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SHADOW MONITORING OF ILLEGAL ANTISEMITIC HATE SPEECH

6th - 7th October 2022

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The EU-Funded RELATION – RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE & EDUCATION AGAINST ANTISEMITISM project (https://www.relationproject.eu) aims at defining an innovative strategy that starts from a better knowledge of the Jewish history/traditions as part of the common history/traditions, and puts in place a set of educational activities in Belgium, Italy, Romania and Spain as well as online actions in order to tackle the phenomenon.

The project activities include the monitoring of antisemitism phenomenon online in the four countries of the project (Belgium, Italy, Romania and Spain) by creating a cross-country web-monitoring of illegal antisemitic hate speech.

The monitoring exercises aim at

- Analysing the removal rate of illegal antisemitic hate speech available on diverse Social Media Platforms, namely Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok.
- Partners organisations focused on their country language: French in Belgium, Italian, Romanian and Spanish;
- Analysing the types of content and narratives collected by the research team.

Four organisations from four different countries (Belgium, Italy, Spain and Romania) took part in the monitoring exercise. Comunitat Jueva Bet Shalom De Catalunya (Bet Shalom, Spain), CEJI - A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe (Belgium), Fondazione Centro Di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC, Italy), Intercultural Institute Timișoara (IIT, Romania).

The monitoring exercise follows the definition of Illegal hate speech as defined "by the Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law and national laws transposing it, means all conduct publicly inciting to violence or hatred directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin."

The content was collected and reported to social media platforms between October 6th and 7th, 2022. Content was checked for removal on October 12th to give enough time to social media platforms to analyse and remove the content. The monitoring exercises devote particular attention to the intersection of antisemitism and sexism.

KEY FIGURES

1. Notifications of illegal hate speech

- A total of 177 pieces of content Content were submitted following the Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA definition of hate speech to the IT companies part of the Code of Conduct.
- Twitter received the largest number of reports (52), while Facebook and TikTok respectively received 41, and YouTube 40. The content was collected and reported to social media platforms between October 6th and 7th, 2022.

2. Removal Rate

From the 177 pieces of content reported to the Social Media Platforms only 22 (12,4%) have been removed by October 12th, 2022. The removal rate, which is well below that of the European Commission's 6th evaluation of the Code of Conduct (62,5%), varies greatly among the four platforms and the four languages.

% Removal rate by Social Media Platform and language on Oct. 12th, 2022

■ French ■ Italian ■ Spanish ■ Romanian
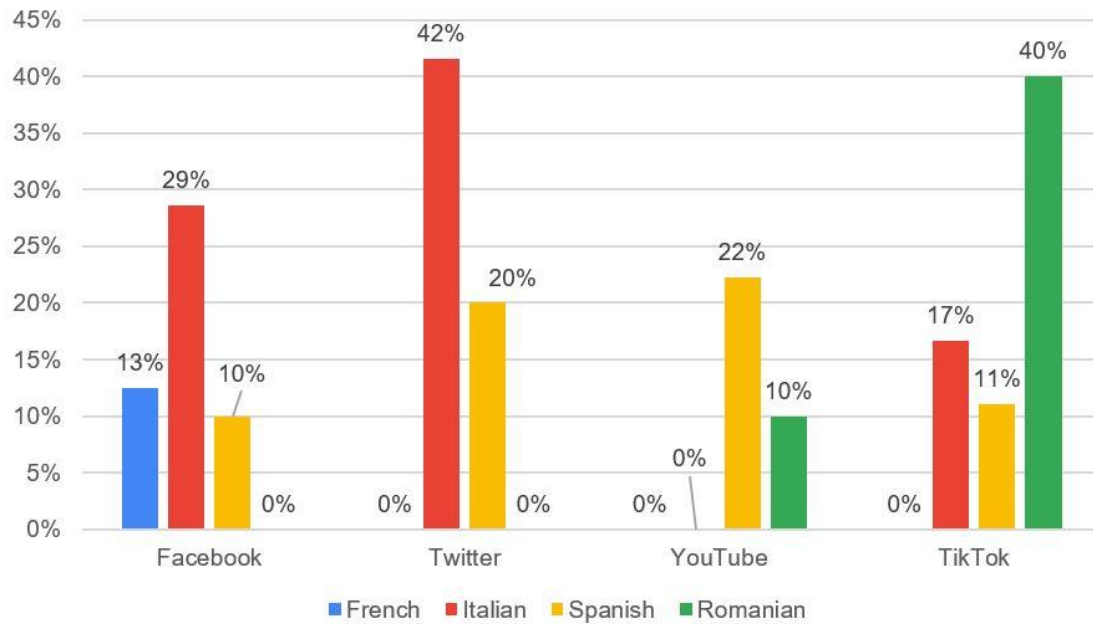
Platform	Language	Removed*	Not Removed*	% Removed
Facebook	French	1	7	13%
	Italian	4	10	29%
	Spanish	1	9	10%
	Romanian	0	9	0%
Twitter	French	0	16	0%
	Italian	5	7	42%
	Spanish	2	8	20%
	Romanian	0	14	0%
YouTube	French	0	8	0%
	Italian	0	13	0%
	Spanish	2	7	22%
	Romanian	1	9	10%
TikTok	French	0	14	0%
	Italian	2	10	17%
	Spanish	1	8	11%
	Romanian	2	3	40%

