

Haim Fireberg

A “Jewish Problem” or a “Society Problem”? Understanding Contemporary Antisemitism in Europe from Jewish and Governmental Perspectives

Antisemitic violence is always a reminder of the fragile balance between Jewish life and society. It happens even in the most thriving communities. Jews are experiencing an increasing fear of violence, a feeling almost ingrained in their identity by the memory of the Holocaust. When reviewing antisemitic incidents around the world, it becomes clear that hatred of Jews results in growing violence or worries about the future of Jewish life in Europe. The comparison of current antisemitism in EU member states reveals several peculiarities which are almost paradoxical. I have argued in a previous publication that the number of violent incidents is not necessarily indicative of the intensity of antisemitic sentiments in the country where this happens. Undoubtedly, it is a necessary condition for defining antisemitism, but it is not sufficient.¹

Perceptions driven by the hatred of the Jews – i. e. antisemitism – were collected and encapsulated in the “Working Definition of Antisemitism” published in 2004 by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. Although not legally binding, the definition was meant to provide a practical guide to identifying incidents, collecting data and supporting future antisemitism-related legislation.² Few governments have accepted and used the definition, even if only for the purpose of training law enforcement organisations – the United Kingdom de-

1 Haim Fireberg, “The Antisemitic Paradox in Europe: Empirical Evidences and Jewish Perceptions. A Comparative Study Between the West and East,” in *Being Jewish in 21st Century Central Europe*, ed. Haim Fireberg, Olaf Glöckner, and Marcela Menachem Zoufala (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 269–279.

2 The most comprehensive information and discussion on the definition can be found today at: https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/0001/unedited.pdf; “The Working Definition of Antisemitism – Six Years After” (2010). The definition itself can be found in the opening pages. The original definition cannot be found online anymore, because the FRA decided it was not its mandate to deal with definitions. For other views and analyses on the definition, see: <https://rm.coe.int/opinion-ecri-on-ihra-wd-on-antisemitism-2755-7610-7522-1/1680a091dd>; <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/legal%20analysis%20IHRA%20working%20definition%20of%20antisemitism.pdf>; <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/ihra/>.

serves to be mentioned as one such country. However, the definition became a core reference for any discussion on antisemitism and the hatred of the Jews.³ As a result of its adoption by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 2016, it has also been embraced by hundreds of civic organisations and governments worldwide.⁴

There are many types of antisemitism that are frequently mentioned today, including traditional antisemitism, secondary antisemitism, etc. This essay does not examine each of them separately. It discusses antisemitism in contemporary Europe as it is experienced by the Jews. When people encounter hate on the street, online, at work, or in social settings, they are uncertain what it means. They should not attempt to categorize it and decide whether or not they fit into a specific category. Our basic assumption is that when there is a “Jewish problem” it often indicates that the society has a problem: a deep-seated hatred of the Jews, often disguised as something else.

Concentrating my research on Central Europe, I have chosen to analyze the current situation in three countries – Poland, Hungary, and Germany – as well as to study the overall policy of the EU towards antisemitism. All three states mentioned above have long-term, ambivalent relationships with their Jewish populations: a flourishing Jewish culture on the one hand, and a history of persecutions and antisemitism on the other. One should not forget the events during World War II, when Germany was responsible for the extermination of millions of Jews and Hungary actively collaborated, while Poland became a venue for the tragedy of the Holocaust and, shortly after the war, for deadly pogroms. Continuing antisemitism experienced by the European Jewry provides a context in which we can study this type of conflict in order to shed some light on the contradictory factors influencing antisemitic perceptions among individuals, organizations, and governments.

The Case of Poland

For centuries, Polish Jews had functioned as a prosperous society that was then virtually wiped out during the Holocaust. In extermination camps on Polish soil, the Germans executed millions of Jews deported there from all over Europe, in ad-

³ For comprehensive analysis about the definition and its legal significance, see: Adv. Talia Naamat, *The Legal Significance of the Working Definition: Recent Trends and Case Law* (Justice, Spring 2020), 27–31, <https://www.ijl.org/justicem/no64/#27/z>

⁴ For more information about the process and updated situation, see: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>.

dition to the overwhelming majority of Polish Jews themselves. Even today, when speaking about the “death machine,” many people confuse the German death camps, or concentration camps on Polish soil, with Polish death camps.⁵ I argue that there can be no effective way to address contemporary antisemitism in Poland without neutralizing the war years per se as much as possible and a debate about the restitution of Jewish property in Poland to descendants of the pre-war owners. Global politics, emotional inclinations, and preconceptions also influence the relations between Jews and non-Jews in today’s Poland.⁶

In 2015, there were around 7,500 Jews that are defined as enlarged Jewish population, of them approximately 3,500 Jews that are recognised as the core Jewish population – only a fraction of the country’s pre-war Jewish population.⁷ The Kantor Center’s Annual Reports on Worldwide Antisemitism indicate that compared to other countries formerly part of the Soviet Union and/or Warsaw Pact (e.g. Latvia, Romania, Czechia, Slovakia, Estonia), violent antisemitic incidents are significantly more common in Poland. The numbers are even higher than in Hungary, where the Jewish population is 15 times larger. Between 2012 and 2018, the Kantor Center recorded 85 major violent incidents in Poland and only 57 significant incidents in Hungary.⁸

5 For more about President Obama’s remarks, see: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18264036>. Even after official protests from the Polish government and Obama’s apologies, such mishaps are still common: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/23/world/europe/fox-news-polish-death-camps.html>. When serving as the head of opposition in the Israeli parliament, Yair Lapid tweeted: “There were Polish death camps and no law can ever change that”: <https://twitter.com/yairlapid/status/957208421794709504?lang=en>. This was a declaration that caused a diplomatic crisis between the two countries: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/auschwitz-museum-slams-lapid-lie-after-he-claim-ipoles-helped-run-death-camps/>.

6 The debate over the abandoned property of Poland’s Jews can easily be found all over the Internet, including the official stance of the Polish government, the changing attitudes of Israeli governments as well as opinions of academics and laymen. Few examples: <https://www.jta.org/2021/08/25/global/yair-lapid-says-the-holocaust-defined-him-thats-adding-fuel-to-the-fire-in-israel-poland-relations>; <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/israels-lapid-vs-polands-holocaust-restitution-law-analysis-673157>; <https://notesfrompoland.com/2021/08/12/us-and-israel-condemn-property-restitution-bill-passed-by-polish-parliament/>; <https://notesfrompoland.com/2021/08/30/polands-new-restitution-law-explained/>; https://www.clevelandjewishnews.com/columnists/ben_cohen/time-to-cut-ties-with-poland-s-government/article_a63548ae-e415-11eb-8c51-7f25126c7692.html.

7 Sergio DellaPergola, “Jewish Demography in the European Union – Virtuous and Vicious Paths,” in *Being Jewish in 21st Century Central Europe*, ed. Haim Fireberg, Olaf Glöckner, and Marcela Menachem Zoufala (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 26.

