


National strategy against antisemitism

Antisemitism Online

Package of Measures against Antisemitism
and Antisemitic Disinformation in the Digital Sphere



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Federal Minister
Karoline Edtstadler

In addition to creating a world of opportunities, the digital sphere also presents a multitude of new challenges and is, unfortunately, often a platform for division and hatred, as well. The massive spread of antisemitism and antisemitic disinformation, particularly on social media, is just one example of the dark side of the digital transformation. This is a trend that we urgently need to tackle.

The phenomenal increase in antisemitic incidents in Austria against the backdrop of the war between Israel and Hamas has once again shown us that the security situation for Jews is just as fragile as ever before. The virtual world, most notably social media, is primarily used as a space for disseminating antisemitic ideas and messages. Facilitated by algorithmic amplifications, this sometimes happens openly, but often covertly, as well, and always with the ultimate aim of precipitating prejudices, fuelling conspiracy stories and stirring up hate.

It is our responsibility as the Republic of Austria to decidedly and actively oppose these ominous developments and transform the digital world into a safe and respectful place of togetherness for all. Because the dissemination of antisemitism on the internet does not just pose an immediate threat to the safety and wellbeing of Jews in Austria, it also undermines the core values of our democratic coexistence.

This package of measures aims to respond to these pressing challenges and contribute to the protection of all people and their human rights on the internet. As diverse and multifaceted as online manifestations of antisemitism are, so too are the approaches for combating them. The package of measures pursues several objectives. These primarily concern enhancing cooperation with online platforms, supporting and networking players active in the fight against online antisemitism and strengthening the resilience of civil society in the face of antisemitic hate content.

With the introduction of the National Strategy against Antisemitism in 2021, a strong framework for the fight against antisemitism in Austria was established. In order for this fight to be successful, we need a more long-term approach involving sustained efforts and an array of different steps. I am therefore delighted that this package of measures goes beyond the implementation of the National Strategy to create a framework that supports and strengthens the ongoing fight against antisemitism on the internet through a series of additional concrete measures.

For one thing must be clear: antisemitic hate and agitation have no place in our society, neither online nor in the real world.



President of the Jewish
Religious Community of
Austria
Oskar Deutsch

7 October 2023 is a date that will forever be etched in the collective memory of Jews across the globe. Thousands of innocent civilians, including countless children, were brutally tortured, violated, abducted and murdered by terrorists – simply because they were Jewish. The sharp increase in antisemitic incidents since this date once again demonstrates that the terrorism directed against Israel poses a threat to Jewish life all around the world. In Austria alone, the number of antisemitic incidents reported in the weeks following 7 October increased by more than 400%.

This situation should be more than alarming, not just for the Jewish population: the smashing of windows at kosher supermarkets, the arson attack on a Jewish cemetery in Vienna, the spraying of swastikas on cars, the harassment of Jewish schoolchildren, and the myriad of blatant threats seen all over the internet – all these events bring back memories of the darkest times in the history of Europe. How much can a liberal democracy tolerate?

The rise in antisemitic agitation online is particularly significant in this context. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were already seeing an explosive increase in antisemitic content on the internet. Antisemitic stereotypes are being used as a tool to turn both Judaism and the state of Israel into projection surfaces for absurd and harmful narratives akin with conspiracy theories. The trivialisation and denial of the Shoah also play no small part here.

Ever since the terror attack launched by Hamas against Israel, users have been confronted with an increasing volume of antisemitic content online. The internet is seen as a sort of legal vacuum, and it can indeed be difficult to enforce compliance with the law online. All the more reason why it is not just essential that politicians and the respective authorities take action in this regard, but that each and every citizen make a commitment to supporting this cause. There is a danger of antisemitic ideologies gradually taking root. Hostility towards Jews is regarded as commonplace and justified, which in turn creates a breeding-ground for radicalisation and physical attacks.

The fight against antisemitism is a challenge to be tackled by society at large. In addition to creating a collective consciousness, we also need to take clear and decisive action. A robust democracy cannot simply stand back and watch while fundamental values such as tolerance, openness and respect are under attack. The battle against antisemitic hate speech on the internet requires measures to be taken and efforts to be made at both national and European level. The National Strategy against Antisemitism and the EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021–2030) are important steps towards the objective of protecting Jewish life as an integral pillar of the Austrian and European identity.

