

ACTIVITY REPORT

NOVEMBER 2022

FEBRUARY 2023



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EUROPEAN JEWISH CONGRESS

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES

NOVEMBER 2022 – FEBRUARY 2023



European Jewish Congress

Report on Activities

November 2022 – February 2023

Dr Ariel Muzicant

PRESIDENT

Raya Kalenova

EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT AND CEO

Ariella Woitchik

DIRECTOR OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Maria Bagdasarova

HEAD OF PROJECTS AND DIPLOMATIC AFFAIRS

Caroline Totaro

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

Xavier Ruiz

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Dylan Bokler

POLICY OFFICER

EJC

IN

ACTION

WEDNESDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2022

PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

EJC President Ariel Muzicant and President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic Petr Papoušek met in Prague with Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala, whose country holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

They discussed the danger posed by extremist parties to our democracies, the rise of antisemitism online, and the importance of protecting Jewish religious rights.



THURSDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2022

BRUSSELS, PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC TO THE EU

Maria Bagdasarova and Xavier Ruiz participated in the expert meeting “Nazi Memorabilia and their misuse to antisemitic ends” hosted by the Czech Presidency in the Council of the European Union.

The event was attended by delegates from the EU member states law enforcement authorities, ministries of justice, ministries of the interior, public prosecutor’s offices, government offices, Permanent Representations, European Commission, General Secretariat of the Council, and Jewish umbrella organisations. The speakers included representatives of the academic and non-governmental sectors and the Office of the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator.

TUESDAY – WEDNESDAY 6–7 DECEMBER 2022

THE HAGUE



Dylan Bokler participated in the 3rd meeting of the European Commission Working Group on the implementation of the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life. This time it was organised by the Dutch National Coordinator on combating antisemitism and was hosted by the Netherlands Ministry of Justice and Security.

The meeting addressed the following topics: updates on national strategies, countering online antisemitism, moving forward on fostering Jewish life.

13–14 DECEMBER 2022

PARIS



The EJCheld its Executive Meeting in cooperation with the CRIF – Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions in Paris. Members of the Executive discussed current challenges faced by Europe’s Jewish communities and how to address them.

The meeting included discussions on security, the rise of the far right and far left across Europe, and threats to religious rights.

At the same time, Members of the Executive had the possibility to hear from Isabelle Rome, French Minister for Gender Equality, Diversity and Equal Opportunities, on France's upcoming plan on combatting racism and antisemitism and from Karel Francapane, Programme Specialist in the Section of Global Citizenship and Peace Education at UNESCO, on UNESCO's programmes in the field of fighting antisemitism and Holocaust remembrance.

The EJC Executive Committee also enjoyed a guided tour of the permanent collection of the Museum of Jewish Art and History by its Director Paul Salmona.

16-17 JANUARY 2023

JERUSALEM

Dr Ariel Muzicant took part in the European Jewish Leadership Conference in Jerusalem organised by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The event gathered about 40 heads of Jewish communities from 28 European countries. The topics of discussion included the relations between Israel and the Diaspora, the challenges in Europe and the rise of antisemitism, both online and offline.

During the conference, Dr Ariel Muzicant had the opportunity to meet Israeli President Isaac Herzog as well as Minister of Diaspora Affairs Amichai Chikli.



23 JANUARY 2023

BRUSSELS – SOLVAY LIBRARY



The EJC partnered with the European Commission, the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU, and the Swedish Presidency of IHRA in the organisation of the Holocaust Remembrance Conference “Remembering the past, Shaping the Future” that took place in Brussels on the 23 of January 2023 on the occasion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The conference was organised in partnership with Jewish organisations such as the AJC Transatlantic Institute, B’nai B’rith Europe, B’nai B’rith International, European Jewish Community Center, European Union of Jewish Students, and World Jewish Congress.