8 The Kantor Center General Analysis of the Year, volumes from 2012 to 2018. <https://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il>

On average, there are about 12 cases of violent antisemitism every year, but it is yet lower than in other EU member states (France, Germany, and Belgium) and the United Kingdom that have a large Muslim population. Further evidence of this can be found in a Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) survey published in 2018 which asked respondents if they were afraid of becoming a victim of verbal insults, harassment or physical attacks due to their Jewish identity. Among the 12 countries that participated in the study, Poland ranked in the top four with affirmative responses.⁹

Only a few of the violent incidents in Poland were directed at people, according to the Kantor Center data. Most manifestations primarily targeted Jewish facilities, such as synagogues, or desecrated Jewish cemeteries and memorials of Holocaust victims. But the quantitative data on violent antisemitism does not fully explain the phenomenon. In addition to public attitudes and sentiments towards Jews, antisemitism is also influenced by government policies and practices. Furthermore, information on violence alone is not sufficient to reveal people's (Jews' and non-Jews') views regarding Jewish integration into society and the ethos of the nation.

According to Rafal Pankowski, a professor of sociology and one of the founders of the Never Again Association,¹⁰ the Polish government led by the Law and Justice party (PiS) is seen as pro-Catholic. The party "is not [an] ideologically antisemitic party," he claims; however, several members of the party have made antisemitic remarks without the PiS leadership condemning them explicitly.¹¹ Antisemitism is generated in Poland in several ways: a) via the Internet and media¹²; b) by public figures such as politicians, clergymen, and journalists¹³; and c) street demonstra-

9 https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-anti-semitism-survey_en.pdf, 34, 47.

10 <https://www.nigdywiecej.org/en/>.

11 https://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Doch_full_2018_220418.pdf, 75, 77–78.

12 The notorious Catholic-nationalist radio station, Radio Maryja, regularly airs antisemitic utterances from its columnist, Stanislaw Michalkiewicz. For more about the broadcaster and its anti-Jewish attitudes and political involvement, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_Maryja.

13 Few examples: in June 2017, PiS MP from Kalisz, Jan Mosiński, referred to the allegedly Jewish origin of his political opponents. Mosiński had already been known for making xenophobic and antisemitic statements in the past. In July 2017, the former Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) presidential candidate and current supporter of the PiS government, Magdalena Ogórek, referred to the Jewish origin of an erstwhile SLD leader, Marek Borowski, by emphasizing the alleged family name of his ancestors in her hostile Twitter post. On August 2, 2017, another PiS MP, Bogdan Rzońca, wrote on his Twitter account: "I am on my vacation reading books. I am thinking why, despite the Holocaust, there are so many Jews among those abortionists." https://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Doch_full_2018_220418.pdf, 77–78.

tions led by radical nationalist groups such as the National Rebirth of Poland (NOP) and the National Radical Camp (ONR).¹⁴ Main antisemitic themes include: a) Christian prejudices; b) the claim that Jewish identity is not Polish; and c) distortion and trivialization of the Holocaust. Jews have reported tropes such as: “Jews have too much power,” “Jews exploit Holocaust victimhood for their own gain,” and “Jews in Poland have different interests than the rest of the population.”¹⁵ In the FRA survey, 53 percent of respondents identified their persecutors as “someone with right-wing political views” and 34 percent identified them as “someone with Christian extremist views.” The proportion of Polish respondents in both of these categories was the highest in the EU.¹⁶

The conclusion from the survey is that Polish Jews’ real concerns about anti-semitism are caused by the combination of violence and antisemitic atmosphere in public and political arenas. Eighty-five percent of respondents said it was “a very big problem” or “a fairly big problem.” Poland lags behind both France (95%), and Belgium (86%), while recording the same percentage as Germany. In Hungary, only 77% of respondents believe that antisemitism is a serious problem.¹⁷ Internet and private broadcasting networks such as Radio Maryja are the main sources of anti-semitic material.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Jews in Poland have “little chance” of encountering antisemitic expressions. Only 37% of Jewish respondents said antisemitic harassment is a part of their daily lives.¹⁹

Poland’s unique history before and after the Holocaust has influenced and sometimes overshadowed the current relationship between Christian Poles and Jewish Poles. Jews believe antisemitism is rampant in Polish society, although many blame those who adhere to old Catholic Church doctrines and nationalists who seek a purely ethnic Polish society.

Is the current regime in Poland encouraging antisemitism and supporting antisemites? There is no doubt that members of the ruling party, PiS, attend events containing antisemitic symbols or participate in antisemitic public events.²⁰ At

¹⁴ https://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Doch_full_2018_220418.pdf, 77.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/polish-officials-condemn-antisemitism-at-nationalist-rally/>;
<https://notesfrompoland.com/2021/11/12/death-to-jews-chanted-at-torchlit-far-right-march-in-polish-city/>.

¹⁵ https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-anti-semitism-survey_en.pdf, 26.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁰ One recent example of public trivialization of the Holocaust by five MPs: <https://notesfrompoland.com/2021/12/15/polish-far-right-mps-appear-under-auschwitz-style-sign-at-anti-vaccine-protest/>.

the same time, the government takes harsh action against antisemitic, homophobic, and nationalist demonstrators and condemns antisemitism. In a Twitter post, Polish interior minister Mariusz Kamiński said that the Polish government does not accept antisemitism or hatred. In an earlier statement, he called a march commemorating Poland's independence, which featured antisemitic chants such as "Death to Jews," shameful.²¹ Many Jewish people still believe that not enough has been done. Only seven percent of Polish Jews think the government combats antisemitism effectively, according to the FRA survey.²²

In the last few years, two important debates have taken place regarding two controversial laws proposed by the Polish regime. The first one is the "Restitution Law" that ended the right of descendants of Jewish Polish citizens to claim property lost during the period of German occupation and Communist rule. Despite the Israeli Government's assertions that this law is antisemitic, such claims cannot be substantiated.

The second law in question pertains to the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, or IPN). The international community only became aware of it in 2018, after the Polish parliament passed an amendment to the act governing the work of IPN. The amendment, which penalizes statements implying Polish involvement in Nazi crimes, is sometimes referred to by international media outlets as the "Holocaust Law." Observers have called it a dangerous step towards restricting freedom of expression in Poland. Therefore, it is no surprise that the law proved to be short-lived; after one year, thanks to the efforts of the Israeli and Polish governments, very little remains of its most controversial provisions. However, it is likely that the long-term impact of this attention-grabbing development on the Polish political scene will outlive its immediate appearance.²³

For Poland and its Jews to resolve the overburdened relationship, it required a unique and deep understanding of the future. The following summary of Genevieve Zubrzycki's extensive research into the efforts to create a modern Polish state and citizenship shows that conflicts emerged and were deeply embedded in that process:

A symbolic category – here Jewishness – can serve as a foil to construct not only an exclusive ethnic nation, but also to build an inclusive, civic, and secular nation. [...] in Poland the na-

21 <https://notesfrompoland.com/2021/11/15/three-organisers-of-march-in-polish-city-arrested-amid-widespread-condemnation/>.

22 https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-anti-semitism-survey_en.pdf, 41.