*absolute numbers
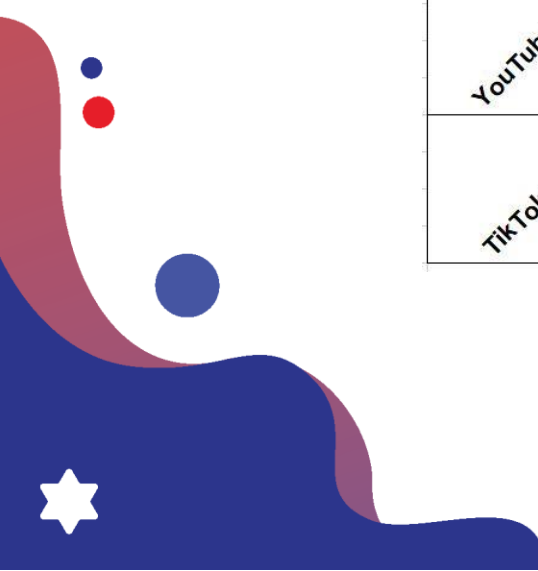
The highest removal rate was seen on Facebook (14,6%), while the lowest was on YouTube (7,5%). When breaking down the numbers by platform and language, we can see that platforms removed 0% of the content on six different occasions:

- Romanian content on Facebook,
- French and Romanian content on Twitter,
- French and Italian content on YouTube,
- French content on TikTok.

The language with the highest removal rate was Italian (21,5%) and the one with the lowest was French (4%), while Spanish and Romanian had respectively 15,7% and 7,8% of the content removed. These numbers show not only that social media platforms removed a very low percentage of antisemitic content reported to them as part of October's monitoring exercise, but mostly that there is a great variation on the removal rate within the same platform when comparing the four languages that were the focus of this study.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

In this section, we are going to analyse the content reported and removed. It allows us to look for similarities and differences in the antisemitic rhetoric employed by social media users in different platforms and languages.

The antisemitic trope of "Jewish power" is present in the material reported in all four languages. Some users claim that Jews (Ashkenazis, Talmudists, Zionists, etc.) exert control of their governments or key areas of society, such as the media, the economy, education, etc. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for "why things go wrong". It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits (CEJI, 2016). Conspiracy myths targeting Jews are not only a modern or contemporary phenomenon. These vary from blood libel to threat of conspiracy myths accusing Jews of sinister plots to spread and profit from Covid-19. Other conspiracy theories include world domination, Jews controlling the media, and the money myth (Network Overcoming Antisemitism, 2021).

Following are some examples of this narrative present in our dataset: a Facebook user affirms in Spanish that "One of the best armies in the world... fought against Zionism, liberating the capitalist peoples and fighting against the Jews, who today control our world. Image: You killed us so that the Jews... can control your banks; can control your money; they can control your president; they can control your government; they can control the media so that your children will

fight for Israel so that your people and your culture will be lost forever," another that "capitalism is JEWISH and we are all their slaves they make you think you are free when everyone is controlled by a TV or a bank that is their system." A Twitter user comments in Romanian that the Jews "seized the White House and power in the US, Exterminations!!! I'm giving all your money to Israel!!! On all Khazarian Zionist Jews!!! There was never a holocaust, It's all a Big Jewish Lie, I'm tired of your stupidity!!! Don't trust them anymore." A former Italian far-left terrorist claimed on Facebook that "I think Lebanon, Italy, Iran is full of Zionist agents, that is, Jewish communities are there to provoke and produce attacks and unrest."