Among the speakers were Vice-President of the European Commission Margaritis Schinas, European Commission Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life Katherina von Schnurbein, Swedish Minister for Gender Equality and Deputy Minister for Employment Paulina Brandberg, Chair of the Swedish Presidency of IHRA Ambassador Ann Bernes and IHRA Honorary Chair Professor Yehuda Bauer.

Participants had the opportunity to hear a testimony from Holocaust Survivor Henriette Kretz followed by the reading of a letter from the Warsaw Ghetto and a musical interlude by Musica Mundi students.

During the commemoration ceremony, EJC President Dr Ariel Muzicant lit the first candle honoring the memory of the six million Jewish men, women, and children who were murdered in the Holocaust.

The conference concluded with a panel discussion featuring Director of Zachor Foundation Hungary and Acting Deputy Director of Programs at USC Shoah

Foundation Andrea Szőnyi, Associate Professor in Archaeology at Cambridge University and IHRA Delegate and Chair of “Safeguarding” Sites” Project Dr Gilly Carr and Founder and Managing Director of the Agency “what matters” Dr Andreas Kahrs on “Where the Holocaust Happened”.

IHRD 2023: SPECIAL SCREENING OF ‘SIMONE VEIL, A WOMAN OF THE CENTURY’

24 JANUARY 2023

BRUSSELS – BOZAR

On the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the EJC and the European Parliament Working Group Against Antisemitism (WGAS) held a special screening of “Simone Veil, a Woman of the Century” with the participation of renowned French philosopher, filmmaker and playwright Bernard-Henri Lévy.

Dr Ariel Muzicant and Vice President of the European Parliament and Chair of WGAS Nicola Beer addressed 400 guests, including ambassadors, MEPs and EU high-level officials, who gathered to commemorate the Holocaust and its victims, and to honour the memory of Simone Veil.

“In today’s dangerous political climate, where uncertainty and despair cloud our horizon, we need to continue fighting against those that threaten democracy and human rights,” Dr. Muzicant said. “We must not lose our determination to fight these force, because if we refuse to fight, hatred and intolerance will prevail.”

“This year, as we also mark the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, those heroes and their ultimate sacrifice, must be an inspiration to us all. Their legacy directs us to continue the fight against those who once again are challenging our societies with their discrimination, racism and antisemitism.” “As we look back in time, we have to remind ourselves to never forget about





what happened all these years ago, to honour those who suffered and to prevent such terrible crimes from ever happening again,” said Vice President of the European Parliament and Chair of the Working Group against Antisemitism Nicola Beer. “Sadly, in today’s world, we still have to fight against antisemitism and religious discrimination, but I am determined that it is a fight worth fighting.” “What we can do, however, is celebrate occasions such as Holocaust Remembrance Week, we can celebrate and honour people like Simone Veil, we can fight the fight together. Every single person in this room can do something, speak up, create awareness, fight for justice, and not ignore what should be blatantly obvious to everyone- making people feel unwelcome or inadequate due to their religion, their beliefs, their appearance or any other criteria is not only heartless, it is unacceptable.”

During his remarks, French philosopher, filmmaker and playwright Bernard-Henri Lévy spoke about his feelings on the current state of antisemitism, intolerance and discrimination.

“I’m pessimistic and optimistic. Of course, antisemitism has not disappeared and certainly reinvents itself, because now it’s all about Israel,” Lévy said. “In this sense, I see the way the devil reincarnates itself at every step of our history. However, I’m also optimistic because there are strong forces of resistance against it, being led by Jewish organizations, like the EJC, which holds firm and delivers on its pledge to fight antisemitism. This didn’t exist 40 years ago.”

"There is a pride, a self-affirmation and a calm about the new way of being a Jew today, especially when I think how undefended the Jews were when I was a teenager, when we had no weapons, and many were even ashamed of being a Jew. When you are ashamed and shy, and you don't dare to accept your identity, you are vulnerable."