23 For a comprehensive analysis of the law, the debates, and solutions: <https://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/politics/the-polish-holocaust-law-revisited>.

tional self is being built not only against the Other (the Jew), but also through that indigenous Other in opposition to an alleged primordial ‘self’ – the ethno-Catholic Pole. This is more than the simplistic story of philosemitism opposing antisemitism – or ‘anti-antisemitism.’ Rather, Polish philosemitism is part of a larger process of redefining national identity.²⁴

Prof. Zubrzycki asserts that, while Jewish culture is just one thread within an intricate tapestry of civic national counter-narratives about the Polish nation, it is a prominent motif given both the long history of Jews in Poland and the trauma of their extermination. Moreover, it enables the authorities to rebrand Poland on the international stage, which is an important motivation that cannot be overlooked. As the Polish case shows, redefinition of national identity can be a complex process, since to enhance the definition of Polishness differences between groups must be introduced and legitimized. This means that various boundaries must be maintained. Therefore, Zubrzycki emphasizes, “The inclusion of Jews within the symbolic perimeter of the nation in order to redefine Polishness does not, and cannot, de-Otherize the Jew. The Jew must irremediably remain Other.”²⁵

The Case of Hungary

Hungary has the fourth largest Jewish community in Europe, between 47,700 Jews (core Jewish population) and 75,000 Jews (descendants of Jewish families).²⁶ Similarly to Poland, Hungary had long been home to thousands of Jews who formed a prosperous and highly integrated society that was then destroyed and wiped out in just four months during the Holocaust, with active participation of Hungarian paramilitary forces. Consequently, I believe it is impossible to deal with antisemitism in modern Hungary without neutralizing the war years per se to the extent possible. Hungarian Jewry’s tragic fate may obscure any discussion of the issue and pre-

²⁴ Genevieve Zubrzycki, “Nationalism, ‘Philosemitism’ and Symbolic Boundary-Making in Contemporary Poland,” <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/comparative-studies-in-society-and-history/article/nationalism-philosemitism-and-symbolic-boundarymaking-in-contemporary-poland/3BEF2AB1798A5399D1F686C7F45DE439>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Sergio DellaPergola, “Jewish Demography in the European Union – Virtuous and Vicious Paths,” in *Being Jewish in 21st Century Central Europe*, ed. Haim Fireberg, Olaf Glockner, and Marcela Menachem Zoufala (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 24. To better understand the Jewish community and its demographics, see another paper in the same volume: Zsófia Kata Vincze, “The ‘Missing’ and ‘Missed’ Jews in Hungary,” 115–143.

vent it from being exposed to the political, social, and cultural developments that are shaping it.²⁷

Based on the Kantor Center's Annual Reports on Worldwide Antisemitism, the number of violent antisemitic incidents in Hungary, where the Jewish population is 15 times larger than in Poland, is moderate in comparison. The Center recorded only 57 such cases from 2012 to 2018. On average, Hungary only registers about eight violent incidents per year.²⁸ In fact, this is also indicated in the results of the FRA survey published in 2018. Hungary ranked bottom among the surveyed countries for the frequency of affirmative responses to the question about being afraid of becoming a victim of a verbal or physical attack.²⁹

According to an opinion survey conducted by the Median Institute for Public Opinion and Market Research in 2019–2020 on antisemitism in Hungary, which was initiated by the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (Mazsihisz) and published in July 2021, antisemitism is present in all aspects of the Hungarian society.³⁰ According to András Heisler, Head of Mazsihisz, there are fears among the Jewish community, but there is no antisemitism in Hungary today from which these fears would “directly” result. Therefore, in this regard, Hungary is in a better position than Western Europe or other European nations, since there have been no physical atrocities.³¹

Analysis of the data reveals a more complex Hungarian society. In the category of cognitive antisemitism, referred to as “antisemitic perceptions” in this article, it has been discovered that only 16 percent of Hungarians are “strongly cognitive antisemites” (a further 20 percent exhibited moderate antisemitic attitudes). Consequently, “the proportion of those resistant to this form of antisemitism increased from 38 to 44% [in comparison with previous surveys].”³² “According to a comprehensive aggregate indicator,” concludes the survey, “... two-thirds (64%) show no

27 See also: Andras Kovács, “Hungarian Intentionalism: New Directions to the Historiography of the Hungarian Holocaust,” in Randolph Braham and Andras Kovács, *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later* (Central European University Press, 2016), Kindle edition, 443–459.

28 The Kantor Center General Analysis of the Year, volumes from 2012 to 2018, <https://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il>.

29 https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-anti-semitism-survey_en.pdf, 34, 47.

30 For the press conference, see: <https://www.wzo.org.il/antisemitism/index.php?dir=site&page=articles&op=item&cs=9313>. The full survey, its methodology, and results is available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fvboWRLQmvJmDGo8qPCVhwhOKQTo2G5k/view>. I have chosen to use the Hungarian survey. For an ADL survey that covers the same topic with almost similar result, see: <https://global100.adl.org/country/hungary/2019>.

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*, the survey, 46.

antisemitic attitudes at all. This value is also not a significant shift from the average of previous years.”³³ When considering public attitudes towards other minorities or strangers as a whole, it turns out that the sympathy index towards Jews is only slightly lower than the sympathy index towards Germans (5.38/9 and 5.89/9, respectively). In comparison, the sympathy index towards Black people is 3.91/9; for Arabs, it stands at 3.37/9, for Roma people at 3.33/9, while towards the mythical category of “migrants” at 2.76/9.³⁴

The survey also found that when data for Hungary is compared to the rest of the Western world, especially Western Europe, “the fear of physical attack is much less common among Jews, but Holocaust denial and relativization are more prevalent.”³⁵ Hungarian Jewish communities experience antisemitism strongly, even though the number and frequency of violent incidents is low. Nationalist discourse and the revisionism of Hungary’s wartime past are viewed by many as the causes of an unhealthy atmosphere. In this case, the debate is not restricted to academic circles and closed groups; it extends to the media and to public demonstrations.³⁶

András Kovács, Professor for Jewish Studies at Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, emphasizes that the government is not antisemitic.³⁷ His research suggests that the rise in prejudice in Hungary is related to the 2009 emer-

33 Ibid., 46–47.

34 Ibid., 59, Table 2.

35 Ibid., 111. It should not come as a surprise. I had discovered this paradox years ago: the number of violent antisemitic incidents cannot predict the level of antisemitic perceptions in a society. See my article: “The antisemitic Paradox in Europe: Empirical Evidences and Jewish Perceptions. A Comparative Study Between the West and East,” in *Being Jewish in 21st Century Central Europe*, ed. Haim Fireberg, Olaf Glockner, and Marcela Zoufala (Berin: De Gruyter, 2020), 269–279.

36 The Kantor Center, <http://www.kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/Doch2014-2.pdf>;

Randolph Braham, “Hungary: The Assault on the Historical Memory of the Holocaust,” in *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later*, ed. Randolph Braham and András Kovács (Budapest: CEU press, 2016), 261–309;

Hungarian Free Press, <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2015/05/07/budapest-politicians-tour-new-holocaust-museum-described-as-shocking>;

The Kantor Center, <http://www.kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/Doch2014-2.pdf>, 55.

Another controversy referred to the anti-George Soros campaign in Hungary that deepened the gap between the Government and the veteran Jewish establishment, currently led by Andras Heisler.

The Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/decrying-netanyahu-betrayal-hungary-jews-say-pm-ignoring-them/>.

<https://www.dw.com/en/rising-anti-semitism-in-hungary-worries-jewish-groups/a-55978374>; <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/11/30/sense-of-impunity-lies-behind-hungary-officials-antisemitic-at-tack-on-soros/>.