Let us work together to make our community – both offline and online – a safe place, where we can all live together in harmony.



Introduction

The digital world has evolved to become an indispensable part of our everyday lives. The internet and social media are central hubs for our communication, networking, information and entertainment needs. They significantly influence our social interactions, attitudes and routines, shaping various aspects of our lives. Despite the plethora of opportunities that the digital sphere provides us with, increasing digitalisation also brings with it a whole world of challenges. Social media often serves to amplify hate speech, conspiracy theories and disinformation (fake news), which can spread more quickly, but also more permanently, online than anywhere else. Through the use of intricate algorithms, social media becomes a sort of echo chamber, intensifying existing prejudices, intolerance and extremist views. This has a profound impact on social cohesion in the real world. It can threaten the lives and safety of individuals, groups of people and the existence of establishments, as well as interfere with public order and internal security.

The events of 7 October 2023 have shown that the internet, particularly social media, has evolved into a central platform for the dissemination of antisemitic ideologies and disinformation as well as for the networking of extremist actors. Tackling these phenomena has itself become a key challenge that needs to be overcome in order to effectively put an end to antisemitism in Austria and worldwide.

When browsing the internet or social media, you do not need to search at length to stumble upon a comment, meme or video that spreads content that falls under the legally binding working definition of antisemitism¹.

“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.”
– *Definition of antisemitism provided by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)*

In addition to the incitement of violence against Jews and the dissemination of false and stereotypical allegations and myths (e.g. about an international Jewish conspiracy or “blood libel”), contemporary examples of antisemitism that fall under the IHRA definition² also include the denial or trivialisation of the Holocaust as well as

1 <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>.

2 <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>.

Israel-related antisemitism (e.g. denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g. by claiming that the existence of the state of Israel is a racist endeavour).

Accurately measuring the extent of antisemitic content online poses a considerable challenge, with the majority of incidents remaining unreported. However, systematic recording and analysis conducted by national reporting agencies have yielded unequivocal results.

The Reporting Centre for Antisemitism (Antisemitismus-Meldestelle) of the Jewish Community of Vienna (IKG Vienna) documented a total of 769 antisemitic incidents on the internet in 2023³, which is almost double the 385 incidents reported in 2022.⁴ Of these 769 incidents, 514 occurred on social media, 178 via e-mail and 77 in another, unspecified online environment.⁵ In 2022, the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) registered a total of 225 antisemitic motives of prejudice in police reports of hate crimes⁶ in Austria. 90 (corresponding to 40%) of these offences were committed online, the internet representing the largest category of all crime scenes recorded.⁷

Since the attack against Israel on 7 October 2023, we have seen a massive increase in antisemitic incidents throughout Europe and worldwide, fuelled by exuberant disinformation and fake news on the internet: A special evaluation published by the Reporting Centre for Antisemitism of the IKG Vienna revealed that, for the period between 7 October and 15 November 2023, there was an increase of 385% in such incidents compared to the average number of cases reported in the previous year. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) also recorded a huge surge in antisemitic hate posts in the week following the attack: on the social media platform X, the number of incidents observed rose by 919%, while on Facebook, there was an increase of 28%.⁸

3 See IKG, Reporting Centre for Antisemitism, Antisemitic cases 2023 in Austria, p. 4f.

4 See IKG, Reporting Centre for Antisemitism, Antisemitic cases 2022 in Austria, p. 5.

5 It should be noted here that some of these reported cases were also reported to the police.

6 *Hate crimes* are acts punishable by law that are committed because of the actual or perceived affiliation of the victim to a group that the perpetrator rejects. Hate crimes are committed based on the victim's identity markers, such as gender, age, disability, skin colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, sexual orientation, social status or beliefs. Such offences are often directed against life and limb, property or the honour of the victim and also include hate speech both on- and offline.

7 See Federal Ministry of the Interior, Lagebericht Hate Crime 2022, S. 48; FRA, Antisemitism in 2022. Overview of antisemitic incidents recorded in the EU (europa.eu), p. 21, 39.

8 <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/online-antisemitism-increased-after-hamas-attack>.

