange of knowledge and best practices, the CCOA seeks to tackle antisemitism on social media platforms. For enquiries, support with capacity building or multiplier training related to the toolkit, or if you are interested in joining the coalition, please contact the CCOA team at: ccoa@isdglobal.org.

About this toolkit

The toolkit was developed through a three-step process by consultants in collaboration with the CCOA team and ISD. The foundation was laid through focus group discussions with teachers in Poland, which informed the initial structure and key themes. Building on this, the consultants developed the final outline and content. The third step involved an evaluation phase, which included feedback from CCOA members.

Authors and contributing editors

This resource was developed through a two-step process by consultants in collaboration with the CCOA team and ISD. The foundation was laid through focus group discussions with teachers in Poland. The content of this toolkit was developed by Sophie Schmalenberger, Monika Hübscher, Karolina Płaczynta, Anna Zielińska, and Nathalie Rücker with input from Sina Laubenstein, Hannah Rose, Solveig Barth, and Jacob Davey (ISD/CCOA). We would like to express our sincere thanks to Larysa Michalska and Monika Mazur-Rafał from Humanity in Action, Poland, who facilitated the focus group discussions and shared their expertise and insights from working with practitioners.

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Outline

Brief Overview

This CCOA Toolkit is designed to support the capacity building of civil society organisations (CSOs), practitioners and educators. It equips them with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively address online antisemitism in their work.

What is the purpose of this toolkit?
The purpose of this toolkit is to provide resources and strategies to confront and combat antisemitism online, particularly through critical digital citizenship.

Who is the target audience?
The target audience includes civil society organisations (CSOs), educators and practitioners, aiming to equip them with the tools to challenge antisemitism and promote a safer, more inclusive digital environment.

What was the development process?
The development process involved focus group discussions with practitioners to identify needs, gathering relevant research and practical examples from fieldwork, and content creation by experts in the field (see acknowledgment), with additional input from specialists within the CCOA network.

What makes it unique?
What makes it unique is its focus on deconstruction as a method to recognise, identify and criticize antisemitic stereotypes and narratives and empower individuals to take action against them.

How and when should it be used?
It should be used in non-formal educational settings and workshops, particularly to raise awareness and build critical digital literacy skills.

What are its limitations?
The toolkit is not a quick fix to counter online antisemitism. It offers guidance and practical support, but it's not a comprehensive solution on its own. Additionally, it's not intended for formal education settings without further adjustments to align with national and local curricula and policy frameworks.

How can readers navigate the content of the toolkit?
Here is an overview of the symbols and their use in the CCOA toolkit on combating online antisemitism, designed to enhance the accessibility of the content:

Pushpin (Guidance): Used to highlight important guidance or information related to exercises and similar content for the reader.

Notepad (Learning Activity): Represents learning activities or exercises.

Lightbulb (Key Insights and infobox): Symbolizes insights. It's used to highlight essential takeaways or concepts that are key to understanding online antisemitism.

Key (Recommendations): Used to highlight recommendations, strategies or essential actions that should be taken to combat online antisemitism effectively.

Dartboard (Aims): Represents the goals or objectives of each secction.

Red Crossed Circle (Flagging Antisemitic Content): This symbol is used to mark antisemitic content, particularly in visual formats such as images, graphics, and memes. It aims to raise awareness and flag harmful material in educational settings, with the goal of breaking the cycle of reproducing antisemitic visual content. However, it is important to note that the use of the symbol should be accompanied by proper contextualization and explanation. Simply marking the content with this symbol will not prevent its reproduction; practitioners must frame it within discussions that explain why the symbol is being used and actively reframe antisemitic narratives to address the underlying issues.

(Link for Caption - Used to indicate the source or reference of a graphic)

Books (Additional Resources): This symbol is used to highlight supplementary materials, references, or resources that can deepen understanding and provide more context.

Puzzle Piece (Deconstruction): This symbol is used for deconstructing antisemitic examples. It helps to break down harmful stereotypes and generalisations about Jewish individuals, exposing the unrealistic or damaging elements within these views.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The digital sphere is a cornerstone of modern society, transforming how we communicate, access information, and connect with others. In 2023, 86% of the EU population and 97% of people aged 16-29 were online every day.[1] As a result, young Europeans—though not exclusively—are increasingly socialized through digital platforms and social media. The content they consume, from entertainment, subculture to news (and disinformation), along with their interactions in these spaces, significantly shapes their worldviews, identities, and values.[2] What happens online often doesn't stay online; the digital and offline realms are deeply interconnected and constantly influencing and shaping one another. This becomes particularly relevant when addressing online antisemitism.

The increasing spread of antisemitic rhetoric, conspiracy theories, and hate online has amplified the visibility and influence of such hate, continuing to pose significant risks to Jewish communities across Europe and globally. As highlighted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) over 80% of Jewish respondents in Europe report encountering antisemitic content online, with social media identified as one primary channel for such hate. Antisemitism online – on social media, websites, in online forums, personal blogs, online encyclopedias, on e-commerce platforms or spread via messaging services – is embedded in a long history of violence, persecution, stigmatisation and discrimination that has led to genocide and continues to have harmful, violent and even deadly consequences for Jews and non-Jewish individuals. Among others, the shooter who tried to enter a synagogue in Halle, Germany and murdered two passers-by on Yom Kippur in 2019, or the gunman who killed eleven people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, USA in 2018 had been radicalized and active in antisemitic online communities and networks, and even attempted to livestream their acts of antisemitic terrorism on social media and other online platforms. Social media in particular plays a central role in an unprecedented dissemination of antisemitic prejudice, hate and violence.[3] This has been especially true since October 7, 2023, and its aftermath, when antisemitic content online skyrocketed, driven by social media campaigns that spread footage of the extreme violence committed against (Jewish) civilians, thus re-victimising and dehumanizing[4] them.[5]

This direct relationship between online hate speech and real-world violence underscores the urgent need for preventative and proactive measures to address the mainstreaming of extremist ideologies, especially in the context of the growing digital reach of antisemitism. It highlights the urgent need for comprehensive responses to antisemitism. Supporting individuals on how to engage critically with online content and equipping them with the skills to combat hate is essential to creating a safer and more inclusive online environment.

This toolkit aims to strengthen and empower individuals and civil society organisations to confront antisemitism online and offline. ISD plans to monitor and evaluate its use over the coming years, making adjustments and improvements as needed, while continuously incorporating diverse perspectives and focusing on what works best. This toolkit is intended as a starting point, not a complete solution. It offers strategies and resources to help individuals and communities confront antisemitism online and offline, empowering them to challenge harmful ideologies.

1.1 Mainstreaming of Extremism: Antisemitism from the Fringe to the Mainstream

A consequence of the rise in antisemitism online is the mainstreaming of extremism[6]. Antisemitism and other forms of hate are increasingly gaining visibility and acceptance, spreading from niche online forums to mainstream platforms.[7] Research on antisemitism in the digital space shows that these harmful ideologies are not only spreading but also intensifying.[8] This growing visibility of online hate is causing antisemitic rhetoric to move from the fringes to the mainstream, posing a serious threat to democracy and human rights. Extremist voices that once operated on the periphery can now influence larger audiences and rapidly gain followers facilitated by the amplification mechanisms inherent in social media algorithms, has enabled fringe ideologies to transition into the mainstream. This shift poses a significant challenge to social cohesion and democratic principles, as the polarization and division exacerbated by online hate discourse permeate offline political and social arenas, thereby undermining the stability of democratic societies. As extremist ideologies gain traction, it is crucial to acknowledge the influence of online platforms in facilitating this shift and to proactively address the vulnerabilities of users by preventing the spread of hate through education, regulation, and community involvement.[9]

1.2 Why do we need this toolkit?

The Potential of youth and civil society to contribute to combating antisemitism through critical digital citizenship

A key focus of intervention in combating online antisemitism is harnessing the potential of youth and other societal groups, particularly mainstream society to contribute to solutions, including countering online antisemitism. A significant portion of young Europeans engage with online platforms and social media, where they are exposed to harmful content. This digital socialisation shapes their worldviews, identities, and values, and socio-political discourses and realities. Lamentably, education systems across Europe have been slow to adapt to the digital age, leaving young people unprepared to recognise online harms or build resilience against them. Although citizenship education is included in the national curricula of all EU countries, its implementation is uneven and often overlooks critical media literacy. Instead, it tends to prioritize communication and technical skills for navigating the online space, rather than focusing on violence prevention and building resilience. It is vital for young people to learn how to contribute positively online and, crucially, how to identify, unpack and counter antisemitism and other forms of hate online and offline.

Effective digital citizenship education (DCE) is essential to countering these harms.[10] It equips young people with the knowledge and skills to leverage the internet's positive potential while building resilience against harmful online interactions. DCE teaches critical digital literacy, encouraging individuals to recognise offensive content, respond to hate speech, and challenge antisemitism in their personal and professional lives. In the context of this CCOA toolkit, these essential skills involve understanding how to deconstruct antisemitism—exploring what this entails and how it can be effectively learned, which will be addressed throughout the toolkit (cp. Chapter 2.4).

Digital Citizenship[11]

See best practice examples from CCOA countries in the annex for further details, page 68

Various organisations worldwide have attempted to define digital citizenship, but there is no universally agreed-upon definition. Frameworks developed by bodies like the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Digital Intelligence (DQ) Institute offer detailed breakdowns of the necessary skills, behaviours, and attitudes. In 2017, the CoE released a comprehensive literature review of academic research and policy proposals on digital citizenship education (DCE), alongside findings from a multi-stakeholder consultation involving all Integrating digital human rights in education and civic action to comat online antisemitism member states. These resources provide a strong basis for developing DCE programs.

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) has adopted the CoE's definition for its regional programs, valuing its focus on democratic principles and online user safety.

> Digital Citizenship refers to the ability to engage positively, critically, and competently in the digital environment, drawing on the skills of effective communication and creation, to practice forms of social participation that are respectful of human rights and dignity through the responsible use of technology.

As such, there are various possible definitions of digital citizenship to guide DCE programs, with common outcomes and values. CSOs, practitioners and educators should select the definition that best fits their context and target audience. For those in European organisations, using either a national definition or the CoE's is recommended.

Digital citizenship intersects with UNESCOs Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in several meaningful ways. Digital citizenship is the digital expression of global citizenship. It's how GCED values play out in the online world.

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) is a strategic component of UNESCO's work in education that builds upon the groundwork laid by peace and human rights education, with the aim of nurturing in learners the skills, competencies, values, mindsets and attitudes necessary for responsible global citizenship, including the fostering of criticality, creativity, innovation, common humanity and an unwavering dedication to peace, human rights and sustainable development. Digital citizenship education, a central element of GCED, emphasizes the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to responsibly navigate the digital sphere.

1.3 Who is it for?

This toolkit is designed for civil society organisations (CSOs), practitioners, and educators who play a crucial role in shaping the educational and digital landscapes. It also provides valuable insights for policymakers and those creating educational resources and training programs aimed at combating antisemitism. By addressing the challenges posed by online antisemitism, it empowers different target groups to lead initiatives that promote inclusive, respectful, and accurate portrayals of Jewish communities and history.

1.4 What is its educational approach?

This toolkit adopts deconstruction as an educational approach, enabling participants to critically examine ideas, narratives, and systems that perpetuate harmful ideologies, including antisemitism. Deconstruction encourages the questioning of language, stories, and structures that underpin prejudice. Rather than accepting ideas at face value, this method unpacks them, revealing their socio-cultural origins and the power dynamics sustaining them. It fosters critical thinking and equips learners to identify and challenge antisemitism's mechanisms of exclusion and dehumanisation, promoting a deeper understanding of its operation in various contexts.

Participants

Deconstructing antisemitism empowers participants by shifting the focus from passively absorbing facts and counterarguments to actively engaging in critical inquiry and self-reflection. Instead of being presented with just information, participants are encouraged to question the underlying assumptions, power structures, and historical narratives that sustain antisemitic ideologies. This process enables them to recognise the mechanisms of exclusion, prejudice and dehumanisation. In the toolkit's activities, participants actively analyse texts, discourses, and representations to develop the ability to identify and challenge antisemitic tropes in their own contexts. This participatory approach cultivates a sense of agency, as individuals are equipped not only with knowledge but also with the skills and language practice to critically evaluate and dismantle prejudices in their environments. It fosters ownership of the learning process, enabling participants to become active agents in combating antisemitism through reflexivity, dialogue, and informed action.

CSOs, practitioners and Educators as facilitators

By employing deconstruction, CSOs, practitioners and educators focus on destabilizing the binaries which oversimplify complex realities, and which reinforce stereotypes. The process of deconstruction involves critically examining how antisemitism intersects with other forms of discrimination, such as racism, anti-Muslim hatred, misogyny and LGBTQ+ hatred, and uncovering the implicit hierarchies embedded.

Learning environment

In the toolkit activities, this means fostering an environment where students critically engage with historical texts, media, and public narratives to identify the often-subtle mechanisms of exclusion and vilification from their point of view and experiences. This approach values participants' unique perspectives, encouraging them to draw connections between personal encounters with discrimination and broader societal patterns. By grounding the learning process in their lived realities, students develop a more nuanced understanding of how antisemitism manifests in diverse contexts and how it intersects with other forms of oppression. The activities in the toolkit empower students to become active contributors to the discourse, transforming from passive recipients of information into critical thinkers and changemakers in the fight against antisemitism. Additionally, deconstructing antisemitism emphasises the ethical dimension of education, compelling both educators and participants to confront their own perspectives, viewpoints and biases. By doing so, it seeks not only to critique antisemitism as a historical and ongoing issue but also to develop the strategies for disrupting its perpetuation in contemporary contexts, ultimately fostering a pedagogy rooted in justice, equity, and the recognition of shared humanity.

1.5 What is covered?

The toolkit begins with a brief theoretical and practical introduction (chapter 2), classifying antisemitism as beliefs in inequality and pointing out the various contexts in which antisemitism can be addressed. In Chapter 3, the toolkit explains how antisemitism is constructed and communicated, providing a deconstruction of concrete examples of (online) antisemitism. Chapter 4 delves into antisemitism on social media, examining how platforms work, specifically how they facilitate the algorithmic spread of antisemitic content. To apply this knowledge and build competences in recognising, classifying, deconstructing, and responding to online antisemitism, the toolkit offers practical exercises. These tasks, which focus on reflection, deconstruction, and the discussion of antisemitic biases, stereotypes, and narratives, are well-suited

for workshops aimed at training educators and other multipliers. Simultaneously, these exercises are meant to inspire antisemitism-critical educational activities in classrooms and other settings. Chapter 6 concludes with a discussion of the policy and regulatory frameworks concerning online antisemitism at the EU and national levels within the CCOA member states, providing guidance for civic action aimed at combating online antisemitism.

1.6 What are the Objectives?

The main objectives of this toolkit are as follows:

- To increase awareness of how antisemitism manifests in online spaces.
- To provide practical tools for identifying, challenging, and combating antisemitic narratives and content in educational settings.
- To promote critical digital literacy, helping people recognise and challenge harmful content and ideas, thereby fostering a more inclusive online environment.
- To encourage self-reflection and action, equipping users with the language and skills necessary to challenge prejudice and discrimination in their personal and professional lives.
- To create a broad, united European coalition against antisemitism, strengthening solidarity and promoting respect, equality, and justice in online spaces and educational settings.

Equipping individuals to identify and reject harmful content that fosters antisemitism, as well as other forms of discrimination, is a key component of a broader public health strategy aimed at combating antisemitism. This involves promoting critical thinking, media literacy, and encouraging individuals to engage with diverse perspectives while resisting the spread of prejudiced ideologies. This approach helps build a more resilient society. This toolkit aims to contribute to that goal, serving as a small but essential piece of the larger puzzle of strategies necessary to combat antisemitism effectively.

The importance of a public health approach to countering antisemitism

Approaching antisemitism from a public health perspective is important because it expands the focus beyond security threats and violence, offering a comprehensive, proactive, and long-term strategy for reducing antisemitism in society. It focuses on prevention, early intervention, community support, and social change—all essential for creating a healthier, more inclusive society. This approach also recognizes the interconnectedness of social issues and offers a sustainable way to address antisemitism alongside other forms of hate and discrimination.

Addressing the root causes of antisemitism

- A public health approach emphasizes prevention, aiming to reduce the incidence of antisemitic beliefs before they manifest as violence or discrimination. This approach focuses on understanding the underlying psychological, social, and cultural factors that contribute to the spread of harmful stereotypes and prejudice. It includes promoting education, critical thinking skills and empathy from an early age.

- Just as public health looks at the wider determinants of health (e.g., poverty, education, and social cohesion), a public health approach to antisemitism would look at how inequality, social exclusion, and lack of exposure to diverse communities can contribute to the perpetuation of prejudiced views.

Reducing the spread of extremism

- Antisemitism is often part of a broader spectrum of extremist ideologies. A public health approach can help identify early signs of radicalization, intervene with supportive programs, and address the factors that contribute to people adopting extremist views. This could involve mental health interventions, community programs, and promoting positive alternatives to extremist ideologies.

- Public health strategies also aim to influence attitudes and behaviors by offering support for individuals who may be susceptible to extremist views. This could involve therapies, discussions, and community engagement to challenge antisemitic ideologies and reduce the likelihood of violent outcomes.

Promoting long-term social change

- A public health perspective prioritizes social cohesion. By fostering inclusive communities, it addresses antisemitism not just as a security issue but as a social health issue. Building trust and understanding between communities can reduce prejudice and foster stronger, more resilient societies.

- Public health approaches focus on breaking the intergenerational transmission of prejudice and hate. When individuals or communities have been exposed to antisemitic narratives over time, a public health approach can interrupt this cycle through education, dialogue, and promoting positive intergroup relations.

Addressing mental health and trauma

- Victims of antisemitism often experience trauma, stress, and mental health issues. A public health approach recognizes the importance of providing mental health services to those affected by hate speech and discrimination, addressing the psychological impacts on both individuals and communities. This includes trauma-informed care and providing support for those experiencing harassment, violence, or discrimination.

- In addition to addressing the mental health needs of individuals, public health strategies promote community resilience. Helping communities to recover from hate incidents and providing spaces for healing can have long-term benefits in reducing the impacts of antisemitism on social health. However, this support should not shift the responsibility to communities to protect themselves—this remains a responsibility of governments and wider society.

Improving public health messaging and media literacy

- Public health campaigns are well-equipped to challenge harmful stereotypes and misinformation. Through media campaigns, education programs, and public service announcements, public health approaches can work to dispel false beliefs about Jewish communities and promote factual, unbiased

information.

- A public health approach that focuses on Media Literacy involves teaching individuals how to critically assess media messages, identify biased or misleading information, and understand the impact of stereotypes and hate speech. Media literacy initiatives can also focus on equipping people with the skills to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources, recognize online propaganda, and promote positive, fact-based narratives that counter harmful ideologies. Additionally, prebunking—the practice of exposing individuals to potential misinformation in a learning environment before they encounter it offline and online—can be a key component.

Intersectional approaches to tackle multiple forms of hate

- By emphasizing understanding, dialogue, and empathy, public health approaches can help reduce the stigma surrounding Jewish communities. Creating spaces for intergroup communication and cooperation helps challenge negative stereotypes and foster mutual respect.

- Public health approaches often consider how different forms of discrimination intersect. Antisemitism is frequently linked to other forms of group-based enmity, such as racism, anti-Muslim racism, sexism, misogyny, and anti-LGBTQ hate. A public health approach recognizes the need to address these intersections to build broader societal harmony and reduce hate in all its forms.

Long-term, sustainable solutions

- While law enforcement and security measures are vital for addressing the immediate threats posed by antisemitic violence, public health interventions aim to create long-term solutions by addressing the root causes and changing societal attitudes over time. This is especially important in reducing the recurrence of antisemitism and extremism in the future.

Building stronger partnerships across sectors

- Public health approaches are rooted in the idea of collaboration across multiple sectors, including education, health, law enforcement, community organizations, and the media. This multi-faceted collaboration is essential for tackling group-focused enmity like antisemitism. For instance, schools, community leaders, healthcare professionals, civil society organisations, educators and social workers can all play roles in countering antisemitism and promoting inclusive, supportive environments.

Chapter 2: Unmasking Online Antisemitism – Theories and Approaches to Combat It

Develop an understanding of online antisemitism as a form of group-based hostility with a long-standing history.

Provide inspiration for different educational contexts and approaches to addressing antisemitism.

2.1 Antisemitism as an Ideology of Inequality

Ideologies of inequality[12] – the conviction that some individuals or groups are not equal to "us" – have a social and political function. The term refers to a belief system that aims to justify and promote unfair treatment of social groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, class, or ethnicity. These ideologies often frame inequality as natural, inevitable, or deserved, seemingly legitimising discrimination and exclusion.

Specifically referring to antisemitism as such an ideology, Hannah Arendt[13] argues in her book The Origins of Totalitarianism that antisemitism should not be understood as a form of meaningless or irrational hatred, but as a powerful and strategic political tool that fulfilled different socio-political functions throughout the centuries. Modern antisemitism, which emerged in the 19th century, was interwoven with nationalist ideologies and functioned as a tool for externalising the blame for social or economic crises to Jews as an essentialised group. According to Arendt, this culminated in antisemitism being weaponised by the National Socialists to mobilise and unify large fractions of German society in the supposed fight against Jews as an alleged "common enemy" and justify the discrimination, violence, and ultimately genocide committed against them.

Arendt's analysis of totalitarian regimes, particularly in her work The Origins of Totalitarianism, highlights how ideologies—such as those rooted in racism, nationalism, and imperialism—serve to justify and perpetuate social hierarchies and exclusion. She argued that ideologies could distort reality by promoting false narratives that legitimise oppression and division, creating "enemies" who are portrayed as inherently inferior or dangerous. These ideologies help to "rationalise" inequality by presenting it as a natural or inevitable order of things, rather than as a constructed social and political phenomenon. In her later work, Arendt also explored the importance of resisting these ideologies. Her idea

Hannah Arendt at the 1st Congress of Cultural Critics in 1958, photograph by Barbara Niggl Radloff.[14]

of the "banality of evil" in The Origins of Totalitarianism and Eichmann in Jerusalem suggests that when individuals are complicit in systems of inequality, they often do so by accepting ideologies without critically questioning their validity. In her later work, Arendt also explored the importance of resisting these ideologies. Her idea of the "banality of evil" in The Origins of Totalitarianism and Eichmann in Jerusalem suggests that when individuals are complicit in systems of inequality, they often do so by accepting ideologies without critically questioning their validity. This mindset can facilitate the continuation of oppression and inequality by framing unjust actions as part of a larger ideological framework.[15]

Historical Contingencies of Antisemitism

- Jews have been constructed as "the other" and scapegoated for various social, political, economic, and other crises in European societies for centuries. As such, contemporary antisemitism – including online antisemitism – must be understood as a continuation of this long history of exclusion, discrimination, and violence. Furthermore, antisemitic narratives, stereotypes, and the knowledge and imaginaries informed by antisemitism are deeply embedded in European societies, continuously reproduced through socio-political discourses and practices, as well as in educational settings that seek to teach about antisemitism and/or the Holocaust.[16]

- Educational initiatives and civic action could explore the challenge of online antisemitism by considering the historical patterns and continuities of antisemitic discrimination and violence (cp. chapter 2), while examining the mechanisms through which such prejudice and hatred are perpetuated (cp. chapter 3). They might also reflect on the role of technological platforms in facilitating the rapid, global spread and normalisation of antisemitism (cp. chapter 4), as well as its impact on Jewish communities, institutions, and democratic societies and advocate for policy change (cp. chapter 6.)