25 JANUARY 2023

BRUSSELS, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Ariel Muzicant and Raya Kalenova held a meeting with European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas. They discussed the current challenges faced by European Jewish Communities, the need to fight against antisemitism and strengthen Jewish communal security.



25 JANUARY 2023

BRUSSELS

Ariel Muzicant and Raya Kalenova attended a dinner in honour of the President of Israel Isaac Herzog organised by the Israeli Embassy in Belgium and the Mission to the EU and hosted by the World Jewish Congress.



26 JANUARY 2023

BRUSSELS – EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



The EJC team participated in a special plenary session of the European Parliament to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day. President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola chaired the event and Israeli President Isaac Herzog addressed the ceremony with a keynote address.

The ceremony was followed by the inauguration of a permanent Holocaust memorial in the European Parliament. President Herzog and President Metsola unveiled “The Refugee”, an art piece by Felix Nussbaum, who perished in the Shoah. The piece reflects the fear and desperation of the artist on the eve of WWII and a grim reality: for the Jew, there is no refuge. The series of commemoration events in the European Parliament concluded with the moving testimony of Holocaust survivor Alberto Israel.

27 JANUARY 2023

BRUSSELS

EJC Public Affairs Officer Caroline Totaro took part in a ceremony held in honour of Youra Livschitz, Jean Franklemon and Robert Maistriau, three young resistants who on 19 April 1943 attacked the train of the 20th convoy carrying 1,631 Jews from the Dossin barracks in Mechelen, Belgium to Auschwitz near Boortmeerbeek.



30 JANUARY 2023

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BRUSSELS

The EJC took part in the Board meeting of the European Parliament Working Group against Antisemitism to discuss the group's plan of action for the first half of 2023. WGAS Board members also heard reports from Katerina Vyzvaldova of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on the findings of FRA's 18th annual overview of data on antisemitism and from Dr Susanne Urban and Tomasz Wlodarski on "Moreshet - European-wide, value-orientated network dedicated to foster awareness of the Jewish Heritage of Europe".



EJC GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND GALA DINNER 6-7 FEBRUARY 2023

BRUSSELS



The European Jewish Congress held its General Assembly. Leaders from over 30 Jewish communities across Europe gathered in Belgium to discuss recent developments, exchange on best practices, and address opportunities and challenges ahead.

EJC President Dr Ariel Muzicant, Chair of the Council Francis Kalifat, and Executive Vice-President and CEO Raya Kalenova chaired the General Assembly.

EJC General Assembly unanimously confirmed the mandate of Dr Ariel Muzicant as Interim President until the end of 2024, expressing its complete confidence in his leadership. At the same time, EJC and SACC by EJC budget for 2023 and 2024 was confirmed.

Dr Ariel Muzicant laid out EJC's priorities for 2023 and insisted on the importance of continued efforts in the fight against antisemitism, fostering of Jewish life and culture, and joint action against threats to religious rights in Europe.





A large number of initiatives were discussed for the following years including Jewish education, cultural programs, and outreach to smaller communities to preserve and foster Jewish life.



Community leaders had the possibility to exchange views with H.E. Amb. Haim Regev, Head of the Mission of Israel to the European Union and NATO and Sharon Buenos, Global Director of Zikaron BaSalon.

The General Assembly was concluded with a gala dinner at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, which brought together ambassadors, Members of the European

Parliament, high-level officials of the European union institutions, members of the diplomatic corps, as well as Jewish leaders, professionals and experts. European Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli honoured the EJC with her presence and expressed her commitment and the one of the EU to fostering Jewish life in all its diversity: "We want to see Jewish life thriving again in the heart of our communities. As it should. We owe it to those who perished in the Holocaust, we owe it to survivors and we owe it to future generations."

European Parliament Vice-President and Chair of the Working Group against Antisemitism (WGAS) Nicola Beer also addressed the audience, ensuring her unwavering support to European Jewish communities in the fight against antisemitism and the flourishing of Jewish life and culture.