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) recorded an increase of 4.963% in antisemitic comments on YouTube when directly comparing the three days prior to and following the attack by Hamas. Furthermore, a more than three-fold rise in antisemitic code words was documented on alternative social media platforms, such as 4chan, Bitchute, Gab and Telegram.⁹

It is therefore necessary to implement a series of measures, based on the National Strategy against Antisemitism (NAS)¹⁰, specifically targeting the digital world. In order to effectively combat antisemitism and antisemitic disinformation on the internet, a coordinated effort between authorities, technology companies and civil society is required. That is why the Online Antisemitism and Disinformation Task Force was established under the direction of the Federal Chancellery. This package of measures is the result of a comprehensive assessment undertaken by the Task Force in consultation with a host of external experts from the world of science and academia, the Republic of Austria, the IKG Vienna and various civil society organisations.

The measures outlined below are to serve as an instrument for effectively and sustainably putting a stop to antisemitic hate speech and disinformation on the internet. They therefore contribute to ensuring that we can all coexist respectfully and safely in the virtual world.

9 See Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), Rise in antisemitism on both mainstream and fringe social media platforms following Hamas' terrorist attack, https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/rise-in-antisemitism-on-both-mainstream-and-fringe-social-media-platforms-following-hamas-terrorist-attack.

10 <https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/en/topics/fight-against-antisemitism.html>.



Policies and measures at national and European level

Antisemitic content is spread on almost every digital platform that allows users to comment and post – on both large and small platforms, on websites, in blogs, in video game chatrooms or in the comment sections of online media. Openly antisemitic posts not only violate the community guidelines of many platforms, but are often also classed as criminal offences under the Criminal Code (StGB)¹¹ and the Austrian Prohibition Act (VerbotsG)¹². As such, they must be removed by platform operators in accordance with the Digital Services Act (DSA)¹³. However, the long-term removal of antisemitic content specifically and online hate in general remains fragmentary.

The evaluation of the European Commission's Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online¹⁴ revealed that IT companies removed only 63.6% of reported hate content, while 36.4% remained online. Removal rates varied depending on the severity of the hateful content and the platform on which it appeared. A study conducted by the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH)¹⁵ found that as many as 84% of reports of anti-Jewish hatred and 89% of reports of antisemitic conspiracy theories were not responded to by the platforms.

There are also various veiled forms of antisemitism spread through deliberately cryptic language and codes, conspiracy myths and supposedly legitimate criticism of Israel. Their antisemitic character often masquerades behind skilful rhetoric and symbols, which require a sound knowledge of current and historical manifestations of the problem in order to be understood. This background knowledge is not sufficiently available when moderating the content that appears on the platforms. Moreover, such antisemitic content often falls below the threshold of criminal relevance and cannot, therefore, be identified and fought directly with the resources at hand. This means that, despite the considerable harm they can cause to society at large, they are recognised and removed to an even lesser extent.

11 Federal Law of 23 January 1974 on Acts Punishable by Law (Criminal Code – StGB), Federal Law Gazette (BGBl) No. 60/1974 as amended.

12 The Federal Constitutional Law on the Prohibition of National Socialism (Austrian Prohibition Act 1947 – VerbotsG), State Law Gazette (StGBI) No. 13/1945 as amended.

13 Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market for Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act).

14 See European Commission, Countering illegal hate speech online. 7th evaluation of the Code of Conduct, November 2022, p. 2.

15 See Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), Failure to Protect. How tech giants fail to act on user reports of antisemitism, July 2021, p. 8, 9.

Antisemitic narratives are an integral component of complexly interwoven global conspiracy theories and serve to supposedly simplify intricate geopolitical contexts. The antisemitism study presented by the Austrian Parliament in March 2023¹⁶ revealed that the more the participants believed in conspiracy myths, the more pronounced any manifestations of antisemitism were. This was the case even if the conspiracy myths had nothing to do with Jews per se.

International crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine or the terrorist attack launched by Hamas against Israel, further intensify the antisemitism that already exists in Austria and across the globe. The amplification of such trends in times of crisis shows just how important it is to boost awareness of this issue and strengthen measures to combat antisemitism in all its forms. This is particularly pertinent in an age when information is quickly circulated all around the world and social media plays an essential role in its dissemination. A particular challenge in the fight against antisemitic disinformation on the internet is the fact that false information, including deep fakes¹⁷ and other content developed with the help of artificial intelligence (AI), often cannot be identified as deceptive or can only be identified as such with great difficulty.