2.2 Antisemitism as a form of group-focused enmity

Group-focused enmity generally refers to hostile attitudes, prejudices, or discriminatory behaviours directed towards a particular group. At its core, group-focused enmity arises from the belief that certain groups are inferior, threatening, or deserving of less moral consideration or fewer rights than others. It often manifests through stereotypes, discriminatory practices, violence, and exclusion. This type of enmity can be both overt, such as hate crimes or discriminatory laws, and more subtle, such as microaggressions or systemic inequalities embedded within social, political, and economic structures.[17]

Group-focused enmity can take many forms, each targeting specific social groups with hostility and prejudice. The most common forms include racism, which involves hostility toward individuals based on their racial or ethnic background; sexism, misogyny, and anti-LGBTQ+ hate, which stigmatises women and LGBTQ+ individuals; religious intolerance, which involves hostility towards people based on their faith; antisemitism, a form of hatred specifically directed at Jewish people; and classism, which discriminates against individuals based on their socio-economic status, often leading to the marginalisation of lower-income or working-class groups. There are other forms of group-based hostility as well. These types of enmity are frequently rooted in stereotypes, dehumanisation, and ideologies of inequality, reinforcing social divisions and contributing to the marginalisation and discrimination of affected groups.

2.3 The process of "Othering"

Like other forms of group-focused enmity (e.g. racism, anti-Muslim hatred, sexism, misogyny, anti-LGBTQ+ hate, classism, or ableism), antisemitism operates through the practice of othering. Othering is the process of excluding and marginalising individuals or groups ("them") by portraying them as fundamentally different and incompatible with "our" group or society. The distinction between 'them' and 'us' is always context-dependent, varying according to the specific circumstances in which othering occurs. This perceived otherness is typically imbued with negative connotations and is often used to justify the exclusion, discrimination, and— in extreme cases— the persecution and denial of basic rights of these individuals or groups. Religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, or physical characteristics are frequently weaponised as reasons for and indicators of this alleged "otherness."[18]

This concept is central to many discussions on power and identity, illustrating how certain groups are constructed as the «Other» in contrast to a perceived societal norm. Scholars such as Gayatri Spivak[19] and Edward Said[20] have made significant contributions to understanding othering. In her seminal essay Can the Subaltern Speak? Spivak critiques how the voices of colonised peoples have been silenced and marginalised by Western narratives, thereby othering them. Said's concept of Orientalism similarly explores how Western literature and thought historically depicted the Middle East as exotic, backward, and inferior, thereby justifying colonial domination. Both scholars show how othering is used to reinforce power structures and perpetuate stereotypes that limit the agency of marginalised groups.[21]

The motivation behind othering often stems from a desire for self-enhancement, as it allows individuals or groups to elevate themselves by marginalising others. Practices of

othering are highly selective, typically focusing on very specific attributes of individuals or groups (e.g. religion, gender, cultural background, sexual orientation, or social status) to construct an unbridgeable divide between "us" and "them." Identifying these characteristics is an expression of power, particularly when "the other" is portrayed as less worthy, less deserving, or as having a negative influence on "our" society. Antisemitism, as an ideology, does not arise from an objective understanding or critique of Judaism or Jewish people. Rather, it is a distorted construction in which "the Jew(s)" are depicted as a singular, monolithic group—often ignoring their diversity or individual identities.[22] This group is then scapegoated to project negative attributes, such as greed, conspiratorial control, or untrustworthiness, that are not inherent to Jewish people but are fabricated by those promoting the ideology. For example, during the Holocaust, Nazi propaganda falsely portrayed Jews as a collective threat to the "purity" and survival of the Aryan race, attributing to them harmful and unfounded negative stereotypes, such as being manipulative or responsible for societal and economic ills.[23] Jewish people, like any other group, are diverse individuals, a fact that antisemitic ideologies intentionally ignore. Instead, Jews are portrayed as a homogeneous "other," which facilitates their targeting and dehumanisation. In this way, antisemitism is not about an accurate understanding of Judaism or Jewish culture; it is a deeply harmful, imaginary construction that allows hateful ideas to be projected onto a group of people.

Unlike other forms of group-focused enmity that construct "the other" as deficient and less worthy, antisemitic narratives simultaneously depict Jews as both deficient and subversive, while also portraying them as all-powerful and secretly controlling or influencing key processes, events, or institutions within "our" society.[24] During National Socialism, the othering of Jewish people was a significant step towards their persecution and the mass murder of their community.[25]

2.4 Deconstruction: A method for unpacking Antisemitism

Deconstruction, developed by philosophers like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, offers a method for critically analysing the socio-historical and cultural forces behind antisemitism. This approach goes beyond surface-level interpretations by exploring how antisemitism is communicated, represented, and reproduced through language, images, and systems. It helps participants understand how persistent antisemitic tropes continue to shape society and equips them to engage with these issues in a reflective, systematic manner.[26] At its core, deconstruction challenges the traditional ways of interpreting texts and ideas by examining their assumptions and structures. It exposes the hidden power dynamics that sustain discriminatory ideologies, such as antisemitism. By «unpacking» these concepts, deconstruction reveals the contradictions within dominant narratives and helps individuals recognise that meaning is shaped by historical, cultural, and societal contexts.[27]

Deconstruction can be used to critically examine how the figure of "the Jew" has been framed in Western discourse, identifying recurring antisemitic tropes such as economic exploitation or conspiracy theories. By deconstructing these representations, individuals can uncover the subtle layers of antisemitism that persist, particularly in modern media and political discourse. In the context of combating antisemitism, deconstruction serves as a tool for dismantling harmful stereotypes and ideologies embedded in cultural, political, and religious history. It encourages analysing how antisemitic ideas spread and challenges individuals to engage with these ideologies, whether in the classroom, online spaces, or their communities.[28]

For instance, deconstruction can guide students through a critical analysis of antisemitic portrayals in media and history. By unpacking the language used in these representations, students can learn to identify and question harmful stereotypes, fostering critical thinking and promoting alternative, more inclusive perspectives. Additionally, this method helps explore the intersections of antisemitism with other forms of prejudice, such as racism and xenophobia, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how prejudice operates across societal contexts and how to resist it.[29]

The link between group-focused enmity and ideologies of inequality

Ideologies of inequality often form the core belief system that drives group-focused enmity.

- Antisemitic ideologies frequently portray Jewish people as an inferior or dangerous group. These beliefs are grounded in longstanding stereotypes and conspiracy narratives, such as the antisemitic notion that Jews "control the world's finances".

- Such ideologies have been used to justify discrimination against Jews throughout history, from the expulsion of Jewish communities in medieval Europe to the perpetuation of these stereotypes today.

Once ideologies of inequality take hold, they often lead to group-focused enmity.

- This enmity manifests in attitudes, behaviours, and actions that target specific groups, justifying their marginalisation or mistreatment. Antisemitism manifests in various forms of group-focused enmity, including exclusionary practices, violence, and hate speech.

- For example, during Nazi Germany, Jewish people were systematically marginalised and excluded from essential aspects of public life, such as employment, education, and social institutions.

- This exclusion was underpinned by deeply entrenched beliefs in their inferiority, leading to violent actions and ultimately contributing to the atrocities of the Holocaust, resulting in the murder of six million Jews.

Ideologies of inequality feed into group-focused enmity by offering a perceived "justification" for treating certain groups as "other" or inferior. They reinforce societal divisions by providing a veneer of legitimacy for discriminatory practices and attitudes.

- This transforms prejudice into a socially accepted rationale for exclusion, violence, and discrimination, perpetuating social hierarchies and violent attitudes towards marginalised groups.

- The ideology of antisemitism often provides a justification for the mistreatment and scapegoating of Jewish people.

- For instance, during the 14th-century Black Death, Jews were wrongly blamed for causing the plague, leading to widespread violence and massacres of Jewish communities in Europe. This scapegoating was rooted in the belief that Jews were "other" and undeserving of protection, further legitimising the violence they endured.

The concept of "othering" plays a vital role in this dynamic. It labels these groups as different or undeserving, constructing a conceptual boundary that facilitates and sustains their ongoing marginalisation and harm.

- Antisemitism constructs Jewish people as "the other" by portraying them as outsiders who do not belong to the broader societal or national community.

- For example, during the rise of nationalism in 19th-century Europe, Jews were often depicted as "foreign" or "alien."

- This rhetoric continued into the 20th century, where Jews were portrayed as unassimilable and a threat to national identity, further entrenching their marginalisation and justifying exclusionary policies and practices.

Deconstruction

- Deconstruction offers a method for uncovering the socio-historical and cultural forces behind antisemitism.
- It goes beyond surface interpretations, examining how antisemitism is communicated and reproduced through language, images, and social structures.
- This approach helps individuals understand how harmful stereotypes persist and equips them to engage with these issues thoughtfully.
- At its core, deconstruction challenges texts. It uncovers contradictions in dominant narratives, showing that meaning is shaped by historical and cultural contexts.
- Deconstruction can be used to examine how "the Jew" is framed in Western discourse, revealing antisemitic tropes like economic exploitation or conspiracy narratives.
- By unpacking these representations, it helps identify the subtle, persistent layers of antisemitism, especially in media and politics.

How to Deconstruct Antisemitism?

To effectively deconstruct antisemitism, it is crucial to critically analyse the language and symbols used in public discourse. This means questioning deeply ingrained narratives, identifying subtle biases in mainstream portrayals, and examining the socio-political factors that have shaped and perpetuated these harmful stereotypes. By consistently applying this analytical framework, individuals can tackle antisemitism at its roots, promoting a more informed and inclusive understanding of Jewish identity and history.

Key Steps:

- **Analyse the language and imagery**
  Examine how Jews are represented in both language and visuals, identifying any stereotypical or biased portrayals.
- **Contextualise the historical and socio-political background**
  Understand the historical context that gave rise to these harmful stereotypes and the socio-political forces that have sustained them.
- **Uncover contradictions in the narrative**
  Challenge the assumptions behind antisemitic depictions. By investigating how these narratives are constructed, we can reveal inconsistencies and flawed reasoning in their underlying premises.
- **Challenge the stereotype**
  Once we recognise how these harmful representations persist, we can actively confront them. This includes calling out biased language, amplifying diverse voices that break free from these stereotypes, and supporting educational initiatives that offer a more accurate portrayal of Jewish history and contributions to society.
- **Engage in conversations to shift public perception**
  Deconstruction goes beyond analysis—it's about creating real-world change. By engaging in discussions on the harmful effects of antisemitic tropes, whether in private or public settings, we can work to shift societal attitudes and challenge the normalisation of antisemitism.

2.5 Intersections of antisemitism with other forms of hate

Antisemitism in the digital sphere intersects with other forms of hate, particularly anti-Muslim racism, misogyny, and anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment, creating a toxic web of discrimination and violence. Online platforms often serve as amplifiers for these intersecting forms of hate, where individuals and groups targeting one marginalised community also direct hostility toward others. For instance, antisemitic and anti-Muslim content is frequently shared together, with both groups being blamed for societal ills through similar conspiracy theories or extremist narratives. Furthermore, misogyny compounds this hate, particularly for women who belong to these communities, with Jewish and Muslim women, for example, targeted both for their gender and religious or ethnic backgrounds. LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly those from Jewish, Muslim, and other marginalised communities, also face a compounded form of discrimination, where hate against them is often fuelled by harmful stereotypes and prejudice. The intersectionality of these multiple forms of hatred requires a nuanced approach that addresses how these biases reinforce one another. A rise in antisemitic rhetoric often signals a broader surge in other forms of hate—whether it's Islamophobia, racism, homophobia, xenophobia, or misogyny. While each of these forms of hate has distinct characteristics, they share common tactics: scapegoating, dehumanisation, conspiracy theories, and the vilification of marginalised groups. These harmful narratives create division and isolation, making it easier for hate to thrive.[30]

Thus, intersectionality is a key concept in understanding how multiple forms of oppression overlap and amplify each other. It goes beyond the individual to examine how societal systems of power shape different experiences of discrimination. For example, a Jewish woman might face both sexism and antisemitism, creating a unique experience that is different from both a Jewish man's and a non-Jewish woman's experience. Similarly, many Jews of Colour[31] may endure the dual burden of racism and antisemitism, where one form of discrimination exacerbates the other. But intersectionality also speaks to broader social patterns. Malicious actors online don't typically limit themselves to targeting just one group; they often hold a multitude of prejudiced views. White supremacist organisations, for instance, not only espouse antisemitism but also promote anti-Black racism, anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments, and xenophobia. These interconnected ideologies of inequality are designed to protect and maintain power structures, reinforcing the need to address all forms of hate as a collective force.[32]

Understanding the intersection of different forms of hate is relevant as well within the context of how hate groups rely on tactics that create division—both within communities and between them. Antisemitic conspiracy narratives often present Jewish people as puppeteers controlling global events.[33] Similarly, anti-immigrant extremists spread the myth that immigrants are a threat to the fabric of society. These harmful and erroneous narratives generate fear and mistrust, fostering an environment where communities see each other as adversaries rather than allies. When we recognise these commonalities, we can better understand how hate is perpetuated.[34]

Activity 1.
Antisemitism as a threat to democracy

This exercise serves as an introduction to identifying and reflecting on the harmful impact of antisemitism on Jewish individuals and society as a whole. It can be incorporated into programmes focusing on (digital) citizenship education, general anti-discrimination training, or specifically on antisemitism. Depending on the participants, this exercise can also encourage reflection on how other forms of hate, such as anti-Muslim racism, anti-LGBTQIA+ hatred, misogyny, or ableism, threaten democracy, thereby highlighting the intersections and parallels between different kinds of discrimination.

- Discuss in small groups for 10-15 minutes and collect answers in a whole-group discussion afterwards.
- In what ways does antisemitism pose a threat to a democratic society?

Ensure that the whole-group concluding discussion includes the following points:

- Antisemitism endangers the safety and well-being of Jewish people, thereby undermining their fundamental (human) right to live in safety, free from persecution.
- Jews are an integral part of our democratic society/societies. Their exclusion and discrimination systematically hinder their free participation in democratic processes, such as forming opinions and expressing their religion and culture.
- The normalisation of antisemitism can contribute to a broader culture of intolerance, where other marginalised groups are also targeted by hate, discriminated against, and denied the freedom and dignity to fully participate in democratic processes.

2.6 Educational contexts for addressing Antisemitism

The topic of antisemitism is commonly addressed in the context of Holocaust education or commemoration, for example, in history lessons at school or on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27th January. While knowledge about the genocide against Jews and the commemoration of its victims is important, confining the issue of antisemitism to National Socialist Germany and the Holocaust is problematic[35]: It historicises antisemitism, evoking the impression that antisemitism is an issue of the past, rather than addressing the pressing problem of contemporary (online) antisemitism and highlighting the connections between the two. Additionally, it limits the opportunity for learners from diverse backgrounds, with varying historical, cultural, and geographical connections to the topic, to engage with it on a personal level, beyond the context of German Nazi history.

Moreover, educational materials often tend to reproduce Nazi vocabulary and language, thus presenting history from a perpetrator's perspective.[36] Meanwhile, Jews emerge primarily as relatively passive victims of persecution and genocide, while instances of active Jewish resistance and the diversity of contemporary Jewish communities and cultures are rarely addressed. To do justice to (online) antisemitism as a widespread and urgent threat in the present, the topic should also be addressed in other contexts. Rather than just imparting factual knowledge – which individuals may interpret differently based on their socialisation – the goal is to empower participants to develop a responsible language practice for discussing antisemitism, while also creating a safer space to make mistakes, reflect on them, and unlearn internalised antisemitic stereotypes and ideologies (see also following chapters).

Digital Citizenship Education

As antisemitism infringes upon the fundamental rights of Jews and threatens their democratic right to freely participate in all aspects of society, contemporary antisemitism can be addressed in the course of digital citizenship education – ideally along with other forms of group-focused enmity and discrimination (e.g. anti-Muslim racism, misogyny, ableism, and anti-LGBTQI+ ideologies), as they usually coexist within the same online spaces, overlapping and compounding each other (see section 2.5). This should address the history, continuity, and ongoing evolution of antisemitism today, enabling learners to understand how the mechanism of constructing Jews as "the other" functions and to recognise and deconstruct antisemitic messages (see following chapters).

(Social) Media Literacy

As the spread of antisemitism has always relied on communication, media, and technology, the increasing prevalence of antisemitism on social media in particular should be addressed in educational programmes concerning social media and digital literacy. Here, students should be trained to critically evaluate news and other information sources, as well as to deconstruct antisemitic narratives and myths inherent in various conspiracy theories and disinformation.

Cyberbullying, Hate Speech, and Mental Health

As antisemitic hate is increasingly present on social media and other online platforms, young people in particular might have encountered explicit or even graphic content perpetuating antisemitic hate, been the target of antisemitic attacks, or witnessed antisemitic hate speech and harassment against other users. Accordingly, online antisemitism can be addressed in programmes that deal with hate speech and other forms of violence. This can include reflections on the impact that confronting (antisemitic) violence and hate has on students' mental well-being and suggesting strategies for improving one's own safety while expressing solidarity with those targeted and affected by (antisemitic) hate online.

Civic Action and Policy Work (see also Chapter 6)

Particularly for civil society actors, online antisemitism can be addressed through advocacy and policy work relating to human and civil rights, democracy promotion, and rules and regulations concerning digital services and platforms at national, European, and international levels. Given that antisemitism flourishes on social media, this may involve advocating for legislation that holds social media companies accountable for the hateful, violent, and derogatory content shared on their platforms. More importantly, it is crucial to push for transparency regarding systemic risks within these platforms, including the role of algorithms in amplifying hate, which represents one of the fundamental systemic changes required. It could also involve organising educational or civic initiatives that raise awareness and encourage reflection among citizens of all ages about the dangers, mechanisms, and impacts of contemporary (online) antisemitism.

While this list is not exhaustive, it provides inspiration for addressing these examples and for approaches that centre not only on the normative rejection of antisemitism but also the development of antisemitism-critical competencies, reflection, and action.[37]

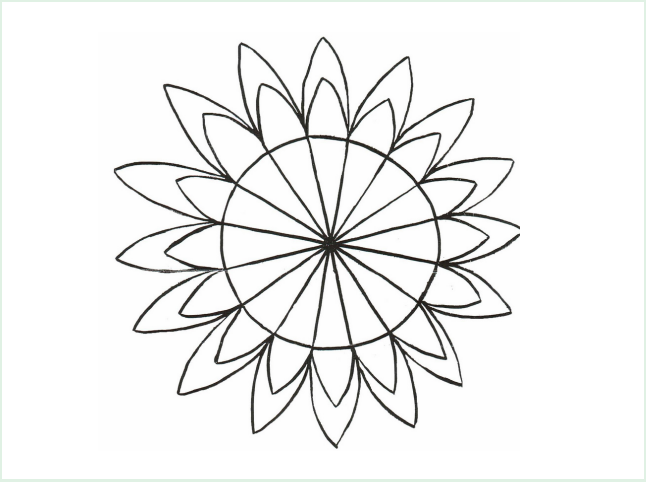
Activity 2.
Flower to Reflect on Intersections of Identities and Power Structures

Type
A combination of individual reflection and community-building.

Group size
Suitable for any group size, adaptable to both small and large groups.

Time to complete
Approximately 1 hour (less time if participants have pre-filled their flowers).

The Power Flower activity offers a powerful way for individuals to reflect on how their identities intersect with societal structures of power. It helps foster empathy, introspection, and a deeper understanding of how multiple forms of discrimination interact. By facilitating this activity thoughtfully, educators and trainers can create a safe and constructive space for participants to reflect and grow.



The Power Flower exercise is an insightful tool for exploring the intersections of identities and societal power structures.

- Using a flower diagram, participants are prompted to reflect on various aspects of their identity—such as ethnic background, gender, religion, social class, sexual orientation, and disability—and how these aspects interact with broader systems of power.
- The diagram features a central "stem" representing one's core identity, with petals radiating outward to symbolise different identity facets.
- Participants are invited to fill in these petals to reflect how their identities relate to power structures, which helps them understand how privilege and oppression manifest.
- This visual exercise promotes empathy and encourages participants to consider how different forms of discrimination—such as antisemitism, racism, misogyny, and homophobia—intersect and compound.

How to fill out the power flower diagram

Print or draw the Power Flower template. The diagram typically has a center (the "core identity") with multiple petals radiating outward, each labeled with a category like gender, race, language, citizenship, ability, religion, etc.

Fill in your own identity

In one layer of petals (usually the inner ring), write your own identity for each category. For example:

- Gender: woman
- Religion: atheist
- Sexual orientation: queer
- Ability: non-disabled

Fill in the dominant group

In the outer petals, write down the socially dominant or most privileged identity in your society for each category. For example:

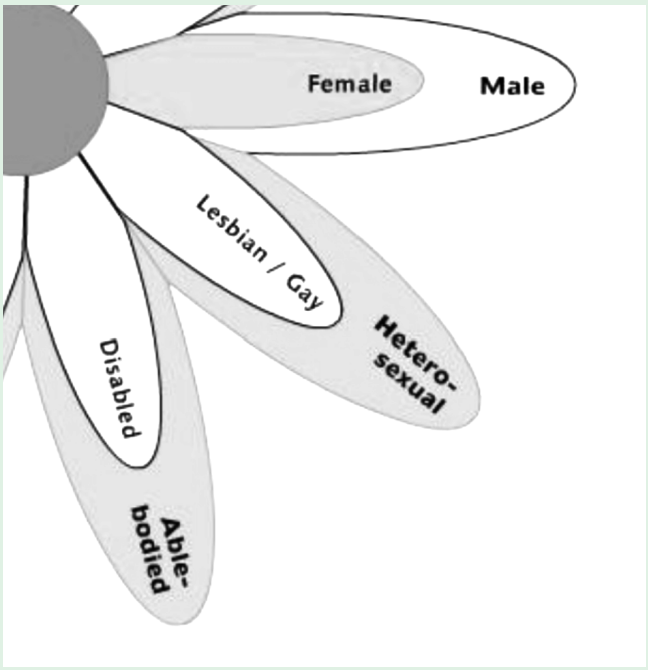
- Gender: man
- Religion: Christian (if in a predominantly Christian country)
- Race: white (in many Western contexts)

Reflect

Compare your personal identities to the dominant ones:

- Where do your identities align with societal power?
- Where do they diverge?
- In which areas do you hold privilege, and in which might you experience marginalization?

Example



Discuss or journal

Use this reflection as a starting point to think about how privilege and power operate in your life and in society more broadly.

Facilitator's Role

Facilitators should create a safe and supportive environment for participants, as this activity can evoke emotional responses. Here are some key points to consider:

- Establish a safe space by setting clear guidelines for respectful discussion. Encourage participants to listen without judgement, remain open-minded, and respect the confidentiality of others.
- As the activity might provoke strong feelings, it's essential to have a support system in place. Facilitators should be prepared to manage any emotional responses and provide resources or referrals if needed.
- While participants can reflect on their positions within power structures, do not pressure anyone to share personal experiences of discrimination. Sharing should be voluntary, and participants should be reminded that they can share what they feel comfortable with.