37 <https://www.dw.com/en/rising-anti-semitism-in-hungary-worries-jewish-groups/a-55978374>.

gence of Jobbik, a party which is more or less openly antisemitic.³⁸ There is a significant correlation between antisemitism and certain attitudes such as xenophobia and nationalism, which adequately explains its influence. However, these attitudes do not produce the same degree of antisemitism in every social milieu and in every region of the country. There are differences that correlate with the strength of support for Jobbik support in a given region. The assumption is that “support for a far-right party is not a cause of antisemitism, but rather – on the contrary – should be regarded as a factor that mobilizes attitudes leading to antisemitism and that directs people towards antisemitism.” Therefore, antisemitism is, at least in part, the result, rather than a cause, of attraction to the far right.³⁹ As a result of its partial defeat in the 2018 parliamentary election, Jobbik was no longer perceived as an authentic home for the right-wing of Hungary and many have sought out other platforms to express their hate and nationalism.⁴⁰

Hungary’s discourse primarily pertains to the quest for national identity in the twenty-first century, to the uncertainty regarding its common values and the place of minorities, including Jews, within a nation-state. In 2017, religion became the main marker of Hungarian cultural identity. Hypothetically, the change was a result of the resurrection of the Christian-national idea which appears as a foundation of the Hungarian constitution. This vision assumes that Christian culture is the unifying force of the nation, giving the state its essence and meaning. Similarly to how denomination is linked to national identity in Poland, in Hungary being Christian is equivalent to being Hungarian. Christian religiosity symbolizes the acceptance of the national-conservative identity discourse as well as belonging to the

38 András Kovács, *Antisemitic Prejudices and Dynamics of Antisemitism in Post-Communist Hungary*, https://www.jmberlin.de/sites/default/files/antisemitism-in-europe-today_4-kovacs.pdf (2013), 22.

39 Ibid.

40 Barna Ildikó and Árpád Knap from Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, suggested that the extreme right continued to support Jobbik even though in 2016–2017 the party seemed to turn away from its original agenda. Jobbik was portrayed as the leader of the opposition and the arch enemy of the governing Fidesz, the latter being accused of resorting to dirty tricks in order to defeat Jobbik. The turning point came after Jobbik was defeated in a parliamentary election in April 2018, and especially after its most extreme politicians left the party to establish the “Our Homeland Movement” (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom). See: Ildikó Barna and Árpád Knap, *Antisemitism in Contemporary Hungary: Exploring Topics of Antisemitism in the Far-Right Media Using Natural Language Processing* in: https://www.theo-web.de/archiv/archiv-ab-juni-2017/news/antisemitism-in-contemporary-hungary-exploring-topics-of-antisemitism-in-the-far-right-media-using/?tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=98e44e842b1e2d38f1692d89d2f0a7c8; *The Jobbik Party in Hungary: History and Background*, <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/Jobbik-Party-Fact-Sheet-final.pdf>.

Christian-nationalist political camp, where antisemitism is more prevalent than in other sectors of society.⁴¹

The regime developed by Viktor Orbán after his ascension to power in 2010 has been viewed as being ethnically nationalist and authoritarian. Culture-wise, it is necessary to note the creation of some public institutions, national strategy research institutes, museums, and public universities, as well as many monuments (many of them honouring antisemitic “heroes” of the Horthy era).⁴²

For instance, a statue constructed at Budapest’s Freedom Square in 2014 depicts a German imperial eagle striking down Hungary’s guardian angel, Gabriel – an image meant to symbolize Hungary’s innocence in the face of Nazi aggression and commemorate German occupation which began on 19 March 1944. Wide segments of the Hungarian public, not just among Jews, continue to oppose the statue, arguing that it downplays Hungary’s responsibility for the Holocaust.⁴³ In September 2021, Pope Francis visited the site and, speaking to a large crowd, denounced the incorporation of Christian values into the Hungarian political system. “The cross, planted in the ground, not only invites us to be well-rooted: it also raises and extends its arms towards everyone,” said Francis.⁴⁴

Even if the Fidesz cabinet led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is not considered antisemitic, it is obvious enough that it uses the same “anti”-rhetoric for domestic political gains. Budapest (and Poland) and the EU establishment are at odds over several issues, including whether European identity imposed by EU regulations takes precedence over national identity. Both Hungary and Poland refused to allow “refugees” to settle in their countries, claiming their Christian and national identities were being threatened.⁴⁵ After a meeting with his Polish counterpart Mateusz Morawiecki in November 2020, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán declared: “There are a number of topics on which we disagree with the other EU countries, such as immigration and gender, and this would mean we could

41 Barna Ildikó and András Kovács, *Religiosity, Religious Practice, and Antisemitism in Present-Day Hungary*, <https://archive.jpr.org.uk/download?id=7149/>. A similar trend is obvious in Polish society. Being Christian, especially Catholic, appears as a typical feature of being “truly Polish.”

42 *Ibid.*, 124.

43 For more examples of the rift between the Jews and the Government, see: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/budapests-new-30m-holocaust-museum-sits-in-limbo-as-hungary-debates-its-contents/>.

44 <https://www.dw.com/en/pope-francis-meets-hungarys-viktor-orban-on-4-day-europe-trip/a-59156880>.

45 An interview by Madeleine Janssen with Michael Roth, German Minister of European Affairs: https://www.t-online.de/nachrichten/ausland/eu/id_88431006/eu-europastaatsminister-michael-roth-will-polen-und-ungarn-sanktionieren.html;

<https://balkaninsight.com/2020/11/27/democracy-digest-poland-and-hungary-refuse-to-back-down-over-eu-veto/>.

be forced to accept their interpretation of all these matters. My patriotic duty is to defend Hungary and its vital interests.”⁴⁶

Nonetheless, in an article published on the pro-government news site *Origo* at the same time, Szilárd Demeter, the government’s cultural commissioner and director of the Petőfi Literary Museum, pointed out how much antisemitism, the Holocaust, and the Jewish fate are embedded in the political rhetoric in Hungary. According to Demeter, in defending their way of life against the EU, Poles and Hungarians have become outcasts and are therefore the new Jews of Europe. As if that was not enough, he also compared George Soros to Adolf Hitler, calling him “a liberal Führer.” His opinion piece made headlines in the Hungarian media. Eventually, Demeter retracted, saying he did not mean to “relativize the Holocaust.”⁴⁷ Therefore, it is not surprising that the most frequent response in the ADL survey on antisemitism attitudes in Hungary is the statement that “Jews still talk too much about what happened to them during the Holocaust.”⁴⁸ Hungarian society is definitely experiencing a “Jewish problem.”

We have seen that the Holocaust is always present in Hungary’s public life and political discourse. But do the political conditions in Hungary and the unclear societal attitudes towards minorities encourage Jews to go beyond the surface and learn more about their Jewish heritage and tradition? Hungarian government’s rhetoric covertly contains antisemitism, while some extreme political parties openly employ it in their agendas and politics.⁴⁹ International Jewish organizations offer cultural and other programs to support Jewish communities in Hungary.⁵⁰

46 <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/11/27/democracy-digest-poland-and-hungary-refuse-to-back-down-over-eu-veto/>; <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/heres-the-joint-declaration-of-the-prime-minister-of-poland-and-the-prime-minister-of-hungary>.

47 <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/11/30/sense-of-impunity-lies-behind-hungary-officials-antisemitic-ack-on-soros/>; <https://www.szabadeuropa.hu/a/nyilatkozathaboru-utan-visszavonta-gazkamrazos-irasat-demeter-szilard/30974746.html>.

48 <https://global100.adl.org/country/hungary/2019>. A similar indication that the Holocaust is the most bothering issue for Hungarians who could be identified as antisemites was found by a research group in a recent publication: Barna Ildikó, Tamás Kohut, Katalin Pallai, Olga Gyárfášová, Jiří Kocián, Grigorij Mesežnikov, and Rafal Pankowski, *Modern Antisemitism in the Visegrád Countries – Countering Distortion*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349360020_Modern_Antisemitism_in_the_Visegrád_Countries_-_Countering_Distortion/link/602c7321a6fdcc37a82fffb5/download.