The battle to put an end to antisemitism in the real and digital world is a key concern of the Austrian Federal Government. In the process of implementing the NAS, important steps to combat antisemitism on the internet have already been taken. For example, in order to increase protection from violence and hate on the internet, the Austrian Act Combating Online Hate (HiNBG)¹⁸ was passed. This act introduced numerous adjustments to effectively prosecute hate crimes and improve victim protection under criminal (procedural), civil and media law.

16 See Antisemitism 2022. Overview of Main Findings, Vienna, April 2023 (Summary Report), p. 4, 7.

17 *Deep fakes* are deceptively realistic media content (images, videos or voice recordings) that have been created, modified or distorted with the help of artificial intelligence.

18 Federal Act implementing measures to combat online hate (HiNBG), Federal Law Gazette I No. 148/2020.



Minister for the EU and Constitution Karoline Edtstadler and Minister of the Interior Gerhard Karner at the National Forum against Antisemitism on 16 October 2023 in Vienna.

The networking of relevant actors in the context of the “No Hate Speech” Committee¹⁹ also plays a key role in this regard.

As a result of the evaluation of the Austrian Prohibition Act, the Symbols Act and the Insignia Act provided for in the NAS, the Federal Government also agreed on an amendment to the Prohibition Act²⁰, which came into force on 1 January 2024. This

19 More information about the tasks and objectives of the committee is available at www.nohatespeech.at, particularly in the section entitled “Übereinkunft zur Struktur und Arbeitsweise” (“Agreement on structure and working methods”).

20 Federal Act amending the Austrian Prohibition Act of 1947, the Introductory Act to the Administrative Procedure Acts of 2008, the Austrian Insignia Act of 1960, the Uniform-Verbotsgesetz (Uniform Prohibition Act) and the Symbols Act (2023 Amendment to the Prohibition Act), Federal Law Gazette I No. 177/2023.

addressed several issues, including the extension of domestic jurisdiction, with the aim of facilitating criminal prosecution in Austria for behaviours adopted abroad and on the internet.

Antisemitism is not just a direct threat to Jews in Europe, it also calls into question the basic values of the European Union (EU) and those values upon which our European society is built: freedom of religion, democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. In addition to the state measures adopted by the Austrian Federal Government, considerable efforts also need to be made at European level in order to effectively oppose online antisemitism.

The EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021–2030)²¹ provides for numerous measures aimed at eradicating antisemitism on the internet. These include measures introduced by the European Commission (EC), such as the establishment of a Europe-wide network of trusted flaggers and Jewish organisations, greater support from the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) and the performance of a comprehensive data analysis with the aim of developing a better understanding of the dissemination of antisemitism on the internet. The EC also urges its member states to provide financial support to civil society organisations striving to combat antisemitic agitation, disinformation and conspiracy theories on the internet and to increase the capacities of national law enforcement and judicial authorities to prosecute cases of agitation online.

On the basis of the Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law²², the EC agreed a code of conduct with the largest social media platforms and companies in 2016.²³ The aim of this code of conduct is to prevent and put an end to the dissemination of illegal online hate speech in Europe. The code of conduct obliges platforms to promptly review and remove any illegal hate speech reported to them. It is implemented in the context of the High Level Group on

21 Commission Communication – EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021-2030), COM(2021) 615 final. of 5 October 2021.

22 See 2008/913 (JHA).

23 https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-code-conduct-countering-illegal-hate-speech-online_en.

combating hate speech and hate crime²⁴ and its execution is reviewed on an ongoing basis. The EC is also currently working on an enhanced code of conduct²⁵, which encourages online platforms to do more to prevent and anticipate threats.

The Digital Service Act (DSA) was adopted in 2022 with a view to encouraging online service providers and social media companies to take responsibility for the content available on their platforms. The DSA became effective immediately throughout the EU on 17 February 2024 and, in conjunction with the DSA Accompanying Act (DSA-BegG)²⁶ replaces the previously applicable Communications Platforms Act (KoPI-G)²⁷. The primary objective of the DSA is to prevent unlawful and harmful online activities and the spread of disinformation. A key aspect of this is the quick and efficient removal of illegal content. The Action Plan against Disinformation²⁸ and the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation²⁹ are further measures aimed at contributing to the intensified fight against online antisemitism.