Important Guidelines for Facilitators

- Encourage Reflective Thinking, Not Personal Storytelling: Focus on how participants perceive their position within different power structures, rather than pushing for personal accounts of oppression. It's vital that people feel safe without being exposed to vulnerability they may not be prepared for.
- Avoid Pressure to Share Personal Experiences: Emphasise that sharing about individual discriminatory incidents in front of others is not a requirement. This could lead to discomfort and could inadvertently lead to re-traumatisation. The goal is reflection, not personal disclosure.
- Focus on Conceptual Understanding, Not Individual Experiences: The activity should centre on intersectionality—the way in which different identities overlap with power structures—rather than individuals' personal histories. This ensures a more inclusive, group-oriented discussion.
- Respect the Diversity of Experiences: Recognise that participants come with various levels of knowledge and emotional comfort regarding power dynamics. Facilitators must be sensitive to diverse experiences and ensure that everyone feels included and heard.
- Debrief After the Activity: Allocate time for a group discussion after completing the Power Flower. This allows participants to reflect on what they've learned, share insights, and explore how they can apply these lessons in both their personal and professional lives.

Debrief:Questions to Reflect on Systemic Inequality and Power Structures

- How do you think the intersections of different identities influence systemic inequalities in society? (Encourages participants to reflect on how various aspects of identity can contribute to larger, structural inequalities.)
- What changes do you think need to happen at a societal level to address the power structures that contribute to discrimination? (Prompts participants to think about concrete, large-scale changes needed in systems, laws, and institutions to tackle discrimination.)

- What role do policies and institutions play in either perpetuating or challenging power dynamics? Can you identify areas where change is needed? (Encourages participants to consider the role of governance, policies, and institutions in creating or dismantling structural inequalities.)

- How can individuals contribute to changing societal structures and power dynamics, especially within their own communities or workplaces? (Focuses on individual actions within larger systems, inspiring participants to think about how they can impact change on a local level.)

- What would a more inclusive society look like, where all identities are equally recognised and valued? What steps are required to get there? (Invites participants to envision a more just society and explore actionable steps towards achieving that vision.)

- In your opinion, what is the most urgent structural change needed to dismantle systems of discrimination and promote equality? (Encourages participants to prioritise specific areas of structural change that they believe would have the greatest impact in challenging discrimination.)

- How can institutions (such as schools, workplaces, or governments) be held accountable for creating more equitable environments? (Focuses on the accountability of larger institutions and how they can take responsibility for fostering inclusion and reducing inequalities.)

- What are some examples of organisations or movements that have successfully challenged harmful power structures? What can we learn from them? (Encourages participants to think about historical or contemporary examples of successful structural change and what strategies can be applied today.)

For virtual settings, the facilitator can adapt the exercise as follows:

- Use Digital Tools for Anonymity: Enable participants to fill in their flowers anonymously using digital platforms like shared whiteboards or forms, ensuring they feel comfortable sharing their reflections.

- Small Group Discussions: Break larger groups into smaller discussion groups in online sessions. This encourages more intimate and comfortable conversations.

- Facilitator Moderation: In virtual spaces, it's particularly important for the facilitator to actively guide discussions, ensuring that everyone feels respected, safe, and that the conversation remains on track.

Organisations and Toolkits Addressing the Intersection of Hate

UNESCO
Toolkit: Countering Online Hate Speech
UNESCO's toolkit offers a global perspective on the rise of online hate speech, emphasising how antisemitism, Islamophobia, and racism intersect. It provides actionable strategies for governments, tech companies, and civil society to tackle online hate. Read the toolkit

The International Network Against Cyber Hate (INACH)
INACH addresses the overlapping nature of hate speech online, covering antisemitism, racism, anti-Muslim sentiment, and more. It equips civil society organisations with training on identifying, reporting, and tackling these interconnected forms of hate. Visit INACH's website

CEJI
A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe
CEJI focuses on fostering equality and human rights, with a special emphasis on fighting antisemitism across Europe. Its resources offer intercultural dialogue and strategies to address all forms of discrimination, with a particular focus on challenging stereotypes. Explore CEJI's resources

ENCATE Network
European Network for the Coordination of Anti-Discrimination and Hate Speech Efforts
ENCATE is a European network dedicated to fighting hate speech and discrimination. Its toolkit supports civil society organisations and policymakers in addressing the intersectionality of hate, examining how antisemitism, racism, and misogyny interact. Visit ENCATE's website

Additional Resources for Addressing Hate and Discrimination in Education

Facing History and Learning for Justice: Organisations Promoting Education on Antisemitism and Hate
Facing History is an educational organisation dedicated to helping students understand the roots and impact of prejudice and hate, including antisemitism. It offers various resources for teachers, including comprehensive guides and practical suggestions for responding to antisemitism in the classroom.

For more information and to explore the resource, visit: Facing History - Responding to Antisemitism in the Classroom.

Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance)
Learning for Justice is an organisation that works to create equitable schools and communities by providing educators with tools to promote inclusivity and social justice. The Toolkit for Countering Antisemitism and Anti-Muslim Hatred in a School Context offers a comprehensive guide for addressing antisemitism and anti-Muslim prejudice in educational settings. The toolkit includes strategies for fostering understanding, combatting hatred, and promoting an inclusive school culture. By providing actionable steps, Learning for Justice empowers teachers to help students understand the consequences of discrimination and work towards a more tolerant society.

To learn more about the toolkit and other resources, visit: Learning for Justice - Toolkit for Countering Antisemitism and Anti-Muslim Hatred.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
FRA publishes reports and toolkits that focus on discrimination, including intersections between antisemitism, anti-Muslim racism, and misogyny. These resources assist in understanding and addressing these complex forms of hatred. Visit FRA's website

Stories That Move Toolkit
This free online tool, available in seven languages, focuses on diversity, inclusivity, and addressing various forms of discrimination. It includes interactive learning paths with assignments, videos, and group activities to engage students on social justice and inclusion. Access Stories That Move

Additional UNESCO Resources

Countering Holocaust Denial and Distortion through Education: A Guide for Teachers
Read the guide

Countering Holocaust Denial and Distortion through Education: Lesson Activities for Secondary Education
Access the lesson activities

Unmasking Racism: Guidelines for Educational Materials
Read the guidelines

Chapter 3: Recognising (Online) Antisemitism: Explanations and Examples

Understand the mechanisms that shape antisemitic narratives, stereotypes, and hatred.

Differentiate between various forms of antisemitism.

Familiarise yourself with conceptual frameworks and terminology to identify and deconstruct (online) antisemitism.

This toolkit provides a structured approach to identifying, classifying, and deconstructing antisemitism. It encourages critical evaluation of antisemitic content across three levels:

- Cognitive Level: It helps users identify reliable sources and deconstruct antisemitic content.
- Technological Level: It raises awareness of how social media platforms contribute to the spread and normalisation of antisemitic content.
- Emotional Level: It equips users to respond effectively when encountering antisemitic content.[38]

Educational material from the Antisemitism and Youth project, University of Duisburg-Essen: Antisemitism and Youth - Module 1.

3.1 Mechanisms of Antisemitism

Antisemitism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that continues to evolve, adapting to new political conflicts, events, socio-cultural contexts, and crises. It manifests in different historical, political, and socio-cultural settings, is expressed in various forms, and constantly adjusts to emerging technologies. As such, there is no single, definitive definition of antisemitism that can comprehensively and consistently capture all its expressions and forms.[39] The definition of antisemitism remains a subject of ongoing debate, not only within academic and political circles but also among practitioners and within broader societal discussions.[40] These differing viewpoints influence how antisemitism is understood and addressed in various contexts. Rather than providing a universal definition of antisemitism, this chapter aims to offer insight into how antisemitic narratives, stereotypes, and myths are constructed and communicated. This understanding serves as the foundation for recognising and deconstructing antisemitism.

Definitions of Antisemitism

Given the challenges surrounding the definition of antisemitism, it is useful to understand the key similarities and differences between the primary definitions employed in educational settings. The three most commonly used definitions of antisemitism—namely, the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism, the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA), and the Nexus Document—agree that antisemitism can be defined as a negative, prejudiced perception of Jews, which can lead to discrimination, hatred, and violence against Jews, Jewish institutions, or individuals perceived to be associated with Jews or Jewish institutions.

A central point of contention among supporters of these various definitions concerns the Israel-Palestine conflict, particularly regarding when criticism of the state of Israel crosses the line into antisemitism. Antisemitism is a hateful ideology made up of discourses, tropes, and narratives that devalue, dehumanise, and perpetuate negative stereotypes and harmful sentiments about Jews, Judaism, Jewish institutions, or the state of Israel. Antisemitic conceptions of Jews are constructed through a number of mechanisms, often interwoven.

IHRA Definition[41]

On 26 May 2016, the Plenary in Bucharest decided to adopt the following non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism: "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

Othering of Jews[42]

Othering is a central element in all worldviews that promote inequality and group-focused hostility (see Chapter 2.3). In the context of antisemitism, othering occurs when Jews are portrayed as a homogeneous group, defined primarily by their "Jewishness," and presented as distinct from the non-Jewish "us." This process constructs Jews, in general, or specific Jewish individuals, as foreign or alien, implying they do not (fully) belong to "our" society. Othering can be found in explicitly hateful messages, but it is also prevalent in everyday language and discourse. For example, when traditional or orthodox Jews are assumed to represent the entire spectrum of Jewish communities, it reflects this same reductive thinking.

All names used in the following examples are fictional and have been anonymised to protect the sources.

In order to minimize the reproduction of antisemitic content in this toolkit, any antisemitic graphics included for educational purposes are marked with a red circle to highlight the harmful content.

Example 1
Deconstructing the "Othering" of Jews

"But the Jews were always different [...] and I think that's why all this persecution stuff happened,"

Jules, 16 years old. From the project Antisemitism and Youth, University of Duisburg-Essen

Deconstruction

- **Othering**: Jews are seen as distinct from the rest of society.
- **Generalisation**: "The Jews" are treated as a homogeneous collective.
- **Relativisation**: The phrase "this persecution stuff" trivialises the genocide of Jews and the ongoing violence against them.

Dehumanisation

The dehumanisation of Jewish groups and individuals has a long history, particularly in societies dominated by Christianity, and became especially prevalent during the Middle Ages.[43] Art from this period, including church decorations, often depicted Jews as animals or monsters, such as pigs, rats, or insects.[44] Associating Jews with animals like vermin was intended to reflect a supposed inherent Jewish nature.[45] These texts and images not only fuel animosity but also legitimise and justify hatred and violence against Jews. Such depictions have persisted throughout history, playing a central role in the systematic demonisation, persecution, and eventual mass murder of Jews in Nazi Germany.[46] They are also frequently encountered on social media today. Dehumanising imagery can also be found in antisemitic conspiracy theories, where tentacles are commonly used as a metaphor for the supposed far-reaching and all-encompassing Jewish influence.[47]

Example 2
Deconstructing the Dehumanisation of Jews

Meme 1: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-antisemitism-reporters-hreats_n_577e1b58e4b0344d514dfc58

Deconstruction

- **The comparison between Jews and Black people, on the one hand, and vermin, on the other.** This is a form of dehumanisation in which Jews and Black people are likened to animals, particularly pests or vermin, such as rats or insects. Such comparisons serve to strip individuals of their humanity, equating them with creatures viewed as dirty, undesirable, or a threat to society. This imagery has historical roots in both antisemitism and racism, where Jews and Black people were regarded as "other" and dangerous to the social order. By reducing these groups to pests

or animals, it becomes easier to justify mistreatment or even violence against them. This is particularly dangerous because it creates a mental framework in which the targeted groups are seen as less deserving of dignity or rights.

- **Stereotypical portrayals of Jews alongside racist representations of Black people.** This refers to the manner in which both Jews and Black people have been historically depicted in negative, one-dimensional stereotypes that emphasise certain traits as defining their entire identity. For Jews, this often includes the portrayal as greedy, manipulative, or subversive, while for Black people, it may involve depictions of criminality, laziness, or savagery. When these groups are portrayed together in this way, it strengthens the narrative that both Jews and Black people are inherently "other" or inferior. This not only perpetuates harmful stereotypes but also reinforces the idea that these groups do not belong within the broader societal framework.

- **Erasure: The phrase "a world without" reflects a desire for the genocide of both Jews and Black people.** The phrase "a world without" can be understood as an explicit or implicit call for the removal or extermination of Jews and Black people. This is an example of erasure, where entire groups are imagined to be wiped from existence, as if they were never part of the world to begin with. Such rhetoric seeks to erase their history, contributions, and very humanity. This desire for genocide has historically led to some of the most horrific acts in human history, including the Holocaust and the transatlantic slave trade, both of which involved mass violence, dehumanisation, and the deliberate erasure of entire populations.

- **Incitement: The phrase "Let's face it!" calls for action and legitimises violence.** The phrase "Let's face it!" in this context can be seen as a call to action, urging others to acknowledge and act on their dehumanising views. It serves to validate negative stereotypes and positions violence as an acceptable response. This kind of incitement encourages people to actively participate in harm or discrimination against Jews, Black people, or any other targeted group. It's an attempt to normalise hostility and violent behaviour by framing it as an obvious or necessary response to perceived societal issues. When such rhetoric gains traction, it provides moral justification for individuals or groups to harm others without remorse.

- **Intersectionality: The intersection of antisemitism and racism.** Intersectionality refers to the ways in which different forms of discrimination or oppression overlap and affect people in multiple ways. In this case, it highlights the interconnectedness of antisemitism and racism. Jews and Black people have often been targeted by distinct yet overlapping systems of hate, each with its own history, stereotypes, and forms of violence. However, the ways in which antisemitism and racism interact—such as when individuals who are both Black and Jewish face compounded forms of discrimination—are often overlooked in societal discussions. This intersectional view encourages a more nuanced understanding of how people may experience multiple forms of marginalisation simultaneously and how these forms of hatred can feed into and reinforce each other.

Physiognomic Stereotypes

The portrayal of Jews as having distinct bodily or facial features serves to depict them as fundamentally different from "us" and is grounded in false, supposedly scientific claims about racial classifications[48] and "natural" character traits, which were widely promoted in Nazi Germany. These misguided attributions of specific physiognomic features[49] to Jewish people are closely linked to processes of othering and dehumanisation. Jews are often depicted as possessing unique, essentialised traits that make them identifiable, and in turn, distinguish them from "us."

Example 3
Deconstructing Physiognomic Stereotypes

Meme 2: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/happy-merchant/photos?sort=oldest

One of the most prevalent antisemitic memes circulating on social media is the so-called "Happy Merchant." Although it may appear contemporary, its origins can be traced back to imagery employed by the notorious Nazi propaganda magazine Der Stürmer.

Deconstruction

- **Body**: The meme features a deformed Jewish person, often depicted with stereotypical characteristics of a traditional religious man, such as a beard, kippah, and exaggerated features meant to imply specific personality traits. These include a large, hooked nose, an untidy appearance, crooked teeth, hunched shoulders, and hands rubbing together, which are all visually coded to reinforce negative stereotypes.

- **Moral Attributions**: These exaggerated physiognomic features are used to associate Jews with dishonesty, greed, and a propensity for conspiracy. The portrayal of these features in such a negative light perpetuates the idea that Jews are inherently untrustworthy and manipulative.

- **Historical Context**: The imagery used in this meme echoes the visual language of Nazi propaganda, particularly that found in Der Stürmer, which aimed to dehumanise Jews by associating them with negative traits. This type of image is not only rooted in historical antisemitic ideologies but also continues to be used to incite hatred in contemporary online spaces.

- **Psychological Impact**: By framing Jews in such a way, this meme plays a role in reinforcing deeply ingrained prejudices. It serves to normalise negative perceptions and create an association between Jews and the harmful characteristics depicted, influencing how individuals view and treat Jewish people.

- **Amplification via social media**: The viral nature of the meme on platforms allows it to spread quickly and widely, normalising these toxic stereotypes in online communities, where they can easily reach large audiences and influence public opinion and contribute to the mainstreaming of antisemitic hate (cp. Chapter 4).

Conspiracy Myths

False claims and accusations that Jews, as a group or as individuals, are involved in secretive conspiracies and control global politics and the economy have been propagated since the Middle Ages.[50] Throughout these stigmatising narratives, it is frequently falsely asserted that Jews are exceedingly wealthy and influential, harbour malicious intentions, and seek to maximise their own economic and/or political gain. In these narratives, Jews are blamed for social, political, or other crises or disasters, positioning them as the scapegoats for "our" difficulties and grievances. Unlike other racist ideologies that belittle racialised minorities and groups, antisemitic conspiracy myths portray Jews as disproportionately powerful.

Often, antisemitic myths explicitly or implicitly build upon The Protocols of the Elders of Zion – a fabricated, fictional document that blamed Jews for a range of societal ills and crises, thus fostering resentment and hatred towards them. Such myths are frequently communicated through coded language and symbols that represent Jews or Jewish power. A common antisemitic example is imagery using the symbol of an octopus to convey the idea of overwhelming and far-reaching influence, reflecting harmful stereotypes about Jewish people. Another example is the figure of the so-called "happy merchant" (see above), which perpetuates the false and damaging stereotype of Jews as a collective characterised by greed, dishonesty, and untrustworthiness. This image has become iconic online, further normalising hate and prejudice against Jewish people.

Example 4
Deconstructing antisemitic Conspiracy Myths

Meme 3: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Octopus-image-from-the-Facebook-site_fig8_271706818

Deconstruction

- **Body:** Stereotypical portrayal of a traditionally religious man.
- **Dehumanisation:** The equation of a (supposedly) Jewish man with an animal, in this case, an octopus, reducing the individual to something subhuman.
- **Greed Stereotype:** The stereotypical image of rubbing hands, symbolising a greedy conspiracy for global domination (see also section on Physiognomic Stereotypes).
- **Power:** The depiction of the octopus with its tentacles extending to control New York, a city often used in antisemitic imagery to represent the alleged power and influence of wealthy, influential Jews.
- **Manipulation**: The representation of Jewish figures controlling global affairs through covert or deceptive means, reinforcing the idea of a hidden, malicious force behind world events.
- **Cultural Influence:** The octopus symbol may also imply a far-reaching and pervasive influence, stretching into various aspects of culture, politics, and media, suggesting that Jews are pulling the strings behind major societal structures.
- **Victimisation**: This stereotype often paints Jewish people as both powerful and victimised, presenting them as being unfairly blamed for societal problems, thus perpetuating a false sense of persecution while reinforcing the myth of global Jewish domination.

Conspiracy Myth

A conspiracy myth can be defined as a belief or narrative suggesting that a secret, malevolent group or organisation is covertly controlling events or influencing outcomes in society, typically with harmful intentions. These myths often rely on distorted or unverified information and are framed in such a way that positions the conspirators as powerful figures, operating in secrecy and working against the interests of the general public. Essentially, a conspiracy myth presents a narrative in which events or circumstances are the result of a covert, often sinister plot by a powerful group, believed to be manipulating or controlling significant occurrences behind the scenes.

Common Characteristics of Conspiracy Myths

- **Lack of credible evidence:** Conspiracy myths often lack verifiable, objective evidence. The claims typically rely on speculation, distorted facts, or fabricated narratives rather than on empirical proof or credible sources.

- **Secretive and hidden agents:** Conspiracy myths frequently involve the belief that a hidden, powerful group or organisation (such as the government, elites, or corporations) is secretly controlling or manipulating events. This group is often portrayed as malevolent and operating in secrecy, without accountability.[51]

- **Unverifiable or vague claims:** The claims made in conspiracy myths are often unverifiable, meaning there is no tangible way to confirm or deny them. If questioned, proponents of the myth may respond with further speculation or dismiss any counter-evidence as part of the conspiracy itself.[52]

- **Overarching, all-encompassing narrative:** Conspiracy myths often seek to explain a wide range of events and phenomena with a single, unifying theory. This oversimplification reduces complex situations into a narrative of secretive control and manipulation by a small group.[53] The "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" are a historical example of a conspiracy myth that perpetuates these characteristics.

- **Mistrust of authorities and mainstream sources:** Conspiracy myths rely on the idea that trusted institutions (such as governments, media, and scientists) are deliberately misleading the public or covering up the "truth." Mainstream sources of information are often portrayed as part of the conspiracy.[54]

- **Circular reasoning:** Conspiracy myths often involve circular reasoning, where the absence of evidence is presented as proof of the conspiracy. For example, if no proof of the conspiracy can be found, it is claimed that this is due to the conspirators deliberately hiding the evidence.[55]

- **Demonisation of "outsiders" or "enemies":** Those believed to be behind the conspiracy are often portrayed as malicious, manipulative, or threatening. This fosters a "them vs. us" mentality, potentially leading to scapegoating, prejudice, and discrimination against these groups.

- **Appeal to fear and victimhood:** Conspiracy myths often provoke fear, portraying certain groups or individuals as victims of a hidden, destructive force. They tend to exploit anxieties about loss of control or safety, often appealing more to emotions than to logic or facts.[56]

- **Resilience to debunking:** A key feature of a conspiracy myth is its resistance to disproof. Even when counter-evidence is presented, adherents may double down on their beliefs, claiming that contradictions are simply part of the conspiracy designed to silence or discredit the truth.[57]

- **Exclusivity of knowledge:** Conspiracy myths often position their believers as possessing "hidden knowledge" that the general public is unaware of. This creates a divide between those who "know the truth" and those who are either ignorant or complicit in the cover-up.[58]

- **Scapegoating**: Conspiracy myths frequently identify specific groups (such as ethnic or religious minorities, political opponents, or other marginalised communities) as being behind the supposed conspiracy, leading to harmful stereotypes, discrimination, or even violence against these groups.[59]

The Blood Libel

The blood libel is one of the most widespread and damaging falsehoods about Jews, fabricated to justify their exclusion from society and persecution. It falsely accuses Jews of using the blood of Christian children for religious rituals. With its roots tracing back to ancient times, this lie spread throughout Europe during the Middle Ages, when stories of children allegedly abducted and killed by Jews for ritual purposes were fabricated in numerous Christian countries to portray Jews as murderers, threatening the innocent lives of children. These tales were adopted, adapted, and further propagated by Nazi propaganda to stir up fear and hatred towards Jews, justifying their persecution and, ultimately, genocide. Today, this antisemitic conspiracy is often adapted and implicitly invoked in portrayals that depict Jews as barbaric, bloodthirsty, and inherently violent. It also finds echoes in the QAnon conspiracy narrative, which falsely accuses celebrities and high-ranking politicians of abducting children to extract a so-called rejuvenating substance from their blood as part of alleged "satanic" rituals.[60]

Example 5
Deconstructing antisemitic Blood Libel

"You know, I think his name was Epstein, so Epstein somehow had this island, and it's said that children were kidnapped and raped there. Among other things, it's claimed that they were also sacrificed, and their blood was taken. The blood is apparently used to make celebrities look younger. I think it's called adrenochrome, where the children are put into a state of shock, which causes them to produce the most adrenaline..."

