

Building Tolerance, Understanding
and Dialogue across Communities

Antisemitism Report HUNGARY



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Executive Summary

In general, the Jewish population in Hungary has a high level of education and is in a good position socially and financially, according to the available literature and our interviewees. Those who identify as Jews are mostly non-religious and consider themselves predominantly European citizens or equally Jewish and Hungarian. According to research, the level of antisemitism in Hungary increased significantly around 2010, presumably due to the rise in popularity of the far-right Jobbik party. Since 2015, the available data show that the level of antisemitism has not changed significantly. At the same time, most interviewees reported a general increase in antisemitism in the country, citing the internet as the primary cause, as well as the family background, deficiencies of the education system, the polarisation of society, and the government's Soros campaign. In Hungary, antisemitism is most often manifested in the form of conspiracy theories, but other forms are also present (e.g. emotional antisemitism, new antisemitism). According to the available data, the most common form of antisemitism is hate speech. The number of hate crimes is negligible. At the political level, antisemitism emerged from the second half of the 2000s in connection with Jobbik and has been one of the tools of far-right parties (currently Mi Hazánk – Our Homeland) ever since, albeit in a less direct form than before, disguised by coded speech and appearing mainly as conspiracy theories. Although the Fidesz government announced zero tolerance towards antisemitism in 2013, it has focused its communication on several issues related to antisemitism in recent years. These include the

campaign against George Soros, the glorification of antisemitic politicians (e.g. Miklós Horthy) and artists (e.g. Albert Wass) between the two world wars, the distortion of the memory of the Holocaust, and the fight against the global external enemy. Antisemitism is also present in the sports fan milieu, primarily in the football fan scene and especially in the ultra scene. According to a 2017 survey, half of Hungarian Jews have experienced antisemitism in their lifetime, and all of our Jewish interviewees mentioned such experiences. Many of them highlighted the government's antisemitism-related double-talk's negative effects on their sense of security. While antisemitism is undoubtedly present in Hungary, research and interviewees also suggest that society is much more prejudiced towards other minorities, especially the Roma, the LGBTQ+, and migrants. According to first-line practitioners, the extent to which antisemitism is present among students depends on the school. When it appears among students, it is primarily present in verbal forms, and often, there are no real antisemitic sentiments in the background. Several interviewees identified education as one of the most important tools to reduce antisemitism.

Introduction

The BOND project and research

The BOND (Building tOlerance, uNderstanding and Dialogue across communities) project¹ will run from January 2023 to December 2024 in Poland, Hungary, Italy and Romania. Its main objective is to address deep-rooted prejudices, hate attitudes and behaviours in society, particularly towards European Jewry. It also aims to promote understanding, tolerance and dialogue. The project will place particular emphasis on raising young people's awareness of Judaism and antisemitism and on fostering intercultural and interreligious dialogue. This research was carried out as a first step of the BOND project. Both the project and the research use the definition of antisemitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.² All phases of the research were completed in September 2023, so events after 7 October 2023 and their impact are no longer included.

The research aimed to provide a comprehensive picture of antisemitism in Hungary as a basis for further project activities. Consequently, the research had limitations: it was carried out within the timeframe and scope defined in the project and along sub-themes relevant to the project's further activities.

Methodology

The research consisted of two parts.³ Firstly, a desk research was conducted to summarise the literature available on antisemitism in Hungary over the last ten years or so, on the topics predefined in the project. We then conducted nine individual and five focus group interviews to complement the results of the desk research. Our individual interviewees included two first-line practitioners, five experts on antisemitism and/or minority issues, one NGO staff representative working on LGBTQ+ issues, and one Christian religious leader. Focus group interviews were conducted with the following groups: young people with a Jewish identity, young people with a non-Jewish identity, first-line practitioners, leaders and staff of Jewish NGOs and Jewish religious leaders.⁴ Participants were selected within the defined target groups using both a targeted approach and a snowball method.⁵



The situation of the Jewish communities in Hungary

The estimated number of Jews in Hungary in 2015 was between 58 936 and 110 679, according to a 2017 survey.⁶ In addition to available databases on the Jewish population, the research was conducted by interviewing subjects who identified themselves as Jewish and had at least one Jewish grandparent. The results showed that roughly 85% of Jews lived in Budapest, with an ongoing movement from smaller settlements to cities. Their educational level was higher, and their social and financial situation was better than the average in Budapest. While 78% of the Jewish population had a degree, the proportion was 32% for the population aged 18 and over in the capital. 52% of the Jewish population had an intellectual job, and 17% worked in a managerial position, while for the total Budapest population, the former rate was 20% and the latter 6%. Regarding identity, most Jews identified themselves as European citizens (30%) or as equally Jewish and Hungarian (29%).⁷ According to the census, 10 965 people declared themselves Israelites in 2011 and 7 635 in 2022.⁸

These data were also confirmed by the interviewees. Most of them agreed that Jews are in a privileged position in Hungary compared

to other minority groups. They highlighted that this was particularly true in Budapest. In the countryside, mainly because of the Holocaust, the Jewish presence is much smaller, and the circumstances are difficult. According to some, this presence is increasingly active, but some Jewish leaders believe that the Jewish population in the countryside is disappearing.