24 https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-hate-speech-and-hate-crime_en.

25 https://germany.representation.ec.europa.eu/news/bekampfung-illegaler-hassreden-im-internet-eu-kommission-arbeitet-gestarktem-verhaltenskodex-2023-10-12_de.

26 Federal Act enacting the Digital Services Act Coordinator and amending the Federal Act on the establishment of an Austrian Communications Authority, the E-Commerce Act, the General Civil Code, the Copyright Act, the Court Fees Act, the Media Act, the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1975, the Public Prosecutors Act, the Federal Act on judicial cooperation in criminal matters with the Member States of the European Union, the Extradition and Legal Aid Act and the Telecommunications Act of 2021 (DSA Accompanying Act – DSA-BegG), Federal Law Gazette I No. 182/2023.

27 Federal Act on Measures to Protect Users on Communications Platforms (Communication Platforms Act – KoPI-G), Federal Law Gazette I No. 151/2020 as amended.

28 Joint Communication of the Commission – Action Plan Against Disinformation, JOIN(2018) 36 final. of 5 December 2018.

29 <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/code-practice-disinformation>.



Combating antisemitism online effectively

In order for the fight against online antisemitism and disinformation to be successful, a multi-layered and complex approach is needed. As has already been demonstrated, a large number of instruments and initiatives addressing these challenges are currently being implemented. The aim is to expand and strengthen existing approaches and support them with further targeted measures in order to achieve the greatest possible overall effect. Intensified efforts are envisaged in the following three areas of action:

1 Close cooperation with providers of online platforms and search engines³⁰

In order to develop effective mechanisms for reporting and removing antisemitic content and identifying disinformation, it is essential that cooperation with online platforms and search engines be enhanced. The latter shall be encouraged to take greater responsibility in this regard. In addition to boosting exchange at national level, an approach that goes beyond the limits of state influence must be adopted in order to ensure effective regulation, particularly with regard to the major online platforms and search engines, in accordance with Art. 33 DSA³¹. In addition to the DSA, this approach is based, in particular, on the Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act)³², upon which the European Parliament and the EU Council reached an agreement in December 2023. The AI Act will be the comprehensive legal framework for the regulation and responsible development and use of artificial intelligence.³³ The necessary influence on service providers to assume responsibility and comply with the instruments created can only be exerted through active cooperation between the responsible authorities at national and EU level.

30 For information on the terms “online platform” and “online search engine”, see Art. 3, points (i) and (j) DSA.

31 Providers of major online platforms and search engines are those that have an average of at least 45 million active monthly users in the European Union.

32 Proposal of the European Commission for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Laying Down Harmonised Rules on Artificial Intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) and Amending Certain Union Legislative Acts, COM(2021) 206 final. of 21 April 2021, 2021/0106 (COD).

33 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/12/09/artificial-intelligence-act-council-and-parliament-strike-a-deal-on-the-first-worldwide-rules-for-ai/>.

On this basis, the implementation of the following measures is envisaged:

- Intensification of cooperation with relevant service providers, for example by:
 - Inviting representatives of relevant service providers to a summit to combat antisemitism online at the Federal Chancellery with the involvement of the Austrian Communications Authority (KommAustria) as the executive authority of the DSA in Austria.
 - Involving representatives of relevant service providers in existing committees at federal level (e.g. in the National Forum against Antisemitism (NFA) and the Online Antisemitism and Disinformation Task Force).
 - Recognising national organisations with proven expertise as trusted flaggers in accordance with the DSA through online platforms.
 - Further addressing the question as to whether antisemitism could be recognised as a systemic risk pursuant to Art. 34 and 35 DSA.

- Proactive incorporation of and cooperation with committees at EU level that address the issues of online hate and antisemitism.

- Increased networking with other EU member states to exchange effective initiatives aimed at combating antisemitism on the internet (for example, in the context of the European Conference on Antisemitism, hosted annually by Austria since 2022).



More than 70 representatives of civil society convened at the National Forum against Antisemitism on 16 October 2023.