49 For analysis of antisemitic groups’ rhetoric: Barna Ildikó, Tamás Kohut, Katalin Pallai, Olga Gyárfášová, Jiří Kocián, Grigorij Mesežnikov, and Rafal Pankowski, *Modern Antisemitism in the Visegrád Countries – Countering Distortion*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349360020_Modern_Antisemitism_in_the_Visegrád_Countries_-_Countering_Distortion/link/602c7321a6fdcc37a82fffb5/download.

It is commonly believed that this “revival” of Jewish culture and the vibrant Jewish life in Hungary, primarily in Budapest, reflects a robust Jewish community in an encouraging environment. Even so, with all the changes in Jewish institutional life and in spite of the Jewish institutional boom, the number of Hungarians who identify themselves as Jews or are more committed to Jewish communal life has remained relatively unchanged. “The “missing Jews” were targeted again,” concluded Kata Vicze, “but most of them remained missing (perhaps for their protection of their own privacy or deliberate choice of not declaring themselves Jewish, among other reasons).”⁵¹

A conservative Rabbi in Budapest, Gábor Fináli, analyzes the difficulties that hidden Hungarian Jews face when attempting to embrace Judaism. In his view, people often seek companionship. They wish for company first, and yearn for the consolation of spirituality that religion offers. Asked why they do not seek and call upon God in the synagogue, they respond that they view the synagogue with disdain and that they dislike it. The root of the problem is the absence of a living Hungarian Jewish identity – the one that exists is based on the Holocaust and the success of Israel, so it does not relate to current events or life in Hungary. As Fináli states, “Even in the third and fourth generations of Jewish families, the Holocaust is a greater force for community formation than Torah morality, beauty and richness, and Auschwitz is more influential than Mount Sinai.”⁵² Fináli suggests that there should be a communication strategy. Books should be translated thoughtfully and systematically, films should be imported, and Hungarian Jews should become more involved in the Jewish world.⁵³ The quest to reach the “missing Jews” sometimes becomes grotesque, for instance when elements as prosaic as Cholent – a stew of slow-cooked meat that simmers overnight and is often made by observant Jews, in accordance with the laws that prohibit cooking on the Sabbath – are used to attract Jews and part-Jews, in addition to building bridges with gentile Hungarians.⁵⁴

50 <https://ejpress.org/after-years-of-rebuilding-budapests-jewish-community-sees-growth-in-size-and-shuls/>.

51 Zsófia Kata Vincze, “The “Missing” and “Missed” Jews in Hungary,” in *Being Jewish in 21st Century Central Europe*, ed. Haim Fireberg, Olaf Glöckner, and Marcela Menachem Zoufalá (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 115–143, 126.

52 See in the same context in this volume especially the text by Lilach Lev-Ari, who also argues that the Holocaust continues to strongly affect the life and intellectual world of the Jews in Hungary.

53 Gábor Fináli, “We have no example of being able to live as Hungarians,” https://www-szombat-org.translate.google/hagyomany-tortenelem/nincs-mintank-hogy-lehet-magyar-zsidokent-elni?_x_tr_sch=http&_x_tr_sl=hu&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en .

54 <https://www.jns.org/cholent-festival-brings-jewish-culture-to-hungary-via-food-music-traditions/>.

The Case of Germany

The unique history of Germany in the twentieth century has prompted me to focus on antisemitism there, examining the changes and evolution that occurred over the course of the last decade. Germany is home to approximately 117,500 to 250,000 Jews (depending on how Jewishness is defined).⁵⁵ Berlin has the largest Jewish community in the country. The Jewish community in Germany consists primarily of post-Soviet immigrants, who arrived here in the 1990s, and their children. Additionally, many young Israelis (10,000–30,000) have viewed Germany, and particularly Berlin, as a liberal haven from the pressures of life in Israel and have decided to stay, live, and work here for longer.⁵⁶

By 2011, the problem of violent antisemitism had largely ceased to exist for the majority of German Jews. Violent incidents were relatively rare, as antisemites instead chose vandalism as their preferred method of operation. Evidently, old Jewish cemeteries and memorial sites were the primary targets of desecration (16 cases were recorded in 2011 by the Kantor Center). These few incidents did not receive much attention in Germany at the time and were not presented in an alarmist tone in the Kantor Center's 2011 annual report.⁵⁷ However, in a statement released on October 9 2012 by Petra Pau, vice-president of the German Bundestag and a member of the Die Linke party, the Federal Government announced that 82 attacks on synagogues had occurred in Germany between 2008 and 2012.⁵⁸ A similar number was recorded in the Kantor Center Database. However, at that point, there was very little chance that a Jew would be subjected to physical violence. It appears that violent manifestations of antisemitism have increased in frequency since 2013, but most of them have still taken the form of desecration, happening far from the public eye.⁵⁹

55 Sergio DellaPergola, "Jewish Demography in the European Union – Virtuous and Vicious Paths," in *Being Jewish in 21st Century Central Europe*, ed. Haim Fireberg Haim, Olaf Glöckner, and Marcela Menachem Zoufala (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 26.

56 For an updated estimation of the numbers of Israelis in Berlin, see: Dani Kranz, *Israelis in Berlin: Wie viele sind es und was zieht sie nach Berlin?* (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2015), 11, accessed January 10, 2022, <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/publikationen/publikation/did/israelis-in-berlin-1>.

57 https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/humanities/kantor/research/annual_reports/GA-ALL_8.pdf

58 Deutscher Bundestag, 17. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 17/14813, 04.10.2013. Antwort auf die Anfrage der Abgeordneten Petra Pau (DIE LINKE) (Wie viele Anschläge auf Synagogen hat es in Deutschland in den letzten fünf Jahren gegeben?).

59 https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/humanities/kantor/Doch_2013.pdf. Admittedly, in 2019, the German parliament (Bundestag), when answering an of-

Germany was included in an FRA study conducted in 2013 that provided some insight into antisemitism in German society from a Jewish perspective. The survey indicated that 61 percent of the participants believed antisemitism was a real problem in Germany – a figure lower than in France and Hungary, but higher than in the United Kingdom.⁶⁰ At the same time, 32 percent of respondents believed that antisemitism had increased significantly over the previous five years. Compared to other European countries, Germany scored at the bottom on both criteria.⁶¹ Even though the likelihood that a Jew living on the streets of Germany would experience antisemitic violence was extremely low (if not non-existent), a feeling of urgency led scholars, politicians, and other public figures to investigate the nature of these perceptions and feelings, and how they differed from the reality on the streets.

Rabbi Daniel Alter, a prominent member of the Berlin community who is responsible for combating antisemitism, emphasized that the problem was present all across the society. Ludwig Schick, the Archbishop of Bamberg at the time, foresaw the latent danger of antisemitism, even though it had not yet escalated into violence, while also adding that “anti-Jewish attitudes are no longer exclusively hidden from view; they are openly expressed, and they are less hidden these days.”⁶²

An extensive study conducted by Professor Monika Schwarz-Friesel at the Technical University of Berlin has since substantiated this claim by examining thousands of antisemitic hate messages, letters, and emails addressed to Israel’s Embassy in Berlin and the German Central Council of Jews.⁶³ According to Schwarz-Friesel, most of the material contained in the examined sources was generated by “ordinary members of the mainstream society.” The language used by academics, lawyers, doctors, bank employees, clergymen, and students demon-

official inquiry of the Vice President of the Bundestag, Petra Pau (The Left), confirmed that a Jewish cemetery in Germany was desecrated every other week. See: *Jede zweite Woche wird ein jüdischer Friedhof geschändet* in Jüdische Allgemeine Online, August 2, 2019, accessed January 10, 2022, <https://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/unsere-woche/jede-zweite-woche-wird-ein-juedischer-friedhof-geschaendet/>.