Aylo, 877-903. From the project Antisemitism and Youth, University of Duisburg-Essen

Deconstruction

- **Blood Libel:** A reference to the deeply antisemitic stereotype that Jewish people abduct and ritualistically murder children to consume their blood. This myth has been used to demonise Jewish communities for centuries.

- **Perpetrators:** The notion of powerful elites who supposedly control the world is a common feature in conspiracy theories, often disguised here as "celebrities." The idea is further supported by associating these figures with an individual bearing a surname perceived as Jewish, using his criminal history as supposed "proof" to reinforce the blood libel lie.

- **Conspiracy Myth:** The false and baseless claim that elites harvest adrenochrome from children's blood to maintain health and preserve youth is a central element in the QAnon conspiracy myth, perpetuating unfounded fears about the exploitation of children.

- **Exploitation of Trauma:** This narrative manipulates real and tragic events for conspiracy-driven purposes, by falsely claiming that these elites engage in horrific activities, such as child abduction and abuse, to serve their own interests.

Educational Material Provided by the Project "Antisemitism and Youth", University of Duisburg-Essen: https://www.uni-due.de/biwi/antisemitismus-jugend/asj_modul_1_englisch.php

Modules for Antisemitism-Critical Educational Work: Fatma Bilgi, Henriette Fischer, Monika Hübscher, Nicolle Pfaff: https://www.uni-due.de/imperia/md/content/biwi/antisemitismus-jugend/module_eng.pdf

3.2 Forms of (Online) Antisemitism

While different forms and manifestations of (online) antisemitism are often combined in antisemitic images, texts, and other online content, the following categories help to recognise, identify, distinguish, and discuss the antisemitic implications of various content posted on social media, shared through messaging services, or published on other online platforms.

Anti-Judaism

Anti-Judaism has its roots in Christianity and constitutes the oldest, most mainstream form of antisemitism in European societies.[61] Central narratives that perpetuate anti-Judaism include the claim that Jews were responsible for the crucifixion and death of Jesus, as well as the blood libel myth (see Section 3.1). While anti-Judaism was initially reproduced and justified through theological works (e.g. the writings of Martin Luther), it has been adapted into new myths that construct Jews as evil and deceitful and has been incorporated into various contemporary conspiracy narratives.

Example 6
Deconstructing Anti-Judaism

Meme 4 source: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/happy-merchant/

Deconstruction

- **Religion**: A reference to the biblical story in which Jesus drove the merchants out of the temple, often used to frame Jews as antagonistic towards Christian values.

- **Money:** The bankers depicted in the image are named after real-world financial institutions such as Goldman Sachs and Wells Fargo, which have faced financial difficulties. These institutions are often constructed as "Jewish" in antisemitic imagery, reinforcing harmful stereotypes about Jewish control over the global financial system.

- **Body:** Physiognomic depictions of stereotypical Jewish men, such as exaggerated features like a large nose, which are commonly used to dehumanise and caricature Jewish people in antisemitic portrayals.

- **Stereotypical Characterisation:** The depiction of Jewish people as manipulative or power-hungry, often linked to narratives of wealth and control, which feeds into conspiracies about Jewish dominance in global affairs.

- **Manipulation of Institutions**: The image may also suggest that Jews have undue influence over important global institutions, including financial bodies, media, and government, perpetuating the myth of a global Jewish conspiracy.

- **Victim Blaming:** The portrayal of Jews as responsible for financial crises or social unrest, a common antisemitic trope that positions them as the scapegoat for broader societal problems.

Modern Racist Antisemitism (Nazi Ideology)

Modern and racist constructions of antisemitism were invented and heavily propagated in Nazi Germany. Embedded within the wider Nazi ideology, racist doctrines, and classifications, this form of antisemitism centres around the pseudoscientific and hateful claim that Jews are biologically different and inferior to other groups. This supposed inferiority was portrayed as a threat to the ideal of a "pure" Germanic race, undermining and tarnishing the fantasy of a homogenous German nation. Often, pseudoscientific tests were used to fabricate supposed evidence for these claims, which were then employed to justify the persecution, expulsion, and ultimately the genocide of European Jewry.[62]

Example 7
Deconstructing Nazi Antisemitism

"Yes, they were all just [...] they just tried to make Germany pure [...], so anyone who looked different [...], who didn't fit the image, was simply [...]. It started with the fact that you didn't go to Jewish shops."

Susi, 17 years old. Source: Antisemitism and Youth project, University of Duisburg-Essen

Deconstruction

- **Nazi Ideology:** The reference to a "pure" Germany reproduces the core Nazi ideology, which sought to create an ethnically homogenous state, free from Jews and other "undesirable" groups. This reflects the racial purification concepts promoted by the Nazis during their reign.

- **Normalisation:** The statement "You didn't go to Jewish shops" normalises discriminatory practices, presenting the exclusion of Jewish businesses not as an act of prejudice, but as a natural, acceptable practice. It suggests that such behaviour was a standard, unchallenged part of daily life, making it easier to justify and perpetuate antisemitism.

- **Othering:** The mention of "Jewish shops" as something separate and distinct from "German" culture reinforces the idea that Jews do not belong to the same national or social fabric as non-Jews. It constructs Jews as the "Other" and establishes them as outsiders in their own country.

- **Collective Guilt:** The idea of "purifying" Germany by removing Jews from society implies collective guilt attributed to Jews for the perceived ills of society. This allows for the rationalisation of discrimination, exclusion, and violence against Jews as a necessary action to protect the nation's purity.

- **Incremental Exclusion:** The gradual steps mentioned, starting with boycotting Jewish businesses, reflect the incremental nature of Nazi policies that started with social exclusion and escalated to legal segregation, forced migration, and eventually genocide. This incremental approach made the eventual atrocities appear more socially acceptable to the population.

- **Dehumanisation:** The Nazi framing of Jews as inherently inferior and a threat to the «purity» of the German people was key in dehumanising them. This made it easier for people to accept antisemitic measures, including exclusion and violence, as justified actions against a supposedly «inferior» group.

Secondary Antisemitism

Secondary antisemitism, which developed after the Holocaust, refers to statements or narratives that distort, relativise, trivialise, or deny the Holocaust. It manifests itself in attempts to absolve (German) perpetrators from their involvement, guilt, and responsibility for the Holocaust, among other things by minimising or completely denying their involvement or attributing some or all guilt and responsibility to a few prominent perpetrators. Furthermore, statements that blame Jews or Jewish groups for the Holocaust or portray the supposedly innocent perpetrator society (e.g. Germans) as the primary victims of World War II and National Socialism inherently reverse the roles of victims and perpetrators and reproduce secondary antisemitism.[63]

Holocaust relativisation occurs in statements that question or minimise the number of Holocaust victims or when the Holocaust is equated with other current and historical events or social phenomena, such as factory farming or the Covid-19 pandemic measures. However, it is important to note that approaches – particularly academic or scholarly ones – that carefully and respectfully compare the Holocaust with other genocides to better understand the Holocaust, or to produce knowledge about parallels and interconnections between different historical events, are not antisemitic, unless they aim to downplay or question the fact or extent of the Holocaust. Meanwhile, jokes that mock the Holocaust and/or its victims trivialise the event and the suffering it caused the victims.

Holocaust denial manifests in statements that contradict historical facts, claiming that the Holocaust or its particular aspects did not happen – for example, when the existence of gas chambers or death camps is denied or questioned. Similarly, the claim that Jewish individuals or groups today are instrumentalising the Holocaust and its memory for financial or political gain constitutes incidents of secondary antisemitism. Additionally, a recent study has suggested the term Tertiary Antisemitism for narratives and revisionist accounts of history that omit the Holocaust while discussing World War II or related events in 20th-century European history, in a manner that highlights the suffering of non-persecuted groups and/or the (German) perpetrator society.[64 65]

Holocaust denial and distortion

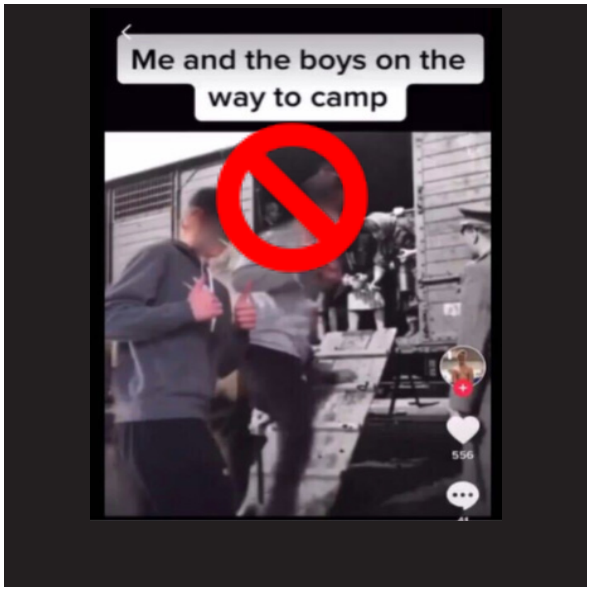
The UN Resolution 60/7 (2005) explicitly condemns all forms of Holocaust denial and seeks to encourage education to combat such distortion.

Holocaust denial refers to the denial or distortion of the historical facts of the Holocaust, including the denial of the systematic genocide carried out by Nazi Germany, the number of victims, and the use of methods such as gas chambers in extermination camps.

Holocaust distortion includes the manipulation of the Holocaust's facts to promote ideological agendas, minimise the scale of the atrocity, or shift blame.

Source: UN Resolution 60/7 (2005) - Holocaust Denial[66]

Example 8
Deconstructing Secondary Antisemitism



Screenshot from YouTube via JTA: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqer6l1l3qA, originally posted on TikTok.
The screenshot from a video shows TikTok users superimposing themselves onto a photograph depicting a violent deportation scene, in which women are forced into a cattle car, overseen by a Nazi official. The caption references the meme "Me and the Boys," which was popular around 2019. While the meme itself is not inherently antisemitic, it has often been used in an ironic manner that trivialises or distorts serious historical events.

Deconstruction

- **Lack of Empathy:** The use of this scene demonstrates a lack of empathy towards the victims of Nazi crimes, with "humour" employed as a legitimisation strategy for dehumanising those involved.
- **Holocaust Relativisation:** The act of superimposing the image of individuals into a violent scene from the Holocaust is an example of relativisation, where the historical gravity of the event is diminished or distorted.
- **Radicalisation:** This type of content may encourage identification with the Nazi perpetrators, potentially fostering radicalisation by normalising their actions in a satirical context.
- **Normalisation of Violence:** The juxtaposition of this scene with modern-day internet culture normalises violence, particularly against Jewish women, and frames it as a subject of "humour."
- **Misogyny:** The portrayal of men enforcing genocidal violence against women in this context highlights the intersection of antisemitism with misogyny, suggesting that Jewish women are victims of both forms of hatred.
- **Intersectionality:** The meme overlays antisemitism with misogyny, showing how these two forms of discrimination can intersect.
- **Validation:** The multiple likes and comments on this post serve as a form of validation, amplifying the message and spreading this distorted view to a wider audience, which can normalise these harmful attitudes.
- **Distortion of Historical Memory:** The meme distorts the memory of the Holocaust, turning a tragedy into a commodity for viral entertainment, which can desensitise younger audiences to its significance.
- **Exploiting Trauma:** By transforming such a violent and traumatic historical event into a meme, the Holocaust is appropriated, diminishing its significance and silencing the voices of survivors and victims.

Antisemitism against Israel

Antisemitism related to Israel (also referred to as Israel-related antisemitism) occurs when Jews are equated with the actions and policies of the State of Israel, or when Jewish individuals or groups are held accountable for the actions of the Israeli government.[67] Similarly, the conflation of Israel with all aspects of Jews, Judaism, Jewish life, and Jewish identity also constitutes antisemitism. Criticisms of Israel become expressions of antisemitism when Jews and/or Israelis are stigmatised or generalised, or when antisemitic stereotypes and myths are attributed to the state of Israel.

Example 9
Deconstructing Antisemitism against Israel

Deconstruction

- **Dehumanisation:** The use of emoji combinations to represent Jews is a continuation of the longstanding antisemitic tradition of equating Jews with vermin, thereby reducing them to something less than human.

- **Homogenisation:** This tactic links to the historical practice of portraying Jews as a monolithic group, often equated with vermin, and extends this rhetoric through references to Israel, further entrenching the idea that all Jews are responsible for or connected to the actions of the Israeli state.

Philosemitism

Philosemitism refers to an exaggerated adoration or overly positive and sympathetic attitude towards Judaism, Jewish individuals, or groups simply because they are Jewish, regardless of their personal characteristics, attitudes, or actions.[68] While philosemitism promotes a positive view of Jews, it simultaneously employs antisemitic stereotypes, portraying Jews as exceptional or unique, and thus "different" because of their Jewishness. An example of such philosemitic stereotyping includes the notion that Jews, in general, are highly intelligent or exceptionally well-educated. Furthermore, philosemitic attitudes can manifest through the creation of an unrealistically positive image of the state of Israel.[69] This occurs when Israel is glorified without addressing the injustices or human rights violations committed by the state. Such views are typically expressed by selectively highlighting positive examples to represent all Israelis or Israeli society. When Jewish groups or individuals fail to meet these inflated expectations, philosemitism can quickly turn into antisemitism.[70]

Example 10
Deconstructing Philosemitism

"Look at the most brilliant, successful businessmen and you'll find they've all been Jewish. They're just so much better at this sort of thing."

Source: Facebook

Deconstruction

- **Equalisation:** The portrayal of Jews as a homogeneous collective, where all Jews are seen as the same, erases individuality and diversity within Jewish communities.

- **Wealth:** This reflects the antisemitic stereotype that Jewish people are inherently "good with money," contrasting with the equally harmful stereotype of Jewish "greed."

- **Stereotyping:** The oversimplification of Jewish characteristics, such as intelligence or success, ultimately reduces the complexity of Jewish identity to mere stereotypes, which can be both patronising and dangerous.

- **Unrealistic Expectations:** By placing Jewish individuals or groups on an unrealistically high pedestal, philosemitism creates an unattainable standard. When individuals fail to meet these exaggerated expectations, it sets the stage for negative backlash and the potential for antisemitic reactions.

- **Glorification of Israel:** The selective portrayal of Israel in an overly positive light, without acknowledging its controversies or human rights violations, reflects a one-dimensional view that disregards the multifaceted reality of Israeli society.

3.3 Radical Actors that strategically spread Antisemitism

Contemporary antisemitism maintains continuity with centuries of anti-Jewish prejudice, hatred, and violence.[71] Growing up in European societies, therefore, often entails being socialised with knowledge, traditions, and cultures shaped by antisemitic attitudes. As the internet has become an integral part of daily life and culture, antisemitic narratives, stereotypes, and resentments are also reproduced online. Since the advent of social media, anyone with internet access can express, share, and support antisemitic statements, contributing to the omnipresence of antisemitism in digital spaces. In some cases, harmful statements with antisemitic undertones may be shared unconsciously or without malicious intent, particularly when they perpetuate established antisemitic knowledge. In other instances, individuals may share antisemitic content deliberately, expressing hostile or hateful attitudes towards Jews. Finally, certain groups intentionally misuse social media platforms (as well as web forums, blogs, and messaging services) to create, promote, and spread antisemitism, often with the goal of radicalising others.[72]

Foreign malicious actors, including both state and non-state entities, may exploit Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) techniques to amplify antisemitic conspiracy theories.[73] These include harmful ideas like the "Jewish World Order" or the notion that "Jews control the media." Such conspiracy theories are often propagated on social media, online forums, and other digital platforms, aiming to sow division, distrust, and hatred. By targeting and spreading such disinformation, these foreign actors exacerbate the proliferation of antisemitism and deepen societal polarisation.

The Far Right

Antisemitism is a central feature of far-right ideologies, which are based on ethno-nationalist, racist, anti-democratic, and anti-pluralist paradigms. This is reflected in claims, narratives, and myths that portray Jews as both powerful and influential on the one hand, and inferior or corrupt on the other (see also Nazi antisemitism). Today, far-right actors often promote revisionist historical accounts that deny or relativise the Holocaust (secondary antisemitism) and circulate conspiracy myths blaming Jewish groups or individuals for socio-political or economic crises or undesirable developments. These narratives frequently intersect with other forms of group-focused hatred, including racism, anti-Muslim sentiment, or anti-LGBTQI+ ideologies. While far-right groups typically rely on platforms like Telegram and other fringe social media, spaces like TikTok and gaming servers also serve as hubs for ideological socialisation, where antisemitism is often combined with other extremist narratives and anti-government sentiments.[76]

Recently, some far-right actors and political parties across Europe have adopted philosemitic narratives as a strategic tool to deflect criticism regarding the antisemitism inherent in far-right ideologies. Such philosemitic claims often reproduce antisemitic stereotypes and contribute to othering, frequently instrumentalising pro-Israeli stances to legitimise and perpetuate anti-Muslim resentment and hate[77].

Islamist Groups

Islamist groups, which politicise and radicalise Islam (and should not be confused with Islam as a religion), promote a violent political ideology centred around Islamic supremacy. Islamist actors, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the self-proclaimed Islamic State, use violence and terrorism in their attempts to establish governance systems based on highly selective interpretations of Islamic text.[78] These groups often misuse parts of Islamic religious writings to present Jews as evil enemies of Islam, incorporating elements of modern European antisemitism. They portray Jews as a powerful global collective or deny and distort the Holocaust. Furthermore, these groups frequently stigmatise Jews as the driving force behind Western imperialism and colonialism. Their conflation of Judaism and Jewishness with Israel in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict often serves as a nexus for presenting Jews as oppressors of Muslims.[79]

The antisemitic content created and disseminated by radical Islamist groups typically incites or glorifies violence against Jews or those associated with Judaism or Israel. The significant increase in the presence of such content across social media platforms following October 7, 2023, highlights that the distribution and normalisation of this violence are central to Islamist communication, radicalisation, and terrorism strategies.[80]

The Far-Left

While the far left traditionally embraces principles of equality and anti-discrimination, antisemitic narratives and myths also emerge in leftist contexts, particularly in anti-capitalist, anti-Western, anti-imperial, and anti-Zionist (see info box) ideological paradigms. Contemporary antisemitism on the far left is primarily found in anti-cap-

Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) as a method to amplify Antisemitism

Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) refers to the strategic use of digital platforms and media by foreign actors to influence or manipulate public opinion, spread disinformation, and interfere with the political or social processes of a target country. This manipulation can take various forms, such as disseminating false narratives, amplifying divisive content, hacking political systems, or using social media bots to sway elections or public discourse. FIMI often seeks to undermine trust in democratic institutions, distort the flow of information, and create societal polarisation. It represents a form of hybrid warfare in which information is weaponised to achieve political, economic, or social goals. These efforts are typically covert, aiming to evade detection and exploitation by the targeted population.[74] [75]

How does FIMI contribute to the spread of antisemitism?

Targeting Jewish Institutions and Individuals

- FIMI tactics may specifically target Jewish individuals, organisations, or Israel through coordinated campaigns of online harassment, misinformation, and hate speech. For example, bots or fake accounts can flood social media with antisemitic content aimed at discrediting Jewish leaders, institutions, or political figures, further amplifying negative stereotypes about Jews.

Erosion of Trust in Democratic Institutions and Processes

- Antisemitic FIMI can undermine trust in democratic institutions, particularly when foreign actors spread narratives that depict Jewish communities as threats or conspirators manipulating political or economic systems. By promoting these falsehoods, such campaigns weaken social cohesion and create fertile ground for harmful stereotypes and prejudices to take root.

Polarisation and Divisiveness

- FIMI campaigns often aim to create societal polarisation by exploiting existing tensions, such as those related to religion, race, or ethnicity. In the case of antisemitism, foreign actors may amplify these divides by promoting narratives that pit Jewish communities against other groups, inciting hate and exacerbating divisions within societies.

Hybrid Warfare and Weaponisation of Information

- In the context of hybrid warfare, FIMI is used as a tool to influence political, economic, or social outcomes by distorting the flow of information. This can involve the strategic use of antisemitic rhetoric or narratives to undermine political stability, disrupt elections, or destabilise societies. By weaponising disinformation, foreign actors can exploit historical prejudices, including antisemitism, to destabilise nations and manipulate public opinion.

Erosion of Holocaust Memory

- Some FIMI campaigns seek to distort or deny the historical facts of the Holocaust, a form of antisemitism that aims to erase the memory of the atrocity and deny Jewish victims their rightful place in history. Foreign actors may use digital platforms to propagate Holocaust denial or distortion, further promoting an environment where antisemitic views can flourish.

Undermining Solidarity and Interfaith Dialogue

- Foreign interference may also work to undermine interfaith dialogue and solidarity among different religious and ethnic groups by spreading divisive, hateful narratives that portray Jews as adversaries or enemies. This "othering" tactic is often employed in FIMI campaigns to create divisions and sow distrust among communities.

Malicious actors in the digital sphere

Malicious actors in the digital sphere are individuals or groups who exploit online platforms and technologies to cause harm, disrupt systems, or manipulate public opinion. These actors often engage in activities such as spreading disinformation, conducting cyberattacks, and using social media bots to amplify divisive content. Their motives range from political manipulation and financial gain to promoting hate speech or undermining trust in institutions. The anonymity and reach offered by the internet make it difficult to trace and combat these malicious actions, presenting significant challenges to online security, the integrity of digital communication, and public trust. Examples include domestic actors, such as extremist groups using social media to recruit followers or spread hate speech, as well as foreign actors, like state-sponsored entities that conduct cyberattacks on critical infrastructure or manipulate elections through coordinated disinformation campaigns.

italist critiques that use and perpetuate false stereotypes of Jews as a powerful and elitist group controlling the finance sector, major capitalist brands, international corporations, and/or world politics.[81]

Far-left actors frequently express antisemitism in relation to Israel and the Israel-Palestine conflict. Online, left-wing antisemitism often peaks during periods of heightened tension in the region, reproducing Israel-related antisemitism (see above) while at times defending, justifying, or even embracing violence against Jews or Israelis as acts of rightful, anti-imperialist or anti-colonial resistance.[82] In this context, narratives, symbols, or misinformation created and spread by Islamist groups (e.g., Hamas or Hezbollah) are sometimes uncritically received and shared online by some far-left individuals and groups. Radical leftist actors may also promote content that questions or downplays Jewish suffering during the Holocaust, or the ongoing discrimination and violence against Jews.

Antisemitism in Radicalised Conspiracist Groups

Radicalised conspiracy movements can be understood as decentralised extremist networks centred around conspiracy theories, often promoting anti-democratic or anti-government ideas that intersect with antisemitic narratives. These movements, which expanded significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, heavily rely on social media, messenger services (e.g., Telegram), and other online platforms (e.g., image boards or forums) for communication. These movements have spread false claims, such as the virus being a "Zionist bioweapon," and revived tropes like elite control and New World Order conspiracies, often targeting Jewish figures and trivialising the Holocaust.[83]

Mainstreaming of hate and extremism: Antisemitism in Entertainment and Pop Culture

Beyond radicalised and extremist groups, antisemitism is propagated by a wide range of prominent figures and private individuals across various fields, contributing to the ongoing proliferation of antisemitism online. On social media, particularly, influencers and entertainment industry personalities play key roles in disseminating, perpetuating, and normalising antisemitism beyond political, ideological, and extremist circles. A notable example occurred in October 2022 when US rapper Kanye West (now known as Ye) posted explicit antisemitic statements, including direct incitements to violence, on his social media account on X (formerly Twitter).[84] Although the post was later deleted, it was read by his 30 million followers, many of whom likely viewed West as a role model, amplifying the spread of these harmful messages.