According to the 2017 survey, most of the Hungarian Jewish population is not religious. Although 70% of the respondents did not want Jews to assimilate fully, the majority supported mixed marriages. The vast majority (75%) felt a sense of belonging to Israel but were not seriously considering moving there. Hungarian Jews were more likely than the general population to be opposition voters and consumers of left-liberal-oriented media. In terms of worldview and political attitudes, they were also more accepting and open-minded compared to the rest of society.⁹

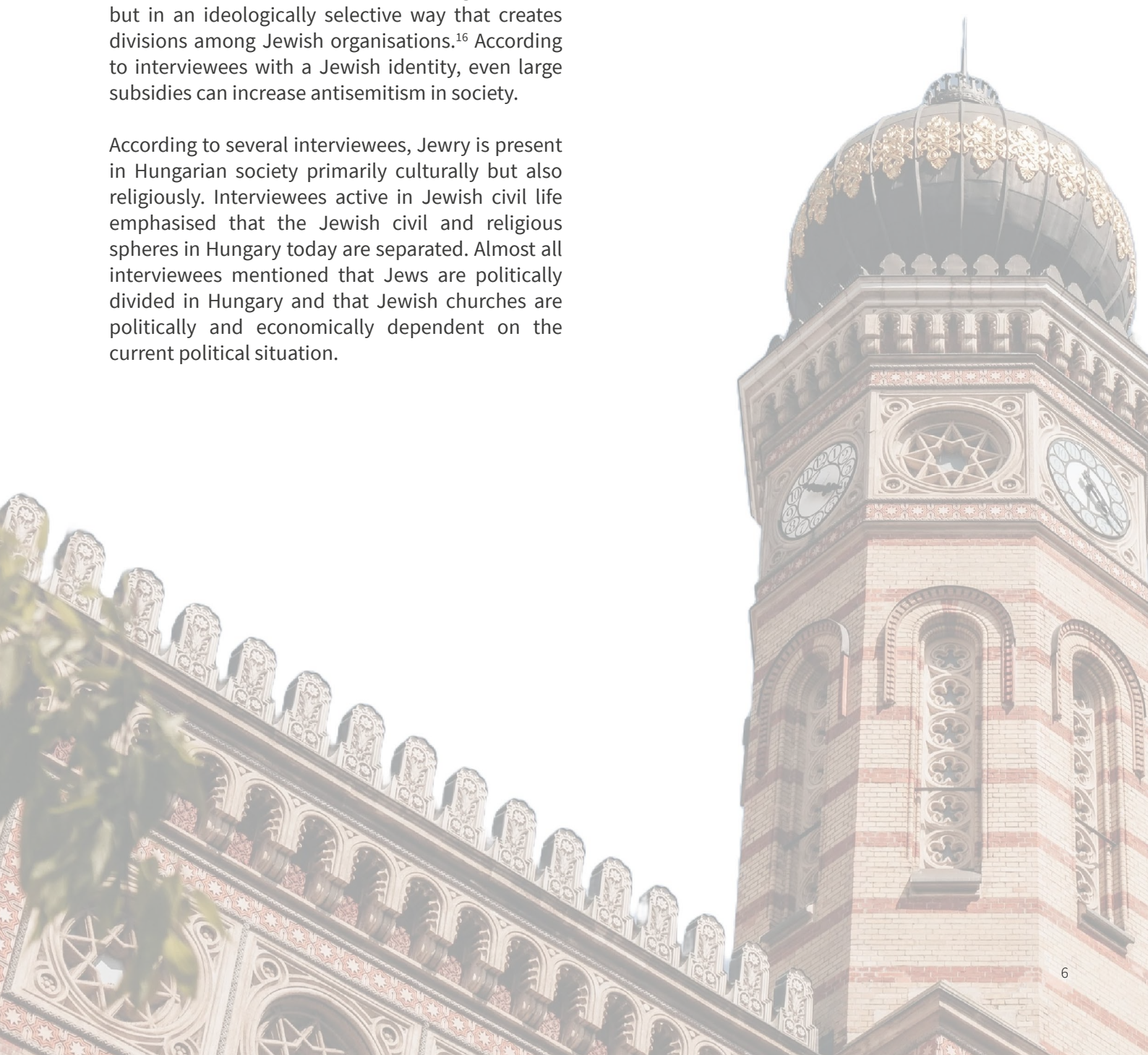
There are three recognised Jewish churches in Hungary: 1) the Association of Jewish Communities of Hungary (Mazsihisz) – the best known in 2017 among the population



identifying themselves as Jews¹⁰ – which represents the neologic faction¹¹) the second best known, the Unified Hungarian Israelite Congregation (EMIH), which represents the status quo ante, i.e. the middle way faction¹²; and 3) the Hungarian Autonomous Orthodox Israelite Congregation (MAOIH), which represents the orthodox faction¹³. In addition, there are two smaller Jewish religious communities, the reform Beit Orim¹⁴ and Sim Shalom.¹⁵

The state supports several Jewish organisations but in an ideologically selective way that creates divisions among Jewish organisations.¹⁶ According to interviewees with a Jewish identity, even large subsidies can increase antisemitism in society.

According to several interviewees, Jewry is present in Hungarian society primarily culturally but also religiously. Interviewees active in