⁶⁰ https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2013-discrimination-hate-crime-against-jews-eu-member-states-0_en.pdf, 16.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶² *Ibid.* 42.

⁶³ Prof. Monika Schwarz-Friesel and her team started their research in 2002, using extensive linguistic methods. Their conclusion was initially published in German in 2013. Lately, the updated English edition was published: Monika Schwaetz-Friesel and Jehuda Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind; The language of Jew-hatred in contemporary Germany* (Brandeis University Press, 2017).

strated rejection, hostility, and defensiveness which decades of memory work have failed to alleviate.⁶⁴

In 2018, the FRA published a follow-up survey to its 2013 study.⁶⁵ It marked the first time that the majority of respondents (85 percent) in Germany perceived anti-semitism as a serious issue. This represented a significant increase of over 39 percentage points in this category. Around 60 percent of respondents reported that antisemitic incidents had increased “a lot” over the previous five years. This represented the second highest increase among European nations. In terms of these two criteria, the 2018 results took Germany closer to what is, on average, found throughout Europe today.⁶⁶ Data provided by the Kantor Center indicated 35 incidents of violent antisemitism in Germany in 2018. In comparison with 2013, one of the major differences was that almost half of the attacks targeted individuals.⁶⁷ Antisemitic violence has become a reality for Jews living in Germany, threatening their sense of security and turning their lives upside down.⁶⁸

The huge migration wave from 2015 onwards gave rise to the question of how the growing number of Muslim refugees in Germany affects the presence of anti-semitism.⁶⁹ In a meeting with Chancellor Angela Merkel, Josef Schuster, the head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, expressed concern about Jew-hatred among immigrants and refugees from predominantly Muslim countries.⁷⁰ The German government (and Jewish organisations) was accused by critics of underplaying or even denying the growing involvement of Muslims and Islamists in antisemitic activities in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany. Migration was a very

64 Ibid. Preface to the 2013 edition.

65 https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-anti-semitism-survey_en.pdf. For a detailed analysis of FRA 2018, see: Sergio DellaPergola, *Jewish Perceptions of Antisemitism in the European Union, 2018: A New Structural Look*, in: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/actap-2020-2001/html>.

66 Ibid., 17, 19.

67 <https://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Antisemitism-Worldwide-2018.pdf>, 138.

68 Ronen Steinke, *Terror gegen Juden. Wie antisemitische Gewalt erstarkt und der Staat versagt* (Berlin Verlag, München, 2020).

69 According to Benjamin Weinthal Germany’s security and intelligence agencies officially expressed alarm in October 2015: “We are importing Islamic extremism, Arab anti-Semitism, national and ethnic conflicts of other peoples as well as a different societal and legal understanding. ... [T]he integration of hundreds of thousands of illegal migrants in Germany is no longer possible in light of the number and already existing parallel societies,” <https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/German-intel-Migrants-will-bring-anti-Semitism-430058>.

70 Ibid. For a comprehensive analysis of the 2015–2018 situation, see: James Kirchick, *Is Germany capable of protecting its Jews*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/04/germany-jews-muslim-migrants/558677/> (April 2018).

controversial topic in Germany at the time.⁷¹ President Joachim Gauck addressed the issue of antisemitism among Muslim immigrants when he left office at the end of 2017, in a Public Lecture at the University of Düsseldorf:

I feel ashamed (...) when antisemitism among people from Arab states is ignored or made understandable with reference to Israeli politics. Or when criticism of Islam is immediately suspected of growing out of racism and hatred of Muslims. Am I right that in these and other cases consideration for the other culture is seen as more important than the protection of basic and human rights? Yes, there is hatred and discrimination against Muslims in our country. What is required to oppose this resentment and generalisation is not only schools and politics, but each individual. But appeasers who disregard reprehensible behaviour of individual migrants in order not to promote racism only confirm racists in their suspicion that freedom of expression is restricted in our country.⁷²

President Gauck recommended that in order to change migrants’ attitudes towards democracy, liberalism, and other groups living in Germany “and to agree on a future in this country together, we need one thing above all else – the same as it once was between native and displaced Germans – more knowledge about one another. More dialogue. More debate. More willingness to meet in the respective other our own fears, but also new opportunities.”⁷³

Following the Islamist terror attack in Berlin on 19 December 2016, in which a truck was intentionally driven into the Christmas market killing 12 people and in-

71 <https://www.dw.com/en/anti-semitism-in-germany-as-muslims-we-must-tackle-this/a-57578758>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/21/magazine/anti-semitism-germany.html>; <https://www.timesofisrael.com/germany-is-accused-of-downplaying-anti-semitic-attacks-by-muslims/>.

72 https://rp-online.de/nrw/staedte/duesseldorf/joachim-gauck-an-heinrich-heine-uni-duesseldorf-mich-erschreckt-der-multikulturalismus_aid-17821655. Translation by the author. The original quote of Joachim Gauck in German: “So finde ich es beschämend (...) wenn Antisemitismus unter Menschen aus arabischen Staaten ignoriert oder mit Verweis auf israelische Politik für verständlich erklärt wird. Oder wenn Kritik am Islam sofort unter den Verdacht gerät, aus Rassismus und einem Hass auf Muslime zu erwachsen. Sehe ich es richtig, dass in diesen und anderen Fällen die Rücksichtnahme auf die andere Kultur als wichtiger erachtet wird als die Wahrung von Grund- und Menschenrechten? Ja, es gibt Hass und Diskriminierung von Muslimen in unserem Land. Und sich diesem Ressentiment und dieser Generalisierung entgegenzustellen, sind nicht nur Schulen und Politik gefordert, sondern jeder Einzelne. Beschwichtiger aber, die kritikwürdige Verhaltensweisen von einzelnen Migranten unter den Teppich kehren, um Rassismus keinen Vorschub zu leisten, bestätigen Rassisten nur in ihrem Verdacht, die Meinungsfreiheit in unserem Land sei eingeschränkt.”

73 *Ibid.* Translation by the author. Original speech in German: “Um uns gemeinsam auf eine Zukunft in diesem Land zu verständigen, brauchen wir – wie einst zwischen einheimischen und vertriebenen Deutschen – vor allem eines: mehr Wissen übereinander. Mehr Dialog. Mehr Debatte. Mehr Bereitschaft, im jeweils Anderen unseren eigenen Ängsten, aber auch neuen Chancen zu begegnen.”

juring at least 50 more, general fear and reservations towards the Muslim population in Germany increased.⁷⁴ A long-standing fear of far-right extremist terrorism also appeared after a right-radical young man had tried to conduct a massacre in the synagogue of the city of Halle (Central Germany) on Yom Kippur in 2019.⁷⁵

In Berlin, which is home to the largest Jewish community in Germany, anti-semitic incidents have been reported most frequently. It is true that the overall numbers for the first half of 2018 remained high in most parts of the city. However, in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, a district with a high Muslim population and new immigrants, antisemitic incidents rose by more than 50 percent, according to the Research and Information Office on Antisemitism in Berlin (RIAS).⁷⁶ There was (and is) a belief that the increase in antisemitic incidents is related to the growing number of immigrants from the Middle East living in the city. Felix Klein, the German national Antisemitism Commissioner, also admitted the statistics presented by RIAS would support a sense among Jews that Muslims were far more involved in antisemitic incidents than official statistics suggested.⁷⁷ Thus, the results of the FRA survey in 2018, also based on a comprehensive survey among German Jews, were not unexpected. The research found that almost 75 percent of German respondents chose not to carry attributes that would identify them as Jewish.⁷⁸

Antisemitic violence and hostility are directed not only toward adult Jews. Recent studies have revealed an increase in antisemitism in German schools. Germany had for many years invested a great deal of resources and effort into school education in order to counter the young generations' hostility towards Jews. In fact, according to surveys, the situation paradoxically produced a new phenomenon re-

74 <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/occasional-papers/aftermath-terror-attack-breitscheid-platz> (accessed January 10, 2021).