Antisemitism has also emerged in the electronic music scene in Europe, where certain music festivals and events, particularly those attracting far-right or nationalist groups, have served as venues for the display of antisemitic symbols or slogans. Some DJs or producers associated with extremist ideologies have used their platforms to spread antisemitic messages. In the European rock and punk music subcultures, antisemitic views have been linked to far-right ideologies, with instances in the 1980s and 1990s where neo-Nazi groups used punk music to spread such views. More recently, French rapper Freeze Corleone faced widespread criticism for antisemitic lyrics in his music, which were seen as promoting conspiratorial language and antisemitic references.[85]

Similarly, antisemitism has been observed on gaming platforms and gaming-related communication, where radical actors actively attempt to normalise and mainstream antisemitic hate and prejudice.[86]

Hybridization of Antisemitism

While categorising antisemitism according to different political ideologies can be useful in highlighting the adaptability and various forms of antisemitic myths and narratives, the boundaries between these ideologies are often blurred. Particularly on social media, elements of similar antisemitic conspiracy myths and disinformation circulate across different ideological ecosystems. This can result in surprising overlaps and alliances, such as the glorification of Hamas terrorism or antisemitic variations of anti-Zionism being shared across both Islamist groups and parts of the far left, particularly in the aftermath of October 7, 2023.[87]

Activity 3. Reflection on Forms and Mechanisms of Antisemitism

Find suggestions for solutions in the appendix

Print out the explanations of the forms and mechanisms of antisemitism from the educational materials provided by the "Antisemitism and Youth"[88] project (Slides 16-21). Display these on the wall for reference. Divide participants into small groups and ask them to discuss the following questions:

- What makes antisemitism unique? What are the similarities and differences compared to other forms of exclusion and hate? (Refer to Chapter 2 as the basis for discussion)
- What relevance does antisemitism have in your life? In what contexts do you encounter antisemitism?

Each group will discuss these questions and summarise their points on cards. The groups will then present their findings in a collective discussion of the results (for guidance on discussing the outcome, see the appendix).

Additional Resources

CCOA Compendium on Antisemitism: https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Research-Compilation-on-Online-Antisemitism_.pdf

ISD Explainer on Far-Left Antisemitism: https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/far-left-antisemitism/#i

ISD Compendium on Holocaust Denial and Distortion: https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/the-fragility-of-freedom-online-holocaust-denial-and-distortion/

ISD Briefing on Cross-Ideological Antisemitism: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vz_KrCEr-9IrScnu-gfDKK89hV95ACAmc/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=102789431553141237222&rtpof=true&sd=true

3.4 Why is Antisemitism such a persistent phenomenon?

Antisemitism imbedded in Tradition

As can be discerned from the explanations above, anti-Judaism, along with antisemitic discourses and stereotypes, has deep historical roots, often extending back to ancient times, the origins of Christianity, or the Middle Ages, and is reflected in Enlightenment and modern thought. Contemporary online antisemitism should therefore be viewed as a continuation of centuries-old stigmatisation, discrimination, hostility, and violence against Jews and Jewish life. Antisemitism is not only a feature of hateful and extremist ideologies but is also embedded in European cultures and traditions. For instance, research has shown that even Holocaust education materials used in German schools tend to reproduce Nazi language and anti-Jewish stereotypes, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of antisemitic ideology[89]. While these normalised antisemitic discourses are rarely overtly hateful and may be communicated without malicious or hostile intent, or even unconsciously, they form part of the antisemitic knowledge circulating in our societies, shaping our opinions and understanding of the world. Socialisation with such antisemitism-informed knowledge makes individuals more susceptible to further, more explicit and hateful othering and stereotyping, as these messages connect to what is wrongly, but widely, considered "common knowledge" about Jews and Jewish life among the non-Jewish majority.

The timeline in this material provides a compact overview over the persecution of and violence against Jews in Germany. This example can be used to illustrate the long history of persecution and (ongoing) violence against Jews (Slide 12-15): https://www.uni-due.de/biwi/antisemitismus-jugend/asj_modul_1_englisch.php

Another overview of antisemitism in Europe from the Middle Ages until today that illustrates the long history of discrimination, resentment, violence and persecution against Jews can be found on the website of the Wiener Holocaust Library: https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/anti-semitism/

Images as Effective Means of Communicating Antisemitism

Antisemitism is often communicated through images and other visual elements: Since the Middle Ages, antisemitic images have featured in Christian-inspired art. In National Socialist Germany antisemitic propaganda relied on illustrated posters and the infamous cartoons and caricatures in the propaganda newspaper Der Stürmer that stigmatised and demonised Jews. Images and animated visuals (GIFs) and other visual elements (e.g. emojis) are also used to communicate antisemitism online, for example on websites, forums, image boards and via messengers, and particularly on social media. Images are a highly effective tool in spreading (antisemitic) hate as they are understood across different languages, circumvent verbal taboos, endow hate and discrimination with an aesthetic dimension and communicate antisemitic prejudice, stigmatisation and/or conspiracy myths in an accessible way.[90] Images can easily be shared on social media, image boards, forums or via messenger services. Actors promoting antisemitism today strategically produce and spread antisemitic images (and videos) to mainstream and normalise antisemitic prejudice, hate and violence;[91] with the introduction of generative AI tools, production of such content has accelerated further as an image or video can now be generated by an AI app within seconds by providing it with a brief text description of the required visual. This could, among others, be observed in the aftermath of the October 7 terrorist attacks, when materials depicting Hamas terrorists murdering, kidnapping and violating their victims were strategically circulated on social media.

Adaptability and Intersections Between Antisemitism and Other Forms of Hate

As suggested above, antisemitism has evolved throughout history and over time. Antisemitic myths and narratives, for example the phantasma of "powerful Jewish elites" controlling world politics or finances can be applied to a variety of current issues and crises, as was demonstrated by the sharp increase and mainstreaming of antisemitic myths during the Covid-19 pandemic.[92]

Moreover, antisemitism often intersects and occurs in connection with other forms of hate, resentment and discrimination, such as misogyny, Anti-LGTBQ+ hate and racism. These can, for example, manifest in hateful expressions that allege the existence of "global Jewish elites" or "globalists" behind feminist or anti-racist movements questioning traditional gender roles and binaries, or patriarchal power structures and white-Christian hegemony. Hate and violence against anti-racist, feminist and LGBTQ+ empowering movements often go hand in hand with antisemitic narratives and claims (see chapter 2).

Critique of the 3D Test

A widely used method to identify antisemitism, particularly in distinguishing between criticism of Israel and Israel-related antisemitism, is the so-called 3D test. Introduced by Natan Sharansky, former Israeli Minister of Internal Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister, the test asserts that the demonisation and delegitimisation of Israel, as well as the application of double standards to Israeli politics, military actions, etc., constitute instances of antisemitism. However, this definition is disputed among experts, as it is not grounded in research and seeks to establish a general rule without providing clear criteria for what constitutes demonisation, delegitimisation, or double standards in different contexts.[93]

Accordingly, the test is of limited use when it comes to analysing and deconstructing the antisemitic nature of a particular statement or image in context.

Resources

IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism
https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism

Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism
https://jerusalemdeclaration.org

The Nexus Document: https://nexusproject.us/nexus-resources/the-nexus-document/

Zionism

Zionism originated in the late 19th century, influenced by thinkers like Theodor Herzl, Martin Buber, and Max Nordau. It emerged as a political and national ideology advocating for the Jewish people's right to self-determination and the establishment of a sovereign state. While Zionism as a political movement was formalized during this period, the desire for a return to the ancestral Jewish homeland has been a persistent theme in Jewish religious and cultural tradition. At its core, Zionism asserts that the Jewish people, having faced historical persecution, require a nation-state of their own to ensure their survival and safety. It encompasses a range of ideological perspectives, with different factions offering diverse interpretations.[94]

Anti-Zionism

Anti-Zionism, as a political position, often critiques the ideological foundations of Zionism and the policies of the Israeli state. While such critiques can be legitimate, they occasionally intersect with antisemitic sentiments. This convergence is evident when criticisms of Zionism are accompanied by or rooted in longstanding antisemitic stereotypes and tropes, such as dehumanizing Jews or delegitimizing their historical and cultural connections to the region.[95] It's crucial to distinguish that not all anti-Zionism is inherently antisemitic; however, it becomes problematic when political opposition to Zionism merges with broader hostility toward Jewish people. Moreover, the term "Zionism" is sometimes misused as a blanket term encompassing all Jews or Israelis, which can lead to antisemitic dehumanization and justify violence against these groups.[96]

Chapter 4: Antisemitism on Mainstream Social Media as Form of Online Antisemitism

- Develop a critical understanding of how and why social media platforms contribute to the spread of antisemitism
- Empower learners with the ability to deconstruct mechanism, forms and narratives of antisemitism
- Apply knowledge about the particularities of antisemitism on social media in every-day life, professional work and civic engagement

The broad term "online antisemitism" covers all forms of antisemitism that occur on the internet, including antisemitic narratives perpetuated through various platforms such as misleading articles on websites, antisemitic books that deny the Holocaust being sold on e-commerce platforms, or the glorification of Nazi crimes on personal blogs. Meanwhile, antisemitism on social media is a more precise term that encompasses posts, reels, videos, memes, GIFs, emoji combinations and similar content that express and promote hostile attitudes towards Jews and/or Judaism on algorithmically curated platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (former Twitter[97]), TikTok or YouTube.[98] Social media has revolutionised the generation and dissemination of antisemitic hate and prejudice. It enables anyone with access to the internet to publish and consume antisemitic content: to like, share, comment and recommend it at any time and without significant effort, often requiring only a few clicks. Social media has distinct qualities and characteristics in terms of the spread, intensification and normalisation of hateful content in general and antisemitism in particular.

4.1 Algorithmic Dissemination and Normalisation of Antisemitism

Social media platforms rely on user-generated content. This content is curated by algorithms, a mathematical set of rules programmed to define how a given set of data (e.g. social media content) behaves. Additionally, bot-generated content is increasingly becoming a significant factor, further influencing how content is curated and shared on these platforms. Accordingly, the rules "set" by these algorithms determine what users see on their feeds and/or what content is suggested to them.[99] In doing so, algorithms adapt to users preferences and interests, suggesting posts that resemble content the individual user has viewed,[100] posted, liked or shared, or content that like-minded users with similar preferences and interests have engaged with. Therefore, individuals see only a limited selection of all the content and interactions that happen on the respective platform – a selection that tends to confirm and reinforce previously expressed interests, opinions and feelings, including resentment and hate[101]. This fosters the normalisation of antisemitic and other forms of hate speech among these networks of like-minded users.[102] (see Social Validation and Credibility below).

Platforms argue that most of their viewers want personalised content that is relevant to them, which aligns with their business models.[103] Personalised recommendations are designed to enhance user experience, allowing users to quickly access content that matches their interests and preferences. This approach is heavily integrated into the platform's overall strategy, as it boosts user engagement and retention, driving revenue through advertisements and prolonged viewing. However, the problem arises when users actively seek content adjacent to antisemitism, such as far-right podcasts or discussions that subtly promote hateful ideologies.[104]

Moreover, recommendation algorithms can gradually expose users to increasingly radical content.[105] As algorithms constantly learn from user behaviour, they not only amplify antisemitic prejudice and hate but they embed into their code users' antisemitic prejudice and stereotypes, as well as content preferences that are often based on socialisation with antisemitism-informed knowledge and discourses. Accordingly, "algorithmic antisemitism is first generated by what users post, then shapes what users are exposed to, which as a result normalises antisemitism."[106]

Furthermore, social media's business model can rely on monetising the time users spend on their platforms, and recommendation algorithms have the potential to promote content that is likely to attract significant attention and engagement (measured in likes, comments, and shares). They favour content that addresses and triggers users on an emotional level, including user-generated content which is resentful, provocative, angry or hateful. To capture more attention, algorithms boost the visibility of such content on the platform and in users' personal feeds, leading to the increased (and at times viral) dissemination and thus normalisation of incendiary content such as antisemitic speech and images.

Microtargeting

Social media companies collect and monetise user data. Based on these detailed user profiles, they can offer advertisers and other paying customers the means to target a highly specific set of users (based on location, age, political and sexual orientation, religion[107], profession, music taste etc.) through specifically tailored, even personalised messages.

In an advertising context, microtargeting can be leveraged by radical and extremist actors to strategically direct harmful content, such as antisemitic messages or other forms of hate speech, toward specific user groups identified as particularly susceptible to radicalization. In other words, microtargeting can be used to strategically incite verbal and physical violence. This was the case during the genocide against the Rohingya in Myanmar, where the military and extremist groups weaponised Facebook's microtargeting to spread and incite anti-Muslim hate.[108]

The European Digital Services Act (DSA) has introduced measures to address micro-targeting[109]. Specifically, it prohibits targeted advertising aimed at minors and bans the use of sensitive personal data (such as ethnicity, political views, or sexual orientation) for profiling and targeting ads. Platforms are also required to provide greater transparency and control over personalised content, allowing users to opt out of personalised recommendations. These changes are designed to limit the misuse of targeted advertising based on sensitive data and promote more responsible advertising practices online (cp. Chapter 6). Although the DSA was formally adopted in November 2022 and its key provisions began to apply in February 2023, many aspects of the regulation, including those addressing micro-targeting and the transparency of online platforms, are being implemented gradually. The European Commission, alongside national regulators, is responsible for overseeing its enforcement, and platforms are required to comply with these new regulations. However, the full effects of the DSA are likely to unfold gradually, as platforms adapt to the new framework and regulatory bodies begin to enforce the rules with greater rigour. The DSA will require refinement following an evaluation period, taking into account both the emerging challenges and a critical assessment of what has been effective and what has not during the enforcement process.

4.2 Social Validation and Credibility

User engagement with a social media post not only increases its visibility, but also affects the author. For example, comments and likes on Facebook trigger a sense of reward, leading to feelings of accomplishment, joy, and satisfaction.[110] To experience this positive feeling again, users are inclined to post content similar to the original post, hoping to create the same or even stronger effect.[111] If the initial post contained antisemitic content, the desire for social validation may reinforce this behaviour, leading the user to post additional content, which could become more provocative or explicitly antisemitic in order to gain further attention and reinforcement.[112] In this process, the effect (reward) of posting soon becomes more important on a socio-emotional level than the potentially harmful and hurtful consequences of the post or its truthfulness. In addition, other users might perceive likes and comments as indicators of an (antisemitic) post's credibility and social acceptability, and therefore not question its accuracy and instead accept it as fact or legitimate opinion.

4.3 Multimodality of Social Media Content

Social media enables users to consume and share a variety of different forms of content, such as texts, images, animations, short videos, emojis, avatars etc., with social media posts often combining textual, visual, animated and audiovisual elements.[113] Through these combinations, antisemitic messages can be made easily accessible and be communicated in a variety of accessible ways,including in supposedly entertaining or "humorous" ways. As a result, social media encourages almost unlimited creativity when it comes to perpetuation of antisemitism, often adapting and exploiting easily shareable, amusing formats (e.g. memes, GIFs or TikTok videos) or dramatic visual storytelling techniques. Packaging antisemitic hate and prejudice into content units that can be easily consumed and shared is conducive to the at times viral spread of antisemitism, amplified by an algorithmic logic that pushes entertaining, humorous and thus engaging content. Here, images are particularly effective in communicating and ingraining hate: A single picture, meme or cartoon can communicate complex antisemitic narratives and multi-layered hate across language barriers, driving the global spread of antisemitism.

Moreover, communicating antisemitism through the popular, seemingly entertaining and humorous formats can make hateful content appear rather harmless, banal

Activity 4. 5-minute exercise (written individually or verbally in groups of 2-3): Validation on Social Media

Reflect on these questions:

- Why do you post on social media?
- What audience do you have in mind?
- What reactions do you hope for?

Sensitise participants to the need for social validation as an important factor motivating and co-shaping user behaviour on social media platforms.

Hint
While in the previous activities the focus was more on concepts and discussion of different forms of hate, this activity is more personal and aims to encourage learners to reflect on their own use of social media and understand how social validation mechanisms might contribute to posting things that are rewarded with likes/reactions in their network. These reflections should then be framed by the workshop leader.

Notes for Workshop Leader
Summarise the reflections, stressing that the need for attention and/or social validation is deeply human. Stress that this validation can take different forms (likes, comments, expression of feelings via reactions/emojis). Stress that when validation is gained from important peers or users perceived as role models it is especially likely that similar content is posted again to gain even more validation, potentially leading to more radical expressions of antisemitism or of other forms of hate.

Suggestion
This exercise could also be an individual exercise in class with pupils/students who individually reflect on these questions in writing. If the students are comfortable with this idea, they can be invited to submit their answers anonymously (e.g. via Mentimeter) to provide an overview of their reflections.

and as "just a joke", making it harder to recognise and deconstruct their harmful potential. This further contributes to the mainstreaming and normalisation of antisemitism.[114]

Memetic Warfare

Recent research indicates that memetic warfare has become a significant component of modern information warfare, actively employed by various nations.[115] The term describes the strategic use of memes to spread information but also propaganda, and to influence public opinion and perceptions in the competition over narratives, ideologies, and social control on social media.[116] Radical or extremist actors – such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State, Hamas or various far-right movements – also employ this strategy to spread and normalise antisemitism on a large scale and incite violence against Israelis and Jews.

4.4 Lack of Regulation and Effective Tools for Countering Hate Speech and Antisemitism

Social media platforms enable anyone with access to the internet to create a profile and publish posts, reels, images and other content without being bound by journalistic standards or subjected to editorial quality checks. While many hoped that this would foster democratic participation and emancipation, this unregulated environment has also fostered the spread of misinformation and various forms of hate speech. From the start, many social media companies have been hesitant to take responsibility and to self-regulate and/or moderate the content published on their platforms; they have also shown reluctance in terms of sharing information about their content moderation practices or algorithms.

The history of regulation in this area is crucial, particularly the role played by the first EU Code of Conduct on illegal hate speech, which was introduced in 2016. This initiative marked the beginning of structured dialogue between tech companies and NGOs, leading to policy changes on platforms like Facebook, such as its response to Holocaust denial[67]. Additionally, the Code helped establish ongoing collaborations, including Facebook's quarterly roundtables with Jewish organisations and Twitter's (today X) formerly active dehumanisation advisory group. While these co-regulatory efforts were important in raising awareness and fostering collaboration, they

ultimately fell short in driving substantial changes in how platforms handled hate speech and extremism. This limitation set the stage for the eventual introduction of more formal, binding regulation, such as the Digital Service Act (DSA).

The DSA is a supranational legal framework, passed by the European Union (cp. chapter 6) to hold social media platforms accountable, ensuring they tackle harmful content, enhance user safety, and prevent the spread of disinformation. Essentially, it provides a framework designed to enhance transparency and offer insight into the operations of social media platforms, holding them responsible for content moderation, user protection, and data handling. The DSA aims to regulate online platforms in general, and social media platforms in particular (see Chapter 6). As a relatively new regulatory framework, the impact of the DSA on the prevalence, accessibility and severity of antisemitic and other forms of hate speech cannot be assessed yet, and it relies heavily on the work of national coordinators, the passing of national legislation, and the engagement of individuals and civil society in the reporting of hateful and antisemitic content (see below suggestions for action).

Use of automated moderation systems

Algorithms developed for automated content moderation can often identify very explicit expressions of hate and violence which violate legal frameworks and/or the platform's rules on hate speech. However, when it comes to social media posts containing more indirect and implicit forms of antisemitism, moderation algorithms often fail to detect their harmful implications and potential. For example, AI has proven to be unable to distinguish educational content about the Holocaust from posts denying and distorting it.[117] Furthermore, antisemitic messages on social media constantly evolve, for example by employing new antisemitic codewords, punctuation, emojis and GIFs, sometimes in combination. Therefore, moderation algorithms that detect and delete the content are always one step behind those producing it, and their adjustment and training is a labour-intensive process.

Additionally, algorithms used for moderation can reflect the biases inherent in their training data, which may make them less likely to detect more subtle or implicit forms of hate speech, violence, and discrimination—especially those that have become widely normalised over time. While these algorithms are trained specifically for content moderation tasks, which means they typically have a more curated and targeted training set, there is still the potential for bias in the data they are trained on. Unlike general-purpose algorithms, which are exposed to a broad range of content and can suffer from biases due to a lack of specificity in their training data, moderation algorithms are designed to focus on harmful content. However, even with this focus, their training data might still be limited or reflect pre-existing biases in the way certain types of harmful content are identified, leading to gaps in detection, particularly with more implicit or covert forms of harm.

Illegal Content vs. Legal but Harmful Content

Illegal content directly violates the law. Depending on different (national) jurisdictions, this includes hate speech, incitement to violence, terrorist propaganda, child sexual abuse material, or defamation. Legal but harmful content is a term for content that is not against the law, but might cause social, psychological or physical harm to individuals, groups or society. This includes disinformation (e.g. promoting conspiracy narratives), the promotion of harmful lifestyles or depictions of grievous violence. While social media platforms are – in theory[118] – required to prevent or ensure the removal of illegal content, the handling of legal but harmful content is not mandated by law. The rules for handling (e.g. deleting or shadow-banning[119]) such content are governed by regulations, codes of conduct, and voluntary terms of services defined by the social media company and varying between different platforms. Accordingly, content moderation often needs to reflect and interpret the platform's policies and ideals of free speech in relation to the harmful potential of given content.

For a suggestion on how to rethink content moderation, see the policy brief published by the Research Initiative for Digital Dignity: https://www.fordigitaldignity.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AI4Dignity-AI-Extreme-Speech-Policy-Brief-June2021-.pdf

Activity 5. Limitations of Artificial Intelligence Content Moderation

Practice deconstruction skills and sensitize participants to the limitations of AI content moderation.

Task

A text analysis tool (different examples could be used) intended to detect harmful content rated the statement "The Holocaust never happened" as only 28.5% likely to be toxic. While the tool effectively identifies explicit antisemitic expressions as harmful, it often assigns relatively low toxicity scores to more implicit forms of antisemitism. For example, a statement like 'I just don't trust people who are always so good at managing money' may implicitly reflect harmful stereotypes, such as antisemitism, but it might not be flagged as harmful by moderation systems. The tool could assign this statement a much lower toxicity score, meaning it would not be identified as 'toxic' content. The challenge lies in the fact that flagging such content is highly context-dependent, and moderation systems need to improve in their ability to detect implicit harmful speech. It's important that these systems become more refined in identifying subtle forms of harm, while still acknowledging the risk of over-censorship. When systems overreach, they might incorrectly flag content that isn't hate speech, leading to unnecessary censorship. Therefore, striking the right balance between accurately detecting implicit harm and avoiding over-censorship is crucial for effective moderation.