Another common narrative was Holocaust denial, distortion or trivialization. While Holocaust denial and distortion were mostly present on Facebook and Twitter, Holocaust trivialization was concentrated on TikTok, where young users made use of "black humour" to poke fun at Jews and the Shoah.

In Italy, where denying the Holocaust is a criminal offence, some Facebook users posted that "Holohoax - one of the most successful works of Zionist deception 'Repeat a lie a hundred, a thousand, a million times, and it will become a truth.' - Joseph Goebbels … If, on the other hand, you reflect and think independently, you understand that a lie, remains a lie, and that the truth, does not need to be imposed by law" or "Jewish holohoax, 6 million lies". A Spanish user on TikTok posted "Holocaust didn't exist lol", while a Twitter user posted in Romanian that "there is no Holocaust. It is just a big lie to 'squeeze' money from fools who think they [the Jews] are saints. Saints of Lucifer are in fact." Oftentimes, Holocaust trivialization is connected to anti-Zionist rhetoric, for example, this Facebook post published by a renowned Italian graphic artist and book author: "Tomorrow is Remembrance Day ... but what should be remembered? Ah yes, the Jews! Those people who after suffering have been doing the same thing toward the Palestinians for 64 years or so... don't forget." All these posts are still available at the social media platforms at the time of writing.

On TikTok, users talk about the Holocaust. A user posted in French: "*Quand je dis a un juif 'ca gaze mon frerot*?'" ("When I say to a Jew, 'What's up ("is it gazing"), bro?'), another posted "How do you get 60 jews in a car? Two in the front, three in the back and the rest in the ashtray *emoji crying with laughter*". An Italian user asked "Do you know what is the difference between a ball and a Jew? The ball gets out of the field [camp, in Italian], the Jew doesn't." Finally, an Italian YouTuber uploaded two videos, in one he jokes that he is going to visit a Jewish fan of his and then enters a chimney, alluding to the fact that Jews were murdered in the Holocaust, and in another video called "A joke about Jews", he stands over ashes. Combined, both videos have over 120 thousand views on YouTube. All these posts are still available at the social media platforms at the time of writing.

Throughout our research, we were able to find several pieces of content inciting or celebrating violence against Jews. In Italian, we were able to find profiles with "Jews on fire" or "Jews in the oven" as their username or handle, and hashtags with the same sentence on TikTok; videos on YouTube titled "We will shoot you like the Jews;" violent tweets like: "burn f*cking Jews," "die Jews" or "die f*cking Jews," the latter two were related to soccer matches. In Romanian, we found comments like "It's a pity that he [Hitler] disappeared, nowadays we need something like that […]" on a TikTok video about the Shoah; on Twitter "they are some rotten Jews, let them die ... they are 100 times more afraid of us than we are of them […]," "Stinking Jews, they're all going to burn in turn!!" and "F*ck you Zucky [ed: Zuckerberg, Meta CEO], Facebook Nazi, down with censorship! I'm going to kill you Jews!." The latter two tweets contained the slur *Jidan*, which is similar to kike in Romanian. In Spanish, we found a Facebook post which says "Why hit a punching bag if Jews exist?," while a Twitter user said: "they hacked my account, F*cking Zionist Jews, they will pay for their damage to humanity, too bad Hitler couldn't exterminate them, f*cking Jews." Several of these posts are still available at the social media platforms at the moment of writing.

As seen in some of the posts illustrated so far, many of the posts in our database contain a contamination between anti-Zionism and antisemitism, often connected with the above-mentioned antisemitic trope of "Jewish power", which is extended to Israel and Zionists. Some of the posts are ridden with conspiracy theories like "This story of the Khazars, by a miracle, remains unknown and the Zionists and their supporters, do everything to keep it secret. Otherwise, the Zionist plot will be revealed and the world will understand the deception and the lies it has believed! – (Facebook post in French)" or "They do not understand anything... That's what the media wants you to understand.... On a worldwide level the control of the media is held by the Israeli Mossad (the Jewish Khazar Zionists...) the one who commands that is Queen Elizabeth. Hybrid not human. It is biblical. Putin fights them. [ed: Nicolas] Maduro [ed: President of Venezuela] is loyal to 👑 [ed: the Queen]. (a Tweet in Spanish)" a conspiracy that claims that Ashkenazi Jews are not real Jews, but evil impostors. Another user posted on Twitter that "the attitude of Israel and the silence of politicians proves that Dieudonné and Soral are right from A to Z about the powerful Talmud-Zionist lobby!" (in French).