75 On October 9, 2019, on Yom Kippur, the most important Jewish holiday, a heavily armed right-wing extremist tried to enter a packed synagogue in the East German city of Halle. Only the insuperable, thick, wooden door prevented a huge bloodbath. The invader, after realising that he could not breach the door, started a gun rampage on the streets and killed two random passengers.

76 https://report-antisemitism.de/documents/2019-04-17_rias-be_Annual_Antisemitische-Vorfaelle-2018.pdf. RIAS – an NGO that tallies expressions of hatred against Jews, 15 (accessed January 10, 2021).

77 <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Berlin-Europes-antisemitism-capital-580076>. For further analysis on Muslim antisemitism and its influence on German politics, see: https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/humanities/kantor/Antisemitism%20Worldwide%202018.pdf, 73 (accessed January 10, 2021). In addition to the national antisemitism commissioner most of the 16 federal states have installed their own antisemitism commissioners who work at the interface between Jewish communities, the state, and society.

78 https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-anti-semitism-survey_en.pdf, 37 (accessed January 10, 2021).

ferred to as “Holocaust Fatigue” or “Shoah Fatigue.”⁷⁹ Using these curricula, German educators attempted to address the youth of the new immigration wave in such a way as to at least reduce the deep-seated prejudice toward the Jews. However, many indicators suggest that the approach does not appear to be accepted by the students. Although no formal studies are yet available, it has been evident that schools (such as mosques) were used as breeding grounds for growing antisemitism.⁸⁰

Abraham Lehrer, the director of the synagogue of the Cologne Jewish community, explained that “the number of young members of our community reporting hostility is increasing (...) Teachers of the school say that ‘Du Jude’ is used as a dirty word on the playground, despite the fact that no Jewish child attends the school.” Often, ignorance, inability to deal with the phenomenon or indifference to it are the reasons for such reaction. Furthermore, educators are increasingly encountering antisemitism relating to Israel, predominantly (but not exclusively) among Muslims. Despite the 75 years that have elapsed since the Holocaust, “Du Jude” is still a commonly used insult on school playgrounds and in classrooms.⁸¹

During a meeting held in Heidelberg, Germany on February 29, 2019, the German commissioners dealing with antisemitism, together with Jewish and Hebrew teachers, discussed ways to combat the increasing verbal and physical antisemitism in German schools. School headmasters have been accused of failing to act in response to antisemitic incidents for fear of damaging their reputations. Antisemitism in schools has become a real issue – not just in Berlin, but throughout Germany.⁸² According to Marina Chernivsky, the founder of the Berlin-based organisation “Kompetenz-Zentrum für Prävention und Empowerment,”⁸³ which offers counselling for individuals, families, and organizations experiencing antisemitic or discriminatory incidents, the lack of expertise on how to deal with antisemitism in the classroom means that even Jewish teachers do not always re-

79 <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/studie-zu-70-jahre-nach-auschwitz-junge-deutsche-sind-des-100.html> (accessed January 1, 2015).

80 Monica Vitale and Rebecca Clothey, “Holocaust Education in Germany: Ensuring Relevance and Meaning in an Increasingly Diverse Community,” *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education* 5, no. 1 (2019): 44–62, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1207646.pdf>;

<https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/122372-160811-study-german-universities-neglect-holocaust-studies>.

81 https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/humanities/kantor/Kantor%20Report%202020_130820.pdf, 103 (accessed January 10, 2021).

82 https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/humanities/kantor/Antisemitism%20Worldwide%202018.pdf, 74.

83 Marina Chernivsky is also leading the Berlin based Advisory initiative OFEK. See: <https://ofekberatung.de/>.

port incidents concerning themselves, for fear of revealing their own religious identity.⁸⁴

Research conducted in 2018 by Professor Julia Bernstein from the Department of Social Work and Health at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences (Frankfurt UAS) produced significant findings regarding antisemitism in German schools. Bernstein led an extensive qualitative study, whereby Jewish students were asked about their experiences with antisemitism in schools and how teachers responded to it.

This study revealed that: a) among school children and teachers, it is not uncommon to find that antisemitism is normalized in relation to Israel; such “criticism of Israel” conceals deeper aggression and hatred towards the Jews; b) antisemitism is not always considered as a unique phenomenon and is sometimes mistaken for racism; in fact, the similarities and differences between those two phenomena are frequently overlooked; and c) there is a tendency to explain contemporary antisemitism through the lens of National Socialist antisemitism and the Shoah. Nonetheless, surprisingly, many young people use National Socialist symbols and fantasize about the extermination of the Jews in a manner directly related to the Holocaust.⁸⁵

As for contemporary Germany, it should be acknowledged that violent antisemitism is not yet the crux of the problem. The number of incidents involving face-to-face violence is still relatively low, as could be seen from the numbers mentioned earlier.⁸⁶ The true face of antisemitism is presumed beneath the sociological and cultural surface, as it disguises itself as a kind of open and liberal society. Professor Monika Schwarz-Friesel and Professor Jehuda Reinharz explained it as follows:

Here once again, antisemitism proves to be a chameleon: it changes its colors according to the social and political situations, but stays the same at its cognitive and emotional core. ... In spite of all the efforts to erase the distorted and false pictures of Jews and Judaism after the Holocaust, our data reveal the shocking truth about the continuity and persistence of the age-old hostility toward Jews ... Deeply rooted in the Western tradition of thinking ... it

84 See: Marina Chernivsky, Friederike Lorenz, and Johanna Schweitzer, *Antisemitismus im (Schul-)Alltag. Erfahrungen und Umgangsweisen jüdischer Familien und junger Erwachsener*, https://zwst-kompetenzzentrum.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Forschungsbericht_Familienstudie_2020.pdf.

85 https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/humanities/kantor/Kantor%20Report%202020_130820.pdf, 105–106. The full outcome of the research was published in: Julia Bernstein, *Antisemitismus an Schulen in Deutschland* (Juventa Verlag GmbH, 2020).