Questions to discuss first in small groups, and afterwards with the whole group:

1. What form of antisemitism does this statement express?

2. Why does this tool not recognize it as antisemitic?

3. Does this tool seem to be a useful tool for detecting antisemitism on social media?

Suggestion for Summarising in whole-group discussion:

- The statement "The Holocaust never happened" represents an instance of secondary antisemitism, as it denies the Holocaust, implicitly rejecting any guilt or responsibility for the crimes committed by the Nazis. It also suggests that witnesses and Jewish Holocaust survivors are lying, portraying them as dishonest and deceitful.

- The statement "I just don't trust people who are always so good at managing money" reflects implicit antisemitism by reinforcing harmful stereotypes about Jewish people and their association with financial success. It does not explicitly mention Jews, but it subtly perpetuates prejudice.

- While the specific workings of text analysis tools are not fully known, they typically operate by detecting keywords, identifying hateful phrases, negative tone, and grammatical structures. The examples provided may not contain words or phrases that are overtly violent, aggressive, or hateful in nature.

- This example underscores the limitations of automated content moderation tools in detecting antisemitic expressions when they don't include explicit hateful language or keywords. In this case, the antisemitic implications arise from the denial of Nazi crimes and the genocide of Jews, as well as from the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. These less "obvious" forms of antisemitism seem to be challenging for AI to recognize.

As the algorithms behind text analysis tools are continually evolving and learning from user feedback, the toxicity rating of these statements could change in the future—especially if many users report them as harmful.

Additionally, antisemitism is often communicated and spread through visual contents, such as images, memes or GIFs. These often convey less explicit, indirect or hyper-referential forms of antisemitism that may rely on text-image or image-image combinations, or that depend on the context they are posted in. Accordingly, visuals are especially hard to recognise as promoting antisemitism or other forms of hate speech, and to deconstruct. If antisemitism is not articulated explicitly in written social media posts,

using e.g. explicitly violent, discriminatory or extremely negative language, detecting it is difficult not only for moderation algorithms,[120] but also for human content moderators.

Considering the number of users and amount of content posted each day, social media platforms tend to employ relatively small content moderation teams. A single moderator might have to review and assess several hundred posts per hour,[121] thus spending only seconds on assessing whether a post violates the law and/or the platform's regulations. Consequently, incidents of less explicit antisemitism are unlikely to be deleted or sanctioned, as content moderators lack the training in contextual knowledge, cultural sensitivity and in-depth expertise, as well as the deconstruction skills and time necessary to identify and assess the hateful and violent implications of such content.

Overall, content moderation – both automated and carried out by human content moderators – is necessary to reduce the presence and spread of explicitly violent and hateful user-generated content via social media platforms. To this end, social media companies must invest in both constant training of their algorithms and in increased, improved and continuous education of their content moderation staff.[122] But content moderation is unlikely to solve the problem of online antisemitism, among other reasons due to its often implicit, context-dependent and ever-changing manifestations. Parallel to legal and regulatory approaches holding social media companies accountable for the illegal and/or harmful contents published and disseminated via their platforms, it is therefore paramount to educate and empower individuals to recognise, deconstruct and appropriately react to antisemitism on social media and online.

Alt-Tech (Fringe) Platforms

Alt-tech platforms are smaller, non-mainstream social media platforms, web forums and messaging services that are created and primarily used by individuals and groups who feel that the community guidelines on mainstream platforms infringe upon their freedom of expression. Here, users can share their extremist political ideologies, hateful messages and disinformation without moderation or sanctions. As a result, alt-tech platforms often host extremist groups, with antisemitic expressions, explicit hate and violent slurs commonly found on these platforms[123]. Examples include: Gab – a social network attracting a primarily far-right user base, Truth Social – a social media platform established by Donald Trump, the video platform Bitchute, and the encrypted messaging service Telegram[124].

Antisemitism and Generative Artificial Intelligence

The advent of generative AI has opened new possibilities for the communication of antisemitic narratives and the production of antisemitic content. Tools such as Dall-E allow users to generate images based on textual descriptions within mere seconds or minutes. This means that manipulated images and video or audio deepfakes conveying antisemitic messages can be created in almost no time and with very limited resources and editing skills. Similarly, tools like ChatGPT can instantaneously produce antisemitic texts at no cost. As such images, videos and texts are often of a relatively high quality, they might not be identifiable as AI-generated "fakes" at first sight, instead appearing as convincing and true. AI-generated images or videos are, among others, used to ridicule Holocaust victims, glorify National Socialism, portray Jews as evil, or fabricate false "evidence" for conspiracy narratives. Moreover, AI can be programmed to operate large numbers of social bots[125] that constantly post, share and reshare antisemitic content, thus contributing to its overall visibility and presence on social media.

Chapter 5: Countering (Online) Antisemitism – Practices and Exercises

- Develop critical awareness of own antisemitic bias / antisemitism-informed knowledge
- Develop awareness of social media validation logics / dynamics of misinformation /contexts and events that fuel the spread of antisemitism
- Develop deconstruction skills and vocabulary that enables participants to recognise and deconstruct antisemitic texts/images
- Provide learners with advice and resources on how to apply and teach these skills in their work as educators, in civic engagement and everyday life as digital citizen

Antisemitism online and on social media is not confined to digital spaces and platforms; it impacts both individuals and society. As many internet users spend several hours a day online, exposure to hate speech, violence, and implicitly or explicitly antisemitic content can affect not only individuals and groups targeted by these expressions, but also any users who witness and consume them. Jewish users have identified social media as the primary environment in which they experience antisemitism.[126] In interviews, they have further reported that encounters with antisemitism on social media created feelings of isolation and led them to hide their Jewish identity, seeking contact primarily with other Jews to avoid becoming targets of antisemitism.[127]

Moreover, the presence of antisemitic expressions online poses a threat to a democratic and pluralistic society, as they promote hateful, discriminatory, exclusionary, and violent ideologies. Given the algorithmically amplified spread and normalisation of antisemitism on social media, young people are particularly likely to encounter it in their everyday media use. Research has shown that young Germans, despite rejecting antisemitism and having undergone educational programmes focusing on the Holocaust, were unable to identify and deconstruct the antisemitism they encountered in their everyday use of social media.[128]

To turn the rejection of antisemitism into actions that challenge it, educational programmes must convey an understanding of present-day antisemitism online as an exclusionary ideology with a long history of violence and discrimination, culminating in the Holocaust, and which continues to have violent and harmful consequences. Furthermore, individuals should be empowered to recognise, deconstruct, and critically evaluate different forms and manifestations of antisemitism they may encounter in their everyday online practices and when consuming media and social media content.

5.1 Preparing Activities for Educational Work on Antisemitism

Antisemitism-Critical Education: Rules and Standards Checklist

This checklist is designed to ensure that discussions about antisemitism in educational settings are productive, inclusive, and emotionally safe for all participants.

- **Create a Safe and Respectful Environment.** Establish a setting where open interaction is encouraged, while prioritising safety and respect. Allow space for respectful disagreement and making mistakes, without fear of judgement.
- **Set Clear Expectations for Dialogue.** Outline clear rules for respecting and valuing the dignity and humanity of all individuals. Emphasise that all perspectives and voices are welcome and respected within the discussion.
- **Commitment to Respect.** Ensure that all participants agree to uphold a standard of respect for one another, both within and outside the classroom or discussion space.
- **Address Violations of Rules.** Develop a plan for responding to any breaches, such as discriminatory remarks or antisemitic language. Discuss how educators and participants will handle situations where these rules are deliberately or repeatedly violated.
- **Acknowledge Emotions and Personal Experiences.** Educators should engage respectfully with participants, recognising their emotions and personal experiences. Provide space for the expression of diverse perspectives without judgement.
- **Foster Open, Constructive Communication.** Encourage honest and thoughtful dialogue, while maintaining a focus on mutual respect and understanding. Ensure that all participants feel heard and valued during discussions.

Reflecting on the Role as an Educator

When addressing antisemitism or other forms of hate, educators should reflect on their own biases and position in both societal structures of discrimination and the learning environment. In schools or other learning settings, educators hold authority and must critically examine how they use it. They should avoid moralising or passing personal judgements and instead encourage group reflection on antisemitic ideas, stereotypes, and biases. It's important to create a space where participants feel safe to make mistakes, recognising that hateful ideas are often learned through socialisation and require time to unlearn. Educators should guide this process without judging participants' emotions.

Teaching in Diverse Settings

Depending on their own experiences, biographies or personalities – e.g. previous experiences with antisemitism, discrimination, bullying, hate speech and violence (physical or otherwise) – participants' reactions to antisemitic or other hateful material might vary. Participants who come from backgrounds with different perpetrator biographies might strongly react to the topic of persecution, violence and genocide in National Socialist Germany. As victims of Nazi persecution included not only Jews, but also Sinti and Roma, queer individuals, and people with disabilities, learners who have biographical or personal connections to or identify with these victimised groups might be particularly affected by these materials and topics. Moreover, young people with experiences of marginalisation and discrimination might strongly identify with victim groups. It is of utmost importance to consider the potential impact on participants before teaching, and to take their emotions and reactions seriously, acknowledging them throughout the learning process.

If participants reproduce antisemitic messages, it is important to address and criticise this in order to sensitise them to the harmful and violent implications of such messages. It is the educator's responsibility to stop antisemitic remarks, prevent their repetition, and point out that their antisemitic implications are not acceptable – however, without labelling the respective participants as antisemites and instead frame the narrative as antisemitic and explain why. Additionally, educators must avoid attributing antisemitism to specific groups based on their religious, ethnic, or social backgrounds. Such generalisations can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and undermine the goals of reflection and understanding.

Antisemitism-Critical Education in the Wake of October 7, 2023

The attack on October 7, 2023, in the south of Israel, the war in Gaza, and the continued attacks on Israel have exacerbated tensions that affect educational settings in general, but particularly in relation to the topic of antisemitism. Social media and online platforms have played a significant role in amplifying disinformation, spreading graphic depictions of extreme violence, and fostering deeply polarised narratives, including antisemitic and anti-Palestinian rhetoric.

Therefore, antisemitism-critical education must acknowledge the profound emotional and psychological impact these events may have had on individuals. Many participants may have been directly or indirectly affected by exposure to hate and violence, both online and offline. Their emotions, pain, and personal experiences should be met with empathy, respect, compassion, and a strong commitment to solidarity, affirming the shared humanity of everyone involved.

Educators play a vital role in this context, serving primarily as moderators who provide structure and guidance while ensuring that participants retain agency in shaping their learning experience. They can achieve this by creating an environment that is inclusive, free from judgement and fear of dismissal or condemnation, where participants feel safe and valued. These spaces must empower participants to express their thoughts and emotions authentically, engaging with difficult topics with honesty. Comparisons drawn during discussions should be approached as part of participants' efforts to make sense of these complex realities and only be critically examined when they perpetuate antisemitic stereotypes or harmful narratives.

Reacting to Antisemitic Incidents

These examples help create a learning environment that promotes understanding, respect, and constructive dialogue, ensuring that antisemitism is challenged while also providing space for growth.

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Protect and show solidarity with those affected by (antisemitic) hate speech

- If a student shares that they've experienced antisemitic remarks, respond by offering support, such as saying, "I'm really sorry you had to go through that. It's important that you feel safe here, and we'll make sure to address this." Encourage others to offer support and solidarity as well.

Avoid punishing the speaker through shaming, calling out, or exclusion; focus on empowering them to recognise their mistake and embrace the opportunity to relearn

- If a participant makes an offensive statement, avoid embarrassing or isolating them. Instead, say something like, "I understand where you're coming from, but that comment is harmful. Let's discuss why it's problematic and how we can think about this in a more respectful way." Offer resources or further discussion to encourage learning.

Keep in mind that everyone is socialised with forms of exclusion and hate – avoid making moralizing statements

- Instead of saying, "You should know better," try, "Many of us are raised in environments where these ideas are common, but it's important that we recognise how they can hurt others. Let's talk about why this is harmful." This acknowledges that everyone may have been exposed to harmful ideas but emphasises growth and understanding.

Avoid labelling individuals as antisemitic

- Rather than saying, "You're antisemitic," approach the situation with curiosity: "The statement you made seems problematic because it can perpetuate harmful stereotypes. Let's explore why this is an issue." This avoids immediately labelling the individual, allowing room for dialogue and understanding.

Avoid claiming that a statement is antisemitic without a clarification – always explain why and how something is antisemitic

- Instead of simply saying, "That's antisemitic," explain, "This statement is problematic because it denies the reality of the Holocaust, which can perpetuate harmful stereotypes about Jewish people. Holocaust denial has historically been used to downplay the suffering of Jewish communities." Providing context helps others understand the reasoning behind the claim.

Deconstruct antisemitism and avoid reproducing it

- If a stereotype about Jewish people is mentioned, rather than accepting or repeating it, challenge the notion by saying, "That's a harmful stereotype that has been used to marginalise Jewish people for a long time. Let's explore why it's not true and how it perpetuates discrimination."

Develop a considerate way of speaking that addresses antisemitism without, for example, discriminating against speakers

- If someone makes an antisemitic remark, you might respond with, "I hear that you have a different perspective, but what you said could be harmful to others. Let's talk about why that statement could perpetuate stereotypes about Jewish people, and work on framing things in a way that is more respectful." This approach addresses the issue while being sensitive to the speaker's willingness to learn and change.

Reflecting on the use of potentially harmful Material and Examples

When teaching about antisemitism, racism, or other forms of hatred and oppression, it is inevitable to engage with the concepts and sometimes violent content that must be identified, deconstructed and challenged. To learn how to recognise and deconstruct antisemitism, participants must first become familiar with antisemitic narratives, conspiracies and stereotypes, and the imagery and (coded) language that construct and reproduce antisemitism. However, the fact that this content can be distressing and overwhelming, especially for younger participants, must be considered and taken seriously. While it is disputed whether trigger warnings are effective in reducing distress when dealing with potentially upsetting material, they enable individuals to make an informed decision on whether to engage with such content.[129] If participants prefer not to be confronted with such materials or find content they are exposed to overwhelming, educators should offer alternative approaches.

Mere exposure to violent content does not fundamentally lead to critical reflection. It must always be accompanied by thoughtful discussions and reflections that actively immerse participants in a deeper examination and critical engagement with the material.

However, the use of Holocaust images and footage in the context of critically educating about antisemitism should be carefully evaluated to determine their appropriateness and potential impact on participants, ensuring that their use does not lead to trauma or distress.

In general, antisemitism-critical education should strive to minimise the use of violent content wherever possible and never reproduce antisemitic text or imagery. Habitual viewing and normalisation of antisemitism can be irritated by methods such as striking through text containing hateful language or marking antisemitic images with a circle-backslash symbol, encouraging participants to critically question and reject such content. To deconstruct such material visually and linguistically, specific words can be crossed out, and highly stereotypical aspects of images can be censored or explained with appropriate annotations. Below, you can find additional recommendations for dealing with hateful and violent material in educational settings.

5.2 Fostering the Development of Critical Awareness and Deconstruction Skills

The best way to combat antisemitic narratives, conspiracies, and stereotypes is to help individuals identify, break down, and critically assess their harmful and hateful impacts. According to Hübscher & Pfaff (2024) Deconstruction is the "social practice of decoding the complex layers of meaning" that a image, a text or a meme conveys.", hat helps individuals recognise, question, and reflect on hateful or violent content and how it is rooted in historical, social, cultural contexts, and power structures.[130]

The following three exercises are important because they encourage people to reflect on their own biases, stereotypes, and understanding of antisemitism. They help build the skills and vocabulary needed to recognise, challenge, and discuss antisemitic incidents, using the knowledge of antisemitism types and mechanisms in social media shared earlier. These exercises are intended for workshop or training participants and can also inspire activities with their peers in different learning environments.

Activity 6. Deconstructing antisemitic ideology in Educational Material

Find suggestions for solutions in the appendix

Duration
60-90 minutes

Empower participants to identify and critically analyse antisemitic ideology in texts

Support them in developing language practices that actively avoid reproducing antisemitism by rewriting inappropriate text material in a thoughtful and responsible manner.

Hint
This activity trains learners active deconstructions skills and makes them enter into a critical discussion about how/why a certain example is antisemitic, and encourages them to develop a vocabulary for discussing and criticising antisemitism and unlearn internalised antisemitic language and stereotypes

Problem/Tasks
Antisemitic stereotypes, language and imagery are frequently reproduced in educational material. The following examples are taken from educational resources on National Socialism and the Holocaust.[131] The following task should be discussed in small groups (c. 3-4 participants). At the end, results of these reflections and exercises are gathered and discussed with the whole group.

Rewrite these brief paragraphs (one for each group) to reshape the narrative in a way that avoids reproducing National Socialist language and antisemitic content.

a. A radical turning point in the lives of Jews in Germany came with the so-called Nuremberg Laws. [...] From the Nazi perspective, Jews were considered members of a threatening "opposing race" (...). Nazi propaganda repeatedly portrayed how "international Jewry" sought to seize world domination, which was equated with the destruction of the German people.[132]

b. Nazi propaganda from the late 1920s often depicted a stark contrast between a crooked, ugly, and sneaky Jewish man and a straight-backed, beautiful, and strong-willed Aryan woman. This portrayal was a deliberate attempt to promote the Nazis' racial ideology by emphasising supposed differences between the two "races."[133]

False Information, Disinformation and Malinformation[134]

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), through its educational programming distinguishes between three main categories of information: misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. This differentiation is based on the intent behind the dissemination of information and its potential to cause harm.

Misinformation refers to false or inaccurate information that is shared without harmful intent. Examples include unintentional errors such as inaccurate captions, incorrect dates or statistics, translation mistakes, or satire that is misunderstood as factual.

Disinformation involves the deliberate spread of false information with the intention to deceive or cause harm. This includes fabricated or intentionally manipulated audio-visual content as well as purposefully crafted conspiracy theories or rumours.

Malinformation refers to genuine information that is taken out of its original context and shared with the intent to cause harm. Examples include the deliberate publication of private information, such as revenge porn, or the intentional alteration of the context, date, or time of authentic content to damage individuals, organizations, or nations.

These categories help in understanding the different forms of information manipulation and the motivations behind their spread.

Activity 6.1. Understanding the Differences Between False Information, Disinformation, and Malinformation, and the Motives Behind Them

Duration
60-80 minutes

Target Group
Basic knowledge

Find suggestions for solutions in the appendix

- Develop the ability to recognise disinformation.
- Understand the motives that drive the spread of disinformation on social media.

Task
Introduce the three definitions (false information, disinformation, and malinformation) and engage participants in a discussion of local, national, or regional examples for each type, ensuring they grasp the distinctions.

Facilitate a discussion with participants using the following question: What could be the motives behind the intentional spread of disinformation? Record their responses on a flip chart.

Next, introduce the motives behind disinformation (using the "Motives Behind Disinformation" infobox) and encourage participants to share examples related to these motives, including combinations of all three, that are relevant to their own experiences. Examples from pop culture can be particularly engaging for youth groups.

Conclusion
To wrap up the session, ask participants why information manipulation is harmful and what actions society can take, both individually and structurally, to combat it.

An additional resource, "How to Spot and Fight Disinformation", developed by the EU Commission, could be a useful reference: Toolkit for Teachers on Disinformation.

Motives behind disinformation

These are some of the most common motives behind disinformation, but it's important to note that others exist, and these motives often overlap or reinforce one another.

Political Motives

- Misinformation and disinformation are often weaponized to serve political agendas.
- Attacking political opponents: False or misleading claims are used to damage the credibility, reputation, or integrity of political rivals. This can include smear campaigns (e.g. coordinated hate campaigns) conspiracy narratives or manipulated content.
- Enhancing one's own position: Groups may spread exaggerated successes or fabricated threats to rally support, justify policies, or stir public emotions like fear.
- Disinformation can be spread to further ideological goals.

Financial Motives

- Some actors use misinformation primarily to generate income, exploiting fear, uncertainty, and outrage to drive clicks or sales.
- Distributing alleged remedies for diseases: During crises false health claims and miracle cures are promoted to sell unregulated products.
- Advertising through ads on websites: Clickbait headlines and false reports are used to generate high traffic, which is then monetized through advertising revenue.
- Selling products such as clothing, books, etc.: Influencers or brands may push emotionally charged or misleading content to promote products aligned with ideological or sensational narratives.

Trolling Motives

- Trolls are often motivated by a desire for attention or the enjoyment of creating chaos. However, ideology and money can also play a role, and these motives can often overlap.
- Seeking recognition from other trolls: Trolling communities often reward members for creating viral content or causing disruption, fostering a culture of escalation.
- Causing harm to individuals targeted by misinformation campaigns: This includes doxxingi, harassment, or targeted hate campaigns, often directed at women, activists, LGBTQ+ individuals, or other minority groups.
- Expressing a sense of superiority: Trolls may feel empowered by manipulating others or disrupting public conversations, taking satisfaction in deceiving or provoking people.

Activity 6.2. Awareness of Disinformation, Social Validation and Polarising Dynamics on Social Media

Additional resources are provided on the website of "Bad News"

Duration
45-60 minutes

Learn to recognise disinformation.

Understand the dynamics that foster the spread of disinformation on social media.

Task
Participants play the Bad News game.[135] Afterwards, participants share their experience reflecting on the following questions (in small groups or the whole group, depending on total number of participants):

- What kind of posts/activities led to validation (e.g. followers and likes) in the game?
- Was your experience in the game like your experiences on social media? What is similar and what is different? What elements reminded you of your "real" experiences on social media?
- Could you identify antisemitic elements or potential in the "news" you posted?

Resource
Background information for educators to prepare for using the Bad News game in educational settings: https://www.getbadnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Bad-News-Game-info-sheet-for-educators-English-1-1-2.pdf

Activity 7. Unpacking Antisemitism on Social Media

Find suggestions for solutions in the appendix

Practise competences of recognising and deconstructing contemporary (online) anti-semitism on social media.

Duration
60-90 minutes

Task
Print the three PowerPoint slides featuring the examples for deconstruction and distribute them to small groups of learners, with each group receiving one example. In small groups of 3-4 participants, participants deconstruct different examples (one post per group). They can use a guide to deconstruction categories (see appendix) to facilitate this exercise. Afterwards, participants present the results of the deconstruction exercise to the whole group, followed by a concluding discussion. The goal is not to achieve a uniform solution or consensus but to promote a deep, power-critical engagement with the mechanisms and manifestations of antisemitism. This approach empowers participants to develop a thoughtful and effective language practice for addressing and communicating about antisemitism.

Guiding Questions for Group Discussion

Example A

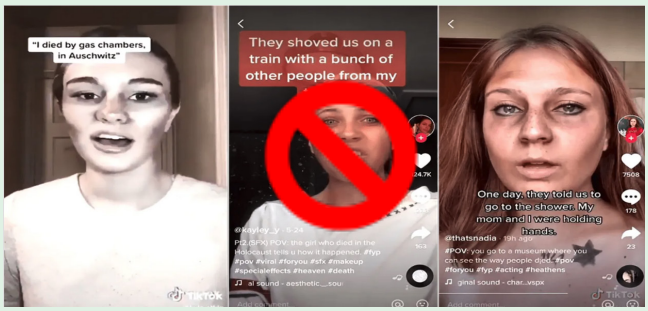
1. What (antisemitic) constructs can be found?
2. How does social media contribute to the creation and spread of this content?