EJC Members payed tribute to the Belgian victims of the Shoah by visiting the exhibition "236- LAND (ES) CAPES from the 20th Convoy" at the Jewish Museum of Belgium.

9 FEBRUARY 2023

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Ariella Woitchik addressed the Democracy, Rule of Law, and Fundamental Rights Monitoring Group (DRFMG) of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs (LIBE) of the European Parliament.



She was joined by European Commission Coordinator on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life Katherina von Schnurbein and FRA's expert Katerina Vyzvaldova.

DRFMG members held an exchange of views on antisemitism in the EU.

"As a consequence of horrific antisemitic incidents and the fact that antisemitism has become normalized, Jews don't feel safe walking around the streets of Europe wearing religious signs. Many European Jews feel afraid of expressing their identity online and offline," said Ms Woitchik to the members of the group. "When a human tragedy happens, young people and influencers launch movements on social networks and rightly so...however where were they when a grandmother was murdered in her home in Paris because she was Jewish?"

The DRFMG group is focused on threats to democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, as well as the fight against corruption within the EU, across all Member States. It is meant to recommend specific actions to the LIBE Committee, such as meetings with stakeholders, hearings and missions, as well as to make suggestions for proposals for resolutions and reports.

13 FEBRUARY 2023

PARIS



Raya Kalenova and Ariella Woitchik attended CRIF annual dinner at the Carrousel du Louvre in Paris.

The event brings together French and international Jewish leaders as well as politicians, ambassadors, artists, religious figures and media personalities.

French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne was this year's guest of

honour. During her address she called to "fight antisemitism with all our might, wherever it is and wherever it is hiding" and explained the story of her family, in particular the deportation of her father to Auschwitz.

"Together with my grandfather and my uncles, he was arrested by the Gestapo. Then came the sealed wagons, the orders, the beatings, the humiliations. Drancy, Auschwitz. They were 1,250 at the start. Only six came back."

Borne also recalled her wish that "each student in France makes at least one visit to a place of memory during their years at school", one of the measures of the new plan to fight against racism, antisemitism and discrimination on the grounds of origin for the years 2023-2026, presented three weeks earlier.

Yonathan Arfi, President of CRIF, recalled the role of education in the fight "against hatred". "Antisemitism is also taking new forms," he said, citing in particular "Islamism", "conspiracy theories" and "hatred towards Israel".

Arfi also insisted on the positive narratives to fight ignorance: "The fact of being Jewish should be considered as a positive cultural fact."

27 FEBRUARY 2023

EJC OFFICE – BRUSSELS



EJC hosted a delegation of young Jewish activists as part of the 2023 EU Activism Seminar organised by the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS). The EU Activism seminar is a flagship initiative of the European Union of Jewish Students to introduce young Jewish activists to the EU institutions and the advocacy efforts of Jewish civil society organisations.

Maria Bagdasarova, Dylan Bokler, Caroline Totaro and Xavier Ruiz presented the activities of the European Jewish Congress at the EU level as well as the organisation's work with the affiliated communities.

This was the eight time that the EUJS EU Activism delegation visited the EJC, signalling the strong partnership, friendship and commitment of both organisations in the service of European Jewish communities.

1 MARCH 2023

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



Maria Bagdasarova and Caroline Totaro participated in the briefing on antisemitism and hate speech in the online sphere organised by Frédérique Ries MEP. The briefing was a follow-up to the reporting action of antisemitic content posted online “MEPs strike back (Part II)” campaign initiated by MEP Ries.

Experts of the “Online Hate Task Force” presented the outcome of the reporting action and briefed the participants on the current state of play in IT companies and treatment of online hate speech, the experts also detailed about terrorism incitement online and antisemitism in the Palestinian textbooks. Representatives of the Belgian Federal police reported on online violent speech and terrorism.

EUROPEAN JEWISH CONGRESS

T: +32 2 540 8159

info@ejcbrussels.com

www.eurojewcong.org



@eurojewcong



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