2 Supporting and networking various actors in the field of online antisemitism

In order to combat online antisemitism and disinformation effectively, reliable data, clear responsibilities for its collection and appropriate resources are essential. In addition to identifying the civil society, state and European organisations responsible for the systematic recording and collection of such content, the promotion and networking thereof is extremely important in order to identify and close any gaps. Thus, a comprehensive advisory service can be provided to those affected by antisemitism on the internet. To counteract the large volume of hate content on the internet, the use of AI both to identify and combat antisemitic content and to reinforce and propagate corrective counter-narratives plays a key role in the medium and long term. In order to achieve these objectives, the implementation of the following measures is envisaged:

- Identifying and networking the organisations responsible for data collection and the provision of advice:
 - Pooling relevant civil society, state, and academic and scientific actors and experts in the field of social media (see Point V in particular) in the Online Antisemitism and Disinformation Task Force. The Task Force, which is presided over by the Federal Chancellery, aims to convene regularly or on an ad hoc basis and, with due regard for existing committees and platforms, to facilitate exchange, networking and coordination with regard to existing challenges.
 - Identifying and potentially supporting organisations that are purposefully searching for antisemitic codes and disinformation on the internet and processing these for public consumption, if need be.

- Ensuring that existing civil society reporting offices and advisory bodies (also in relation to the relevant authorities) are provided with support in the long term in accordance with the EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism.
- Promoting the development of AI-supported systems aimed at identifying and combating antisemitic hate speech and fake news on the internet.

3 Strengthening the resilience of civil society

It is crucial that internet users be given the tools to identify antisemitic hate speech and disinformation online, examine it through a critical lens, report it and adopt effective measures to combat it. Ideally without becoming the target of hatred themselves. In addition to strengthening their skills in interacting with media content, the aim is to provide them with a broad knowledge base and wide range of tools for debunking and combating hate speech and disinformation. Awareness needs to be raised among internet users that the internet is not a legal vacuum and that real human beings with real emotions are behind the user profiles. Not only can disseminating antisemitic content on the internet have consequences under civil, criminal and media law, it can also lead to serious psychological issues in those affected, causing them harm and anxiety.

In order to address these challenges, the implementation of the following measures is envisaged:

- Promoting media literacy across all age and population groups, for example, by pooling existing education and training programmes, preparing new educational materials and supporting targeted projects (including those already being implemented).
- Supporting the development of participatory, inclusive and low-threshold educational tools on Holocaust remembrance and awareness in the digital sphere.
- Providing the general public with fact-based knowledge by:
 - Organising a media campaign about the various manifestations of antisemitism and potential consequences of spreading such content on the internet in cooperation with social and traditional media and civil society organisations.

- Recording, collecting and publishing common antisemitic codes and disinformation narratives on the internet in cooperation with civil society organisations.
- Promoting and establishing projects that facilitate the creation and dissemination of counter-speech and counter-narratives pertaining to antisemitic online content.
- Examining the possibility of collaborating with influencers and famous personalities from the worlds of sports and culture with a view to helping raise awareness of the various manifestations of antisemitism.

IV

United against hate:
options for action
in the event of
antisemitic incidents
on the internet

What can you do if you are confronted with antisemitism on the internet, either as a bystander or a direct target? In order to effectively combat antisemitism on the internet, an interplay of different approaches that place a particular focus on reporting and blocking hate posts and promoting counter-speech is needed. When it comes to responding effectively to antisemitic incidents on the internet, the following options for action are available:

1. **Documentation:** First and foremost, a screenshot or photo of the hate post, which also shows the current date, should be taken, and the link to the hate post should be saved. This serves as preservation of evidence in the event that the post is deleted at a later date. It also facilitates any submission to a reporting office or advice centre.
2. **Reporting:**
 - **to the service provider concerned:** Most online platforms have established corresponding reporting procedures that make it possible to report hateful posts and accounts directly to the platform via a “Report” button. In the best case, the post will then be deleted by the platform. The account may also be blocked if it violates the platform’s community guidelines or the provisions of the DSA.
 - **to a reporting office:** All antisemitic incidents on the internet can also be reported to one of the reporting offices or advice centres listed below. This is particularly appropriate if the post cannot be reported directly on the platform, if users need support or legal advice or would like to contribute to the systematic documentation of antisemitic incidents on the internet. In order to report such an incident, users will need to send the screenshot and the link to the hate post to the reporting office. If the incident is relevant under criminal law, the reporting office can refer the matter to the police or the state prosecution service.
3. **Reporting to the police:** Creating antisemitic hate posts on the internet can constitute a variety of criminal offences. In addition to offences under the Austrian Prohibition Act, these may include incitement to hatred (Section 283 StGB), insult (Sections 115, 117 para. 3 StGB) and disparagement of foreign symbols (Section 317 StGB), among others. In these cases, criminal charges can also be filed directly with any police station or state prosecutor’s office.