Screenshot of an antisemitic post co-opting the Star of David, as major international brand logos of companies accused of supporting Israel are arranged in the shape of a hexagram. A hexagram is a six-pointed star or a figure made up of two overlapping triangles, one pointing upwards and the other downwards. It is often referred to as the "Star of David" in Jewish culture. In addition to its symbolic meaning, a hexagram can also refer to a geometric shape with six sides, or more generally, a symbol composed of six lines, commonly used in various fields, including astrology, divination and symbolism. Source: Screenshot from delated Instagram account, August 16, 2024.

Example B

1. What (antisemitic) constructs can be found?

2. How does social media help to create and spread this content?

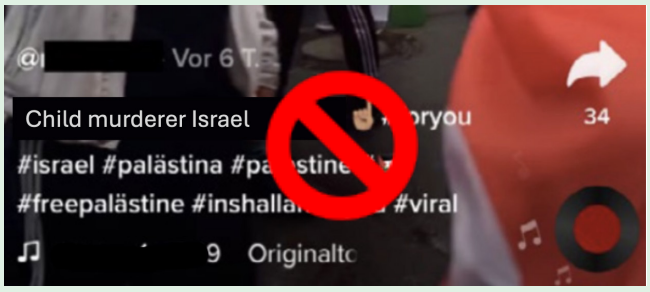


These reels were published as part of the so-called "Holocaust Challenge" on TikTok in 2020. Source: https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemorybackup/2020/09/10/tiktok-holocaustchallenge/

Example C

1. What (antisemitic) constructs can be found? (see appendix)

2. How does social media help to create and spread this content?



Screenshot of reel from TikTok
Source: https://www.uni-due.de/imperia/md/content/biwi/antisemitismus-jugend/module_eng.pdf

Suggested Questions for Concluding Discussion and Reflection:

- How difficult was it to deconstruct these examples? If so, what made it difficult?

- Did other participants identify antisemitic elements you had missed? Which ones?

Resource for Deconstructing Antisemitic Content

- As introduction for the deconstruction exercise, this video explains how social media contents containing antisemitic hatred and narratives though written text and images can be deconstructed: https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/deconstructing-antisemitic-memes

Additional Resources:

- The organisation **Facing History & Ourselves** offers a large variety of resources for antisemitism-critical teaching for different age groups: https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library?f%5B0%5D=teaching_resources_topics%3AAntisemitism. They also offer material for education on the Holocaust and issues such as racism, equity and inclusion, or democracy and civic engagement.

- The educational program **Solutions Not Sides** offers a variety of resources for addressing antisemitism and other issues related to hate speech, discrimination, (political) polarisation and the Israel-Palestine conflict: https://solutionsnotsides.co.uk/learning-resources

5.3 Reacting and Responding to Antisemitic Content in the digital sphere

Beyond developing and applying the competences to identify and deconstruct (online) antisemitism in its manifold and constantly evolving forms, critical awareness and commitment to combat antisemitism can be practiced through the following actions:

Reporting and Blocking

Reporting incidents of online antisemitism to organisations that systematically monitor antisemitic hate and violence[136] can contribute to the documentation and improved knowledge about the spread, community and civil society policies that call on governments to hold platforms more accountable, severity, frequency and normalisation of antisemitic hate online. While social media platforms offer the possibility to report content that violates laws and/or platform regulations, there is currently no option to report content specifically because of its antisemitic implications. Social media platforms' content moderation and deletion practices lack transparency, and reporting only rarely leads to the (quick) deletion of such posts or the banning of respective accounts. Moreover, individuals engaged in reporting antisemitic contents might experience frustration and fatigue when they see that their efforts yield no considerable effects.[137] To protect oneself from being exposed to (more) antisemitic content and harassment, individual users can adjust their privacy settings on social media platforms or block accounts that spread hatred and violence.

Under the Digital Service Act (DSA, see also Chapter 6), Civil Society Organisations can aspire to become so-called trusted flaggers, taking an active role in identifying and reporting of harmful social media content, implementing the regulatory ambitions to hold social media platforms accountable for the content hosted on their platforms. As the DSA is being implemented, research is expected to assess the effectiveness and impact of reporting harmful content within its legal framework.

Showing Solidarity with Those Victimised and Targeted by (Online) Antisemitism

Another way to respond to (online) antisemitism is by showing solidarity with those affected. When witnessing an antisemitic attack aimed at a specific individual, this could involve reaching out to that person (e.g., via a private message), expressing your solidarity, acknowledging that such attacks are violent and unacceptable, and, if appropriate, asking what kind of support they would appreciate. It is particularly important, especially in educational settings, for facilitators in guiding roles to address harmful comments when they arise.

In the digital space, within the context of democratic discourse and digital citizenship, signalling to the "silent listeners" is essential. In many instances, online antisemitism not only targets individuals directly but also reinforces antisemitic narratives, conspiracies, and stereotypes within the digital democratic discourse. Here, solidarity can be expressed publicly, for example, in statements that: reject, criticise, and/or address antisemitism as unacceptable and harmful; express empathy with victimised groups; or deconstruct and problematise a specific incident of online antisemitism (see PowerPoint example). Publicly declaring solidarity may lead to becoming a target of (antisemitic) hate and harassment, so it should be approached with careful consideration of the associated risks, ensuring that appropriate legal and mental support is in place.

If your relatives or close friends may (unintentionally) be spreading antisemitism online, you could address this in a personal conversation, if you feel confident and comfortable doing so. When having such a conversation, the primary aim should be to explain the antisemitic implications of their statement and highlight why such expressions are harmful. It is important to differentiate between the antisemitic narratives or conspiracies and the person who may have inadvertently reproduced them without malicious intent.

Activity 8. Developing Ideas for Addressing Online Antisemitism

Duration: 45-60 minutes

First, discuss in small groups which institutions or individuals could be contacted when witnessing an antisemitic or otherwise hateful incident online, e.g. on WhatsApp, TikTok, Discord or Snapchat. Afterwards, reconvene as a whole group to share and compile the ideas, ensuring everyone is informed about appropriate resources and support channels. Finally, collaboratively brainstorm and formulate specific ideas on how your school, youth club, or similar institution can support you in addressing antisemitic incidents.

If relevant to the context, it may also be helpful to discuss the benefits and considerations of each contact channel. What challenges might arise when seeking help, and how can they be addressed?

Additional Information and Resources:
OSCE Teaching Aid "Dealing with Online Antisemitism https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/1/441134.pdf

Counter Speech on Social Media

Counter speech involves challenging harmful, hateful, or conspiratorial messages, such as those found in antisemitic posts, articles, or comments. It is often promoted in anti-extremism and antisemitism-critical programmes as a valuable tool for fostering dialogue and reducing hate. When used effectively, counter speech can help disarm harmful narratives, provide alternative perspectives, and offer support to targeted communities.

One of the key reasons counter speech is so important is because of the signalling effect it has on silent listeners. Hate speech often creates the illusion that those who spread it are more numerous and supported than they actually are. This can lead to the normalisation of harmful ideas and an increased sense of division and hostility. By responding with counter speech, we send a clear message that these harmful views are not acceptable and do not reflect the views of the majority. It can help shift the conversation towards tolerance and understanding, showing that hate has no place in the dialogue.

However, the nature of social media algorithms can complicate its effectiveness. Engaging with an antisemitic post or comment may inadvertently increase its visibility and reach, amplifying the very hate it seeks to challenge. Furthermore, while counter speech can counteract harmful rhetoric, it does not necessarily lead to the removal of antisemitic content or prevent its creation. Those who engage in counter speech also risk becoming targets of online harassment, verbal violence, and antisemitic attacks themselves.

- **Effective Counter Speech**
  While counter speech plays an important role in combating hate online, its effectiveness and risks must be carefully considered. To reflect its impact and reduce risks, here are some strategies:

- **Choose the Right Platform**
  Consider whether engaging in a particular conversation will contribute positively to the discussion or merely amplify the harmful content. In some cases, it may be more effective to report the content to platform moderators or engage in offline dialogue.

- **Remain Calm and Fact-Based**
  Responding with factual information and measured, calm language is more likely to defuse aggression than escalating the situation. Avoid getting caught up in emotional exchanges.

- **Focus on Educating, Not Confronting**
  Frame counter speech as an opportunity to inform, not to confront. Providing alternative viewpoints or sharing educational resources can help dismantle harmful narratives without escalating tensions.

- **Support Those Affected**
  Sometimes, the best counter speech is showing solidarity with those targeted by hate. Amplifying the voices of marginalised groups or showing support through positive messages can be a powerful response.

- **Know When to Disengage**
  If the conversation becomes hostile or if engaging further could put your safety at risk, know when to disengage. Protecting your well-being should be a priority.

Example:

Scenario: An antisemitic comment appears under a social media post, claiming that "Jews control the media and the government."

Ineffective Response: "You're an antisemite! You should be ashamed of yourself!"

This type of response may escalate the situation, leading to more hate-filled replies.

Effective Counter Speech: "Actually, this is a common antisemitic stereotype that has been debunked by many credible sources, including historians and social scientists. It's important to recognise that generalisations about any group can contribute to harm and division. If you're interested in learning more about the history of these harmful stereotypes and their impact, here are some resources..."

Chapter 6: Understanding the Legal and Policy Framework for Addressing Online Antisemitism

As the previous chapters have laid out, online antisemitism remains a pervasive issue that demands a comprehensive, coordinated approach. Civil society organisations (CSOs), practitioners, and educators need to understand the legal and policy frameworks that govern efforts to combat antisemitic hate speech, as they shape the tools and strategies available to address this harmful phenomenon. This chapter explores the vital role of policy in addressing antisemitism in digital spaces, providing basic understanding of the frameworks and emphasising how CSOs, practitioners and educators and policymakers can actively contribute to these processes. It highlights the need for a dynamic, adaptive policy approach that is responsive to emerging challenges such as new technological platforms, the evolution of antisemitic rhetoric, and the global spread of hate networks.

As technology evolves, policy frameworks must be able to adapt to the challenges posed by AI-driven content, decentralised platforms, and algorithmic biases that can amplify hate speech.While the Digital Services Act (DSA) provides a strong foundation for regulating digital platforms, it is clear that more specific regulatory measures will be needed to address the complexities of certain platforms, such as blockchain-based networks.[138] These platforms, due to their decentralised nature, present unique challenges, including the potential for harmful content, such as hate speech, to spread without effective moderation. In such cases, the DSA alone may not be sufficient to fully address these risks. Rather than relying solely on new regulations, a more effective approach could involve strengthening and evolving existing frameworks. The lessons learned from the enforcement of the DSA will likely inform necessary adjustments, allowing for a more nuanced and practical regulation based on real-world experiences. For instance, the DSA may prompt platforms to implement clearer procedures for reporting antisemitic content and better communication with affected users and advocacy groups. As for blockchain-based platforms, while they are not explicitly excluded from the DSA, their application under the Act may vary depending on their specific function. The DSA generally applies to intermediary services, including hosting providers, online platforms, and search engines. However, decentralised platforms such as blockchain networks may face challenges in enforcement due to their lack of a central authority. Nevertheless, blockchain platforms offering intermediary services or hosting user-generated content are still subject to the DSA, particularly in relation to content moderation, transparency, and user protection. In this context, the role of Civil Society Organisations is crucial. CSOs can advocate for updates to the regulatory framework, ensuring that policies remain responsive to emerging developments, including new technologies and platforms. Their involvement is key to ensuring that regulations remain adaptable and capable of addressing evolving risks.

Moreover, online antisemitism does not exist in isolation but often intersects with other forms of discrimination, such as racism and xenophobia. This intersectionality highlights the shared structures of prejudice that underpin various forms of hate. Recognising these commonalities encourages broader, collaborative approaches to tackling hate speech, which is essential for CSOs and educators working to create a more inclusive and just society. Policies should take into account how antisemitism is interwoven with other hate-driven ideologies, fostering a multi-dimensional approach to addressing online hate.[139]

Social media platforms play a central role in amplifying antisemitism due to the nature of their algorithms, which prioritise engagement. These platforms' amplification of harmful content necessitates tailored regulatory responses that address how antisemitic content is disseminated and magnified through algorithmic systems. A robust policy framework should account for the specific dynamics of these platforms to ensure that antisemitism and other forms of hate speech are effectively mitigated.[140]

Furthermore, policy frameworks must be data-driven to ensure that they are responsive to the evolving nature of online antisemitism. Ongoing research is essential for understanding the patterns and impact of hate speech online and evaluating the effectiveness of existing interventions. CSOs, governments, and educators should collaborate to monitor trends, such as the spread of antisemitic content during global events, and to assess how well policies are working to reduce harm. By leveraging data and collaborating across sectors, CSOs can advocate for evidence-based improvements to the regulatory framework.[141]

Active engagement in the policymaking process is essential for ensuring that online antisemitism is

addressed within digital regulations. CSOs have a pivotal role in influencing policy decisions, advocating for stronger protections against antisemitic content, and ensuring that policies are enforced effectively. For practitioners and educators, understanding the intricacies of the legal and policy frameworks is crucial for advocating for change and for engaging with policymakers to ensure that antisemitism remains a priority within digital regulations.[142]

6.1 The EU Commission Strategy Against Antisemitism and Combatting Online Antisemitism

The EU Commission's Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021-2030) aims to combat antisemitism in all its forms and promote Jewish life across Europe. The strategy focuses on four key pillars:

1. Prevention – Tackling the root causes of antisemitism through education, promoting Holocaust remembrance, and raising awareness about the dangers of antisemitism.

2. Protection – Strengthening the security of Jewish communities and institutions, ensuring the protection of Jewish life both offline and online, and improving the monitoring of antisemitic incidents.

3. Prosecution – Ensuring that antisemitic crimes are properly investigated, prosecuted, and punished, while also strengthening judicial cooperation across Member States.

4. Promoting Jewish Life – Supporting the visibility of Jewish culture, traditions, and communities, and fostering an environment where Jewish communities can thrive.

A central focus of the strategy is addressing online antisemitism by holding tech platforms accountable for removing antisemitic content and by ensuring that EU Member States implement strong legal frameworks to combat hate speech online. The strategy also encourages Member States to develop National Action Plans to combat antisemitism, and emphasises the importance of cooperation among stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and tech companies.

For more information, you can read the full strategy: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/freedom-expression_en

6.2 National Action Plans

National action plans (NAPs) are essential tools for countries to address antisemitism in a comprehensive, coordinated manner. These plans serve as a roadmap for governments, civil society organisations (CSOs), and other stakeholders to implement measures that prevent and counter antisemitism both offline and online. Given the growing scope of online antisemitism, it is increasingly important for these national strategies to incorporate specific measures targeting digital spaces.

What to consider for NAPs?

- A central component of any effective NAP should be a definition of antisemitism that aligns with international standards, such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. It is also vital for ensuring that contemporary forms of antisemitism, which are often expressed in digital spaces, are included. For example, online narratives targeting Jewish communities or the spread of Holocaust denial through social media need to be specifically addressed in these action plans to ensure a modern (see previous chapters).

- NAPs should also include strategies for education, community resilience, and victim empowerment. Education initiatives are key to promoting understanding and awareness and critical self-reflection, particularly for younger generations who are more likely to encounter antisemitic content online. These initiatives should include awareness programs that help individuals recognise antisemitism in all its forms—both online and offline—and that foster positive intergroup relations (see chapter 5). In addition, strengthening community resilience is necessary to ensure that Jewish communities have the resources and support they need. Providing avenues for victims to report incidents and receive support is another critical aspect of these action plans.[143]

- A key challenge in addressing online antisemitism is developing specific measures for monitoring and combating it across digital platforms. Effective action plans should outline clear steps for collaborating with tech platforms, as they play a central role in the dissemination of antisemitic content. These measures might include agreements for platforms to swiftly remove illegal or harmful content, as well as provisions for regular data-sharing to track the spread of antisemitic narratives. Collaborative efforts

with tech companies are crucial for ensuring that antisemitism is not only detected but also swiftly acted upon. Source: Digital Services Act (DSA) - European Commission

- One actionable step in this context could be the creation of multi-stakeholder forums that bring together policymakers and CSOs, to draft and implement national action plans. These forums can serve as platforms for dialogue, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process. CSOs in particular have a valuable role to play in these forums by providing evidence-based recommendations on how antisemitic content spreads and the impact of specific policies. Drawing from data on the proliferation of antisemitism, including trends observed during global events (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic or geopolitical crises), CSOs can demonstrate the urgency for stronger regulatory responses.

- Moreover, data collection mechanisms should be embedded into national action plans to help monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This could involve regular assessments of online antisemitism trends and reporting systems that enable civil society, educators, and tech platforms to share insights and track progress. In the digital age, it is critical that such data be gathered in real-time and used to continuously refine and improve policies. Access to data is also essential for independent audits and academic research,[144] which can further contribute to a nuanced understanding of how antisemitism spreads online.

The European Network on Monitoring Antisemitism

ENMA is a coalition of Jewish and non-Jewish civil-society organisations in Europe, with the goal of providing internationally comparable data on antisemitic incidents.

ENMA aims to build a sustainable reporting infrastructure that will serve Jewish communities and affected persons across Europe. Furthermore, ENMA serves as a gateway to data on antisemitism for Jewish communities, decision makers, academics and journalists. https://enma.eu/

6.3 The Landscape of information manipulation plays a role in the amplification of antisemitism online

Misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation, often part of FIMI (see chapter 3-4), have become central concerns in today's online world. These terms refer to the manipulation or distortion of information, whether intentional or not (compare infobox in chapter 4). The European Union, through institutions like the European External Action Service (EEAS), has recognised the geopolitical dimension of disinformation, particularly from state actors like Russia, China, and Iran. However, the challenge remains that attributing these actions (similar to detecting domestic actors spreading hate) is often difficult, making it harder to combat.[145] Moreover, violent extremist content (often including antisemitic content), terrorist material, child sexual abuse material (CSAM), and other illegal online content (such as self-harm promotion) further complicate the landscape. While the overlap of content can present certain challenges in the context of content moderation, the core issue is straightforward: if any part of the content is deemed illegal and platforms are duly informed of its presence, they assume liability. Consequently, it becomes their responsibility to remove the offending content to comply with legal and regulatory standards.[146]

The rise of digital platforms has significantly shifted the dynamics of public discourse (see chapter 4), and proportionally there are fewer traditional gatekeepers such as journalists who vet information before it reaches a mass audience. This has led to the proliferation of disinformation, as the online "disinhibition effect" removes nonverbal cues and social regulation, allowing users to spread harmful content without immediate consequences.[147]

6.4 Navigating the Digital Services Act (DSA): Processes, Promises, and Persistent Challenges

Understanding the Digital Services Act (DSA) is crucial for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working to combat online antisemitism, as the Act provides a regulatory framework that can help mitigate the spread of harmful content, including hate speech and disinformation, across digital platforms. With the growing prevalence of online antisemitism, which often spreads through disinformation, incitement to hatred, and targeted attacks on Jewish communities, the DSA offers mechanisms for holding platforms accountable for harmful content. By understanding the DSA, CSOs can better advocate for stronger protections, engage in transparent reporting processes, and ensure that platforms adhere to their obligations regarding content moderation, transparency, and user rights. The DSA also facilitates collabo-

ration with regulators and researchers, helping CSOs to contribute to evidence-based strategies for addressing online antisemitism effectively.[153]

Process[154]

- The DSA focuses on a process-oriented approach rather than solely on the content itself. For example, in Germany, disinformation becomes illegal when it involves defamation, libel, or incitement to hatred, but such regulations differ across the EU. The aim of the DSA is to establish clear guidelines for platform providers to adhere to, regardless of the content's nature. Source: European Parliament, The Digital Services Act.

- The DSA introduces obligations for platforms based on their size and the type of service they provide. This includes a "funnel model," which prioritises the handling of illegal content according to the platform's reach and impact. Platforms must report any action taken in response to illegal content and must maintain transparency about their content moderation processes. This includes providing users with clear Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) and allowing them to appeal decisions. Source: Digital Services Act - EU Fact Sheet

- For Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs), conducting comprehensive risk assessments and audits is essential to effectively manage the complex and multifaceted risks associated with disinformation and harmful content. However, this approach should not be limited to the identification of specific types of content, such as illegal material like hate speech or harmful content like disinformation. It's crucial to recognize that there are broader, systemic risks at play, including the potential impact on societal trust, public safety, and mental well-being. Furthermore, a key aspect of managing these risks is assessing the impact on fundamental rights, particularly the balance between safeguarding users from harmful content and protecting freedom of speech. Effective risk management strategies should aim to strike this delicate balance, ensuring that content moderation measures are robust without infringing on individuals' rights to express themselves freely. These platforms must also be able to mitigate imminent risks for public safety and health, particularly during crises, as mandated by the European Commission. Transparency measures also extend to advertising, with rules prohibiting the use of sensitive personal data (e.g. religion, sexual orientation) for targeted ads and preventing the use of deceptive "dark patterns" that manipulate users into taking unintended actions.

Platforms and their role in the Digital Information Ecosystem

- Digital platforms are, at their core, profit-driven private companies. Their business model is based on advertisements, which in turn incentivise platforms to maximise user engagement. This creates an environment where emotional content, often related to sensitive issues like migration, war, and health, is amplified. Algorithms that prioritise content designed to keep users on the platform longer can distort public discourse by favouring sensationalism.[148]

- Furthermore, platforms often employ design choices that do not prioritise user protection. For example, many platforms use default settings that are the least protective, and users must go out of their way to adjust them. The issue of micro-targeting ads,[149] which can affect personal privacy and amplify divisive content, is a pressing concern.

- A significant problem is the lack of transparency in how platforms moderate content. Unlike traditional media, which was governed by states or courts, platform decisions on content moderation have become opaque. The rules of service (ToS) differ across platforms, and these rules are often vague, inconsistently applied, and subject to frequent change. A prime example of this issue is the transformation of Twitter into X under Elon Musk's leadership, which has sparked debates about free speech and content moderation.[150]

- A key objective of the DSA is fostering good cooperation between platforms, regulators, and researchers. The Act mandates that platforms provide unprecedented access to data for researchers, enabling the study of online harms and the effectiveness of mitigation measures. However, this cooperation relies on trust, and platforms are often reluctant to share data, citing concerns about user privacy and business secrets.

What are some key risks and challenges in the DSA´s implementation?

While the DSA introduces significant reforms, its implementation presents several challenges.

- One of the most pressing challenges is the differences in legal frameworks between Member States. While some content, such as hate speech and disinformation, is criminalised in certain countries, the laws are not always harmonised. The DSA aims to address this by providing a unified framework for regulating social media and content moderation, thereby alleviating some of the inconsistencies. The challenge lies in putting this framework into practice and ensuring its effective enforcement across all Member States.

- Another challenge is that the DSA may fail to adequately address systemic issues such as the financial incentives behind harmful content. It does not mandate the redesign of platforms' business models, meaning that platforms may still prioritise content that generates engagement and profits, potentially at the expense of public safety. The reliance on self-regulation and the failure to address underlying business models could limit the DSA's effectiveness in curbing online harms.

- A key challenge in the implementation of the DSA is the need for platform regulation to extend beyond the EU's borders. However, the political feasibility and safety of implementing similar regulations in other countries remain uncertain. Ensuring a human-rights-centric approach that balances freedom of speech with the protection of fundamental rights, while maintaining an independent civil society, is crucial in this context.