We were also able to find posts that compare Israel or Zionists to Nazism/Nazis, "NAZIONIST satanic talmudists to terrorist method Fuck ✡ wtf!!! (Facebook post in French)." A Twitter user claimed in Romanian that "We do what we can how we can and with what we have. But Zionist Nazi Jews run the world, NO!!! They are a 'handful' of dirty Jews, gays, pedophiles. [ed: They] create clones from the organs of innocent people who end up in hospitals."

CONCLUSION

The removal rate of antisemitic content in our study (12,4%) is in sharp contrast to that of the latest evaluation of the Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online (62,5%) coordinated by the European Commission. However, there are some differences between our study and the EC one: only four organisations took part in this exercise, compared to 36 in the EC one; our monitoring lasted two days, while EC's lasted for almost a month; we only reported antisemitic content with regular user profiles, the EC research includes other forms of discrimination and some organisations reported content through "trusted flagger" accounts. It is also important to observe the difference between the timing and differences in the number of content reported, the organisations taking part in this monitoring exercise were able to collect and report 177 cases compared to the "4543 notifications [...] submitted to the IT companies" during the 6th monitoring round coordinated by the European Commission.

The qualitative analysis of the content, as seen above, allowed us to explore antisemitic content available on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and TikTok on its hues and language, country and platform differences. Social media platforms signatories to the EU Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online agreed to remove a great number of posts in violation of the 2008 Framework Decisions, national laws, and their own hate speech policies. This study clarifies that more effort and an implementation of the removal process is needed to create a safer environment for social media users.

Looking at the results, we need to highlight not only the possibility of secondary victimisation, but also the need for a thorough review of policies in the Social Media Platform to avoid the spread and incentivisation of hate speech. Antisemitism on social media is becoming ever more sophisticated, with the increasing usage of mixed media by users (text + image, for example) and the use of coded language. Thus, we believe that companies should improve their monitoring tools, and employ human moderation to a greater extent, in order to be able to recognise antisemitism in all its country-language specific variations. Furthermore, careful consideration should be given to removal of antisemitic content on platforms heavily used by teenagers and young adults, such as TikTok and YouTube, in order to safeguard them as much as possible of the effects of online hate speech and the assimilation of harmful antisemitic tropes and stereotypes.

The organisations participating in the seventh monitoring exercise are the following:

Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC) - www.cdec.it; CEJI - A Jewish contribution to an inclusive Europe - www.ceji.org; Intercultural Institute Timisoara (IIT) - www.intercultural.ro; Comunitat Jueva Bet Shalom de Catalunya - www.betshalom.cat

"**RELATION**" is a project **funded by the European Union** (Citizen, Equality, Rights and Values Program - CERV) that aims at defining an innovative strategy against Modern Antisemitism, starting from a better knowledge of the Jewish history and traditions as part of the common European history/traditions. This is a two-year project that puts in place a set of educational activities in Italy, Spain, Romania and Belgium as well as online actions in order to tackle this phenomenon.

Modern Antisemitism appears in different forms, and it is not always easy to unmask. The number of antisemitic incidents in EU Member States has risen significantly, also in the countries involved in the project where there is evidence of high level of prejudice and misinformation about Jews, forms of antisemitism and intolerance, increasingly exploited by hate speeches online, particularly exacerbated since the 1st COVID lockdown.

Main partners:

Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC) - www.cdec.it; CEJI - A Jewish contribution to an inclusive Europe - www.ceji.org; Intercultural Institute Timisoara (IIT) - www.intercultural.ro; Comunitat Jueva Bet Shalom de Catalunya - www.betshalom.cat; Fondazione Hallgarten-Franchetti Centro Studi Villa Montesca (FCSVM) - www.montesca.eu; University of Milan (UNIMI) - www.unimi.it; Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore - www.unicatt.it