86 Although recent years have seen several deadly attacks (such as in Halle and Berlin), the majority of incidents continue to take the form of desecrating memorial sites or cemeteries.

proves to be a central part of ... culture.... To cope with contemporary hatred of Jews, to find a solution so as to seriously and effectively fight it, must take it [the Western culture] into account.⁸⁷

The EU Perspective: The Challenges of Managing and Confronting Antisemitism

Antisemitism is not ignored by the European authorities. It is generally accepted that antisemitism, especially in its violent form, is perpetrated by the same individuals and groups – whether from the far left, far right or Muslim fundamentalists – that are responsible for extremism, hate crimes, and violence in general. The challenge of fighting antisemitism in Europe requires a coordinated effort against perpetrators. However, Irwin Cotler, former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, is more skeptical as to the level of commitment from governments and international organisations. “Jews are the canary in the mine shaft of global evil,” he declares. “It begins with Jews, but it does not end there. Universal public values – and the humanity they uphold and protect – are also at risk.”⁸⁸

“Antisemitism has been on the rise in Europe and beyond these past few years, and the European Commission has adopted a firm policy to utilize all resources at its disposal to prevent and combat antisemitism and other forms of hatred and intolerance,” said Katharina von Schnurbein, Coordinator of the European Commission for Combating Antisemitism.⁸⁹ Before taking any further steps, the Commission wanted to verify the results of the FRA 2018 survey and get a sense of what the general public thought about antisemitism. Published in January 2019, the Eurobarometer Survey on Antisemitism in Europe provided an interesting overview of the situation. The results showed a significant difference between the general public’s perceptions of antisemitism and the experiences of the Jewish community as indicated by the FRA survey. Nine out of ten (89 percent) Jews surveyed by the FRA believe that antisemitism has increased, and eight out of ten (85 percent) consider it a serious issue. Jews in Europe rate antisemitism as

⁸⁷ Monika Schwaetz-Friesel and Jehuda Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind; The language of Jew-hatred in contemporary Germany* (Brandeis University Press, 2017), preface to the English edition (2016).

⁸⁸ https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/humanities/kantor/Kantor%20Report%202020_130820.pdf, 155–156 (Irwin Cotler, *The Laundering of Antisemitism under Universal Public Values*).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* (Katharina von Schnurbein, *European Union Activities in Combating Antisemitism in 2019*), 152.

their biggest social or political problem. However, according to Eurobarometer results, only 36 percent of the general public believe that antisemitism has increased in recent years.⁹⁰ Therefore, the basic assumption behind bridging the results of the two FRA surveys with Eurobarometer was that there is a social problem that should be addressed.

On June 1, 2017, the European Parliament adopted an important resolution on the fight against antisemitism. It envisioned the appointment of national special envoys, the adoption of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism, and a call for increased efforts at the local, national, and European levels. In December 2018, Justice and Home Affairs Ministers of all 28 EU Member States adopted a joint declaration entitled “EU Council Declaration on the fight against antisemitism and the development of a common security policy for protecting Jewish communities, institutions and individuals in Europe.” The declaration addresses a wide range of issues that require action.⁹¹ It recommends that the Member States: a) develop and adopt comprehensive national strategies on preventing antisemitism that are integrated into their overall strategies to combat racism; b) adhere to the IHRA definition; c) safeguard and secure Jewish communities, while also providing them with adequate funding; d) implement all existing European legislation regarding racism and xenophobia; and e) promote education about the Holocaust and Jewish life in the modern world, including integration courses for newcomers, as well as ensure adequate teacher training.⁹²

On October 20, 2021, the European Commission submitted its “Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life” in Europe.⁹³ “The Strategy we are

⁹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_19_542. It was also revealed by the Eurobarometer that antisemitism is more of an issue in countries with large Jewish populations. In countries where physical attacks against the Jewish community have occurred, such as Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Belgium, antisemitism has also been cited as a problem. Swedish (81 percent) and French (72 percent) respondents are most likely to state that antisemitism is a problem in their country. People with Jewish friends and acquaintances are more likely to be aware of the issues as well as the rise of antisemitism.

⁹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_19_542.

⁹² *Ibid.* It should be noted that although the European Commission and EU Member States have adopted the IHRA definition, the document itself has no legal authority. One of the most compelling aspects of the working definition is its moral affirmative stance which may be the key to convincing politicians and decision-makers to support the Jewish cause as justified in its own right. While the political game allows for flexibility, it is still very difficult to reverse court decisions, especially if they are considered constitutional precedents. However, the European Union still prefers not to deal with antisemitism as a distinct phenomenon, but rather by utilizing the laws and national regulations dealing with hate crimes, hate speech, and racism.

⁹³ For the detailed plan see: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/eu-strategy-on-combating-antisemitism-and-fostering-jewish-life_october2021_en.pdf.

presenting today marks a major step change in the approach the EU takes to counter antisemitism,” said Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission.⁹⁴ The implementation is anticipated to take place within the next decade and all EU member states will be required to prepare detailed plans. The Commission has made no recommendations as to how legislation is to be used as a tool against antisemitism.

Conclusions

A careful review of the current antisemitic situation in three EU Member States – Germany, Hungary, and Poland – allows us to draw several conclusions. The level of violent antisemitism, as indicated by the number of violent incidents, is not necessarily correlated with the perceptions of antisemitism in those countries. Some “paradoxes” can be observed in Hungary and Poland. Despite having relatively low levels of antisemitic violence, the two countries perceive antisemitism differently in light of their understanding of domestic political and social conditions. The situation in Germany is quite similar. Although there have been very few violent incidents in the past, there is a growing feeling of a threat of antisemitism, both in the social sphere and on the streets. According to the FRA survey conducted in 2018, German Jews experience a greater sense of insecurity in almost all measurable aspects. A high degree of estrangement from the national identity ethos is expressed by respondents in Poland and Hungary.

There is frustration with the political establishment, the ruling parties, and their solutions to antisemitism. Another contributing factor is the failure to create a standard platform on which all segments of society can unite. When Jews lack confidence in the future of their country of residence and do not recognize themselves as valuable members of its society, they feel abandoned. This sense of disillusionment also drives their perceptions of antisemitism which is evident in research results.

Even though antisemitism is a serious problem, it is only one of many issues which European governments and societies are facing now, and not necessarily the most urgent one. In light of the special “relations” between Europe and its Jews, particularly in the twentieth century, it is imperative that Jews do not confuse sympathy with action. In the context of increasingly complex European societies, with Western and Eastern nations increasingly divided over nationalism, the human

94 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_4990.

texture is changing rapidly.⁹⁵ Given that the Jewish population of Europe ages and decreases rapidly, in parallel with the entire European population,⁹⁶ Jews should no longer expect special treatment in the future. Whenever the “Jewish problem” occurs, it does so due to Europe’s own challenges such as building nations, combating disintegration, and coping with expanding cultural disparities between a rapidly growing Muslim population and an aging European population. These difficulties are causing political turmoil in Germany and France – the two largest countries in Europe – as well as widening rifts between these Western states on the one hand and Hungary and Poland on the other. As a result, the Jews may once again become scapegoats for societal and political problems faced by the countries in which they live.

95 *A comparative analysis of changes in anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim attitudes in Europe: 1990–2017*, <https://comparativemigrationstudies.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40878-021-00266-w>; Bichara Khader, *Muslims in Europe: The Construction of a “Problem”*, <https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/articles/muslims-in-europe-the-construction-of-a-problem/>; <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/29/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/>.

96 Sergio DellaPergola and Daniel Staetsky, *Jews in Europe at the turn of the Millennium: Population trends and estimates*, https://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR_2020.Jews_in_Europe_at_the_turn_of_the_Millennium.pdf; https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ageing_Europe_-_statistics_on_population_developments; https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ageing_Europe_-_statistics_on_population_developments#Older_people_.E2.80.94_population_overview; *Measuring active aging within the European Union: implications on economic development*, <https://www.ceeol.com/search/viewpdf?id=925494>.