The need for effective content moderation

- The process of content moderation has become incredibly fragmented, particularly across the EU. The definition of "illegal" content can vary greatly between Member States. For example, Holocaust denial is illegal in Germany, but it is not criminalised in the UK. Content moderators, who work quickly and often in foreign languages, face significant challenges in applying a consistent policy across different cultural contexts.[151]

- A major issue is the risk of both overblocking and underblocking content. Overblocking silences free speech, while underblocking allows harmful content to spread unchecked. Finding a balance between adequate assessment and moderation is crucial. The upcoming due diligence rules under the DSA (see next paragraph) for content moderation are intended to address these concerns by ensuring that platforms assess risks and take action accordingly.[152]

Risk management process

1. **Identify + assess "systemic risks" linked to service (Art. 34):**

- Spread of illegal content

- Negative effects on 1) fundamental rights; 2) civic discourse & electoral processes, public security; 3) gender-based violence, public health, mental/physical wellbeing

2. **Report these to COM & put mitigation measures in place (Art. 35):**

- Adapt design, T&Cs, content moderation, algorithms, ad systems, internal processes

- Cooperate with trusted flaggers or other platforms (e.g., Codes of Practice)

- Awareness-raising measures

How to move forward?

- **A Human Rights-Centred Approach to Platform Regulation**: The DSA provides a solid foundation for regulating online platforms, but a human-rights-centred approach with democratic values at its core should guide future developments. The protection of free speech should remain a central principle, but platforms must also be held accountable for the harm caused by disinformation, hate speech, and the incitement of violence. Future regulations should strengthen protections for marginalised communities, including Jewish populations targeted by antisemitism online.

- **Addressing Business Models and Incentives**: While the DSA does not fundamentally alter platforms' core business models, which are largely driven by advertising revenue and engagement metrics, future policies should examine how these financial incentives contribute to the spread of harmful content. Platforms' algorithms must be designed with safety by design principles at their core, prioritising the promotion of content that supports democratic values and public well-being, rather than fostering divisive, harmful, or extremist content for the sake of profit. In this context, incorporating trauma-sensitive content moderation becomes crucial, ensuring that platforms consider the psychological impact on users and employ moderation techniques that are empathetic and supportive, particularly for vulnerable groups who may be exposed to traumatic content.

- **More Effective Oversight of Fringe Platforms:** Encouraging regulators and law enforcement agencies to monitor these platforms more closely is essential. It is important to cultivate a regulatory environment that supports the innovation of smaller platforms, while also ensuring safety. By focusing regulatory attention on fringe platforms, regulators can ensure that harmful content is tackled effectively, without over-regulating spaces that may still be developing or experimenting with new ideas. This approach would allow the benefits of the DSA's framework, such as transparency and accountability, to be applied to smaller platforms, while preventing the unintended consequence of stifling their growth. Additionally, this strategy ensures that new, innovative platforms can flourish without facing the same heavy regulatory burden as larger platforms, all while maintaining the necessary oversight to protect users.

Safety by Design Approach

The safety by design approach advocates for the integration of safety measures into digital platforms and technologies right from the development stage, rather than being added on as an afterthought. This approach focuses on proactively creating environments that prioritise user well-being, prevent harm, and mitigate risks from the outset. It involves building systems and algorithms that are designed to minimise the spread of harmful content, such as disinformation, hate speech, and cyberbullying, by embedding safeguards directly into the platform's architecture and operations.

For example, algorithms should be crafted to promote content that aligns with societal norms and values, favouring accuracy, diversity, and democratic principles, rather than sensationalism or divisive content that generates high engagement but can lead to harm. The safety by design principle also includes user-centric features, such as robust content moderation systems, accessible reporting mechanisms, and transparent decision-making processes, ensuring that users are protected from harmful material while having a voice in the platform's operations.

Trauma-sensitive content moderation

Trauma-sensitive content moderation refers to the practice of moderating online content in a way that is mindful of the potential emotional, psychological, and social impact on individuals who have experienced trauma. Traditional content moderation systems are often focused solely on removing harmful or offensive content based on predefined guidelines, but trauma-sensitive moderation goes a step further by considering the needs of vulnerable users, including those who may be affected by content that could trigger past trauma or exacerbate existing mental health issues. This is particularly concerning for individuals who have experienced trauma, as exposure to certain content may lead to emotional distress, re-traumatisation, or even long-term psychological harm. Trauma-sensitive moderation aims to mitigate these risks by ensuring that the content moderation process is more empathetic, thoughtful, and sensitive to these potential effects.

Why?

- **User protection**
  Trauma-sensitive moderation helps protect users from emotional harm and contributes to the creation of safer online spaces.

- **Mental health considerations**
  It acknowledges the mental health challenges users may face and aims to ensure that platforms are contributing to positive well-being rather than exacerbating distress.

- **Building trust**
  By offering more empathetic and supportive responses to users, platforms can build trust and foster a sense of safety among their user base.

Key features :

- **Acknowledging the Impact of Content:**
  - **Understanding trauma triggers**: Trauma-sensitive content moderation recognises that certain images, words, or situations can act as triggers for people who have experienced traumatic events (e.g., violence, abuse, war, or loss). For example, images of violence, hate speech, or graphic content might trigger trauma responses in survivors of abuse or violence.
  - **Protecting vulnerable users**: Platforms need to consider how exposure to distressing content can affect users who have experienced specific types of trauma, and adjust their moderation approaches accordingly.

- **Providing Clear and Accessible Reporting Mechanisms:**
  - Trauma-informed support: It's essential that platforms offer easily accessible and clear reporting mechanisms that are sensitive to the emotional state of users. Reports should be handled with care, and moderators should be trained to deal with sensitive content with empathy.
  - Safe and supportive spaces: Ensuring that users know how to report content they find distressing, and that they receive adequate support or referrals to resources like mental health services or community support groups, is a crucial aspect of trauma-sensitive moderation.

- **Adopting Empathy and Understanding in Moderation Practices:**
  - Empathy in content review: Moderators should receive training to handle content with empathy, recognising that some users may be exposed to materials that could cause harm. This includes having a deeper understanding of how different types of content may affect people who have experienced various kinds of trauma.
  - Response protocols for sensitive cases: In situations where distressing content or harassment occurs, platforms should provide trauma-informed responses, including offering emotional support to users and directing them to appropriate resources or services.

- **Trigger Warnings and Content Warnings:**
  - Pre-emptive alerts: One of the strategies for trauma-sensitive moderation includes using content warnings or trigger warnings on content that may be disturbing or upsetting. This gives users the choice to engage or avoid certain content, empowering them to protect themselves.

- Transparency and context: Providing users with context and transparency about potentially harmful content (e.g., warning about graphic violence, abuse, or sensitive topics) helps reduce unexpected exposure to harmful material.

- **Mental Health Resources and Support for Users:**
  - Signposting to help: Platforms can play a supportive role by linking users to mental health resources, such as hotlines, counselling services, or online communities designed to provide emotional support for those dealing with trauma.
  - User-controlled settings: Allowing users to set personal content preferences (e.g., blocking certain types of content or filtering specific keywords) can help create safer, more supportive digital spaces.
- **Holistic and Long-Term Approach:**
  - Evaluating content policies: Trauma-sensitive content moderation requires a holistic approach that includes the ongoing evaluation of platform policies to ensure they are not inadvertently causing harm. This might include adjusting content moderation policies to accommodate the diverse needs of users, including those who have experienced trauma.
  - Collaboration with mental health experts: Platforms could benefit from working alongside mental health professionals and trauma experts to ensure that their moderation practices are in line with best practices for supporting vulnerable users.

Recommendations

- **Enhanced Cooperation Across Stakeholders to Combat Antisemitism:** Collaboration between platforms, regulators, and civil society organisations, particularly those representing Jewish communities, is essential to tackling antisemitism online. A coordinated effort can ensure that harmful content, including antisemitic hate speech and incitement to violence, is promptly identified and addressed, while also safeguarding the rights of affected individuals and communities.

- **Ensuring Data Access for Independent Scrutiny of Antisemitic Content:** Platforms must ensure transparency by providing access to relevant data for independent monitoring, particularly for content related to antisemitism. This enables regulators, watchdog groups, and civil society organisations to assess whether platforms are effectively identifying, removing, and preventing the spread of antisemitic content, and to ensure that enforcement measures are robust and aligned with anti-hate standards.

- **Adequate Resources for Regulators and Civil Society Organisations Focused on Antisemitism:** Sufficient resources and funding should be allocated to regulators and Jewish community organisations to help monitor and address online antisemitism effectively. This will allow these bodies to assess how platforms are handling antisemitic content and provide the necessary support to victims and communities affected by online hate.

- **Operationalising "Systemic Risks" with a Focus on Antisemitic Content:** Clear guidance on how to interpret and address "systemic risks" related to antisemitism should be provided. This would ensure that platforms take proactive measures to prevent the spread of antisemitic content and recognise how such content can be harmful to Jewish communities and society as a whole. A more systematic approach to identifying and mitigating these risks will promote safer online spaces for everyone.

- **Continuous Adaptation to Emerging Forms of Antisemitism in Online Spaces:** The DSA should be regularly reviewed to ensure it can respond to new and evolving forms of antisemitism, such as the spread of conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial, and coordinated online harassment. Regular research into these emerging trends, particularly those amplified by AI and social media algorithms, will ensure the regulation remains effective in combatting online antisemitism.

For a comprehensive overview of the CCOA policy recommendations, please refer to the **CCOA Policy Roadmap: Mainstreaming Digital Human Rights – A Pan-European Policy Roadmap to Combat Online Antisemitism**. https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/CCOA-Mainstreaming-Digital-Human-Rights.pdf

Activity 9. Reflecting on the Digital Services Act (DSA)

Duration
45-60 minutes

To critically evaluate the Digital Services Act (DSA) and its potential impact on combating online antisemitism.

To explore the challenges and opportunities for implementing the DSA in different political and social contexts.

Task

Part 1: Small Group Reflection (10 minutes)
Participants are divided into two groups. Each group should discuss and reflect on the following questions:

- What is your view of the DSA now?
- Is the DSA overly ambitious? Not ambitious enough? Why?
- Was anything overlooked, or could/should be improved in the framework?
- Does the DSA adequately balance freedom of speech while regulating online debate?
- How does the DSA address the potential tension between freedom of speech and the need to regulate harmful content?
- Do you think the DSA grants too much or too little power to state actors and platforms? Additionally, how do you view the role of the European Commission and regulators in this context? It's also important to consider the involvement of civil society organisations and researchers, who represent a crucial third group in the regulatory framework. Should their influence and participation be more explicitly accounted for in the DSA?
- Is the distribution of power between regulators and tech platforms appropriate?

Final discussion within the group:
Imagine you are a representative from your country responsible for implementing the DSA. What would be the biggest risks or challenges in your country's context? If you work in digital diplomacy, would you recommend a human rights defender in an autocratic regime to copy and paste the DSA into their context?

Part 2: Group Sharing and Reflection (10 minutes)
Each group selects one presenter to share their discussion points with the whole group. Presenters should address the following:

- Their group's view on the DSA's strengths and weaknesses.
- A summary of the risks and challenges they identified for implementation.
- Thoughts on the international comparison of the DSA.

Part 3: Full Group Discussion (20-30 minutes)
After the presentations, the facilitator leads a full-group discussion, encouraging participants to share opinions and insights on the following:

- Do the concerns raised by the groups resonate with your own experience or knowledge?
- What solutions or adjustments would you propose to make the DSA more effective in combating online antisemitism?
- In your view, what practical and ethical challenges might arise when attempting to create similar legal frameworks in other regions?

This list provides a range of resources to help understand the policy and legal frameworks around combating online antisemitism.

First Progress Report of the EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021-2030)

ISD (2022): CSO toolkit to combat online antisemitism

National Strategies on Combating Antisemitism

The European Union Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act

The Digital Services Act (DSA) and Its Role in Regulating Platforms

The Digital Services Act and the EU as the Global Regulator of the Internet

Guidance Note on Intersectionality, Racial Discrimination & Protection of Minorities

ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 9 (Revised) on Preventing and Combating Antisemitism

Framework for Developing and Implementing Data-Driven, Actionable, Equitable Policy

The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism

The European Commission's Definition of Antisemitism

The Digital Services Act Text

The German Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG)

French Law on Combating Hate Speech and Extremism

Swedish Action Programme to Combat Antisemitism

Addressing Hate Speech through Education: A Guide for Policy-Makers

Antisemitism a Persistent Driver of Transnational Violent Extremist Narratives and Attacks

A Step Forward in Fighting Online Antisemitism

UNESCO, Countering hate speech

APPENDIX - Guideline for Activities

List of activities:

Activity 1. Antisemitism as a threat to democracy

Activity 2. Power Flower: Intersections of hate

Activity 3: Reflection on Forms and Mechanisms of Antisemitism

Activity 4: 5-minute exercise (written individually or verbally in groups of 2-3): Validation on Social Media

Activity 5: Limitations of Artificial Intelligence Content Moderation

Activity 6: Deconstruction of antisemitic ideology in text

Activity 7.Understanding the Differences Between False Information, Disinformation, and Malinformation, and the Motives Behind Them

Activity 8: Awareness of Disinformation, Social Validation and Polarising Dynamics on Social Media

Activity 9: Deconstructing Antisemitism on Social Media

Activity 10: Developing Ideas for Addressing Online Antisemitism

Activity 11: Reflecting on the Digital Services Act (DSA)

Activity 2: Reflection on Forms and Mechanisms of Antisemitism

What is particular to antisemitic ideology? What is similar and what is different to other forms of exclusion and hate?

- Antisemitic ideology simultaneously ascribes immense power to Jews as a collective, and constructs them as inferior.
- It has persisted since the emergence of Christianity.
- It has led to genocide.
- It constantly adapts to events and new media and technology.
- Discrimination and dehumanisation are symbolic violence, lowering the threshold for physical violence.
- All forms of hate dehumanise, devalue and discriminate against the targeted group.
- All forms of hate cause trauma and harm to those affected, who need our solidarity and protection

What relevance does antisemitism have in your life? Where are you confronted with antisemitism?

- According to studies, Jewish participants may have extensive and often traumatic experiences with antisemitic violence in their daily lives. These experiences can include verbal harassment, physical attacks, and systemic discrimination, all of which contribute to a heightened sense of vulnerability and marginalisation.
- The experiences of Jewish participants may stand in stark contrast to those of non-Jewish participants. Studies reveal that non-Jewish participants often struggle to recognise antisemitism in daily life, which can lead to surprise or disbelief at its pervasive and constant presence as experienced by Jewish individuals.

Activity 5: Deconstruction antisemitic ideology in text

Rewritten/corrected texts:

- The unjust and antisemitic Nuremberg Laws marked a significant step toward the genocide against Jews. The Nazis weaponised the fabricated concept of different human "races," falsely constructing Jews as an "opposite race." Through relentless propaganda, they spread the antisemitic lie of Jews as an international collective conspiring for world domination with the aim of destroying Germans.

- Nazi propaganda from the 1920s promoted the dehumanising idea of the Jewish man as crooked, ugly and sneaky. In contrast, the phantasma about the straight-backed, beautiful and strong-willed Aryan woman. In this way, the Nazis wanted to portray the two as different races.But in fact, there are no different human races. and the idea of the so-called Aryans versus the portrayal of Jews as inferior served to legitimise the violence and genocide against the Jewish communities.

Activity 6.1: Understanding the Differences Between Misinformation, Disinformation, and Malinformation, and the Motives Behind Them

Effects of Disinformation as a Threat to Society:

- Undermines trust in public institutions, media, and democracy.

- Erodes social cohesion by polarising communities and creating divisions.

- Weakens the effectiveness of public health campaigns (e.g. misinformation about vaccines).

- Facilitates the spread of harmful ideologies, including hate speech and extremism.

- Interferes with elections and democratic processes by spreading false or misleading information.

- Compromises national security through the dissemination of false information that may influence decision-making.

- Undermines scientific consensus by promoting pseudoscience or conspiracy theories.

Effects of Disinformation on Individuals:

- Causes confusion and mistrust, leading individuals to question reality or truth.

- Increases vulnerability to manipulation, making individuals more susceptible to harmful ideas or exploitation.

- Contributes to stress and anxiety by creating fear or uncertainty around key issues (e.g., health, safety, or social relations).

- Impairs decision-making, as individuals may act on false information.

- Damages personal relationships by fostering conflict, mistrust, and misunderstandings.

- Leads to disengagement from civic activities, as individuals lose confidence in institutions or the media.

Activity 7: Deconstructing Antisemitism on Social Media

Example A - Deconstruction:

- **Generalisation**: Misappropriation of the Jewish symbol, the Star of David, under the disguise of capitalist critique insinuates that all these companies are Jewish, associated with Jews and/or associated with Israel.

- **Othering**: the use of the pronoun "them" implies a difference from "us". In combination with the Star of David, "they" are hinted to mean Jews

- **Conspiracy Myth**: insinuates that Jews are secretly "behind" all these global companies.

- **Wealth/Money/Power**: presents various big international companies as Jewish, and through this presenting (all) Jews as very rich, powerful and dominating global markets / the world economy)

Example B - Deconstruction

- **Holocaust Relativisation**: Dressing up and "assuming" the role of a fictional Holocaust victim diminishes and belittles the profound suffering and loss endured by the real victims. It suggests that the history of the Holocaust is similarly treated here as a distant, imaginary sphere.

- **Holocaust Trivialisation**: Impersonating victims by narrating a story from their presumed point of view exploits the testimonies and experiences of Holocaust victims, misappropriating their suffering for attention-seeking purposes.

Example C - Deconstruction

- **Generalisation**: the post portrays all Israelis as being involved in the killing of children.
- **Dehumanisation and demonisation**: through the label of a "child murderer", all Israelis are implicitly portrayed not as human beings but as violent killers of innocent lives, and therefore inherently evil or even monstrous.
- **Blood Libel / Conspiracy**: the label "child murderer" applied to all Israelis indirectly refers to the blood libel and thus resonates with the conspiracy myth about Jews murdering innocent children for ritual purposes.

Suggested Points for Reflecting on the Role of Social Media

1. **Likes and Shares as Social Validation**
   Social media platforms use likes, shares, and comments as indicators of social validation. These metrics influence users' perception of whether their content is popular and accepted, often shaping their engagement choices.

2. **Perceived Credibility and Acceptability**
   Content with a high number of likes, shares, or comments can appear more credible and socially acceptable, regardless of its accuracy or ethical implications. This can perpetuate harmful stereotypes or misinformation.

3. **Algorithmic Amplification**
   Algorithms prioritise content that garners high engagement. The more attention a post receives, the more likely it is to be promoted and spread further, amplifying its reach and impact, whether positive or negative.

4. **Emotional and Incendiary Content**
   Social media platforms incentivize the creation and sharing of emotional or provocative content, as these are more likely to attract attention and drive engagement. This dynamic often leads to the proliferation of divisive or harmful material.

5. **Ease of Sharing Engaging Content**
   Platforms simplify the process of sharing visually appealing and entertaining content, such as pictures and videos. This ease can contribute to the rapid spread of both positive and problematic material, blurring the lines between entertainment and harmful narratives.

How to promote Digital Citizenship

Training for Critical Media Literacy and Digital Citizenship Curriculum

CSOs can organise workshops that teach users how to critically analyse online content. For instance, they could offer sessions where participants examine common antisemitic myths and tropes found in social media posts or news articles, helping them identify manipulative or false narratives. CSOs might also use real-life examples to show how misinformation about Jewish communities spreads and how it can be debunked.

- **The Digital Discourse Initiative** developed in cooperation by Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) and ISD Germany offers an online module for teachers, helping students recognise and confront harmful stereotypes. https://www.digitaldiscourse.scot/

Creating Digital Citizenship Toolkits for Communities

CSOs can develop easy-to-understand toolkits that outline the core principles of digital citizenship, specifically focusing on combating antisemitism. These toolkits might include guidelines on how to report antisemitic content, how to handle online hate speech, and how to engage in respectful online discussions. These resources can be distributed in schools, community centres, and online platforms to educate users on how to be responsible digital citizens.

- ISD's **Be Internet Citizens**: Provides resources that equip young people with skills to engage responsibly online and tackle antisemitism. https://www.isdglobal.org/be-internet-citizens/

- **Online Antisemitism: A Toolkit for Civil Society**: The guide provides an overview of the online antisemitism threat landscape, a summary of existing policy responses on an international and national level across a range of European contexts, and a broad set of recommendations for civil society engagement with governments, platforms and wider communities to address this challenge. https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/online-antisemitism-a-toolkit-for-civil-society/

Social Media Campaigns Against Hate

CSOs can initiate social media campaigns that promote positive messages about Jewish culture and history while simultaneously calling out antisemitism. For instance, using hashtags like #StandUpTo Antisemitism or #DigitalCitizenship, they can create infographics, memes, and videos debunking common stereotypes and providing factual information about Jewish communities. These campaigns could encourage people to report hate speech they encounter online and share resources on how to engage in online dialogue respectfully.

Workshops on Digital Empathy and Online Etiquette

CSOs can organise virtual or in-person workshops focused on digital empathy, teaching participants how to communicate with others respectfully online. A concrete activity could be role-playing scenarios where participants practise responding to antisemitic comments or online harassment in a calm, constructive way. These workshops aim to shift the culture of online discourse to one that values respectful conversation over toxic behaviour.

Youth Advocacy Programmes to Combat Online Hate

CSOs could set up advocacy programmes for young people, where they learn how to become digital ambassadors in their communities. These young people could lead campaigns or school initiatives to combat antisemitism, such as peer-led discussions on the impact of online hate or creating digital content that promotes inclusion. CSOs could mentor these youth, providing them with the tools to challenge antisemitic behaviour within their social media networks.

- **Young Cities:** https://www.isdglobal.org/young-cities/

Collaborating with the Private Sector to Reach Hard-to-Reach Audiences: Leveraging Trust Between Employers and Employees in the Workplace:

Civil society organisations (CSOs) can partner directly with technology companies and employers to build and leverage trust within the workplace, fostering positive collaboration. By working together, they can reach hard-to-reach audiences, such as adult learners with limited access to similar training programmes. This collaboration can include advocating for the

development of more robust features to identify and remove antisemitic content, as well as creating workplace training that encourages respectful communication and promotes diversity, inclusion, and digital citizenship. Best Practice (Global):

- **BC4D:** The BC4D – a joint initiative from the Hertie Foundation, the Robert Bosch Foundation and ISD Germany – is an innovative opportunity for adults to take courses on digital civic culture. Here, employees can learn more about the spread of hate speech, targeted disinformation and conspiracy theories and discover what they can do to counter such harms and how they can protect others around them. https://www.isdglobal.org/the-business-council-for-democracy-bc4d/

Conflict Prevention in Online Disputes

CSOs can incorporate conflict prevention and transformation strategies directly into their digital citizenship programmes by teaching online mediation skills. This could involve providing training on how to navigate and de-escalate situations where antisemitism or other forms of hate emerge in online spaces. For example, CSOs could host workshops that teach users how to intervene constructively when they witness antisemitic comments, using mediation techniques to address underlying tensions.

- **Strong Cities Network**: Offers resources and programmes focused on conflict prevention and building resilience against extremism. https://strongcitiesnetwork.org/

Endnotes

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