4. **Counter-speech (counter-narratives):** Counter-speech is a method of actively speaking out against antisemitic hate speech, agitation or disinformation on the internet. Specifically, counter-speech means taking a proactive approach to challenging misleading and hateful statements using objective arguments, facts and educational information. By adopting this approach, you do, however, run the risk of becoming the target of verbal attacks yourself. To provide the background knowledge needed to deliver substantive counter-speech, websites such as “Nichts gegen Juden” (Nothing against Jews)³⁴, operated by the German Amadeu Antonio Foundation, and “Get the Trolls out!”³⁵, operated by the Media Diversity Institute (MDI), present comprehensive information about common antisemitic narratives and suggestions on how to counter them in plain language. The MIMIKAMA³⁶ association performs fact checks on hoaxes, fake news and misinformation circulating online, and publishes the results of its investigations on its website and social media channels.

5. **Showing solidarity:** Additionally or alternatively to active counter-speech, you can visibly show support to affected individuals or those who speak up by liking or commenting on their posts. This is a way of showing solidarity with those affected and it empowers and motivates those who take a stand. What’s more, if a post receives a lot of likes and comments, the algorithm will display it more prominently and frequently. Thus, the more traction a post gains, the more visible it becomes.

A step-by-step guide on how to take a stand against hate posts online is also provided in the “Hass im Netz” (“Online Hate”) information brochure prepared by the Federal Ministry of Justice (BMJ). This is available at www.bmj.gv.at → Themen → Fokusthemen → Hass im Netz³⁷.

34 <https://nichts-gegen-juden.de>.

35 <https://getthetrollsout.org>.

36 <https://www.mimikama.org>.

37 <https://www.bmj.gv.at/themen/Fokusthemen/gewalt-im-netz.html#:~:text=Am%201.,auch%20hier%20unser%20Rechtsstaat%20gilt>.



Overview of specific
reporting offices and
advice centres in
Austria

- **IKG Vienna Reporting Centre for Antisemitism (IKG Reporting Centre)**³⁸: The Reporting Centre for Antisemitism is the main point of contact for anyone who would like to report an antisemitic incident³⁹. In addition to systematically recording incidents, the Reporting Centre for Antisemitism also supports those affected by such incidents and offers advice on psychosocial, legal and other matters.
- **#AgainstOnlineHate Counselling Centre of the Civil Courage and Anti-Racism Work Association (ZARA)**⁴⁰: This reporting office and counselling centre supports the fight against hate and agitation on the internet. As well as documenting incidents, the association also offers professional advice, psychosocial support and legal assistance to those affected by hate comments, insults, cyber bullying and other forms of psychological and verbal abuse online.
- **Reporting Office concerning Revitalisation of National Socialism, Federal Ministry of the Interior/Directorate State Protection and Intelligence Service (NS Reporting Office)**⁴¹: The NS Reporting Office is the point of contact for the reporting of antisemitic incidents and cases of revitalisation relevant under criminal law in accordance with the Austrian Prohibition Act (including online content). If such incidents are indeed relevant under criminal law, the pertinent facts are reported to the responsible state prosecutor's office.
- **Extremism and Terrorism Reporting Office, Federal Ministry of the Interior/ Directorate State Protection and Intelligence Service**⁴²: Any case of extremist and radical content on electronic media can be reported to this point of contact of the Directorate State Protection and Intelligence Service. They will review the transmitted content, report it to the platform operators and initiate investigations, should this prove necessary.

38 <https://www.antisemitismus-meldestelle.at>.

39 Based on the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

40 <https://zara.or.at/de/beratungsstellen/GegenHassimNetz>.

41 <https://dsn.gv.at/401>.

42 <https://www.dsn.gv.at/402>.

- **BanHate (Antidiscrimination Office Styria)**⁴³: The Antidiscrimination Office Styria serves as a documentation, advice and monitoring centre, including with regard to antisemitic incidents and cases of revitalisation. The “BanHate” app also allows users to quickly report hate posts and hate crimes from the entire German-speaking region, without red tape and independent from the platform on which the incidents occur. All reports are reviewed under criminal law, referred to the relevant authorities where this is applicable and/or reported to the platform operators so that the post in question can be deleted, should this prove necessary. Those affected by the matter receive comprehensive advice.
- **boJA – Extremism Information Center**⁴⁴: This point of contact offers advice on all matters relating to the issue of extremism (politically and religiously motivated extremism, such as right-wing extremism⁴⁵, jihadism and conspiracy theories) and provides assistance if relatives, social workers, teachers or other individuals are concerned that someone in their circle may be affiliated with an extremist group. The information centre also coordinates the “No Hate Speech” Committee Austria.
- **Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance (DÖW)**⁴⁶: The DÖW documents and analyses incidents of right-wing extremism and antisemitism in Austria. These incidents are then referred to relevant bodies, which statistically document each case and provide advice that is more comprehensive. Incidents that are relevant under criminal law are reported to the police or the state prosecution service with the consent of the reporting person.
- **Mauthausen Committee Austria (MKÖ)**⁴⁷: The MKÖ documents reports of right-wing extremist incidents. If desired, the incident will be forwarded to the state prosecution service.

43 <https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.steiermark.at>.

44 <https://www.beratungsstelleextremismus.at>.

45 For an explanation of the term “right-wing extremism”, please see <https://www.dsn.gv.at/202/start.aspx>.

46 <https://www.doew.at>.

47 <https://www.mkoe.at/rechtsextremismus/rechtsextremismus-melden>.

- **MIMIKAMA**⁴⁸: The MIMIKAMA association is dedicated to debunking misinformation and fighting disinformation online. Supposed misinformation and fake news on the internet can be submitted to MIMIKAMA and are checked for accuracy as part of fact checks.
- **Stopline**⁴⁹: Stopline is an online reporting office for cases of National Socialist revitalisation under the Prohibition Act and the Insignia Act on the internet. The primary objective of Stopline is to remove this type of content from the internet quickly and without red tape.

Online hate and antisemitism can put serious psychological strain on those affected. Victims of hate crimes on the internet may, therefore, be entitled to free psychosocial support and legal assistance under certain circumstances.⁵⁰ Further information about this is available at www.justiz.gv.at → Service → Opferhilfe und Prozessbegleitung or from the relevant advisory body (for example, the Reporting Centre for Antisemitism of the IKG Vienna, the #AgainstOnlineHate Counselling Centre or the Antidiscrimination Office Styria).

48 <https://www.mimikama.org>.

49 <https://www.stopline.at>. Remark: Stopline is also responsible for handling reports of child sexual abuse material.

50 <https://www.justiz.gv.at/service/opferhilfe-und-prozessbegleitung.961.de.html>.

Abbreviations

aa	as amended
AI	artificial intelligence
ADL	Anti-Defamation League
ADS	Antidiscrimination Office Styria
BGBI	Bundesgesetzblatt (Federal Law Gazette)
BKA	Bundeskanzleramt (Federal Chancellery)
BMI	Bundesministerium für Inneres (Federal Ministry of the Interior)
CCDH	Center for Countering Digital Hate
DÖW	Resistance
DSA	Digital Services Act
DSA-BegG	DSA Accompanying Act
DSN	Directorate State Protection and Intelligence Service
EDMO	European Digital Media Observatory
EK	European Commission
EU	European Union
HiNBG	Austrian Act Combating Online Hate
IHRA	International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
IKG	Jewish Community
IKG Reporting Centre	Reporting Centre for Antisemitism of the IKG Vienna
ISD	Institute for Strategic Dialogue
KommAustria	Austrian Communications Authority
KoPI-G	Communication Platforms Act
MDI	Media Diversity Institute
NAS	National Strategy against Antisemitism
NFA	National Forum against Antisemitism
StGB	Strafgesetzbuch (Criminal Code)
StGBI	Staatsgesetzblatt (State Law Gazette)
incl.	including
VerbotsG	Verbotsgesetz 1947 (Prohibition Act)
ZARA	Civil Courage and Anti-Racism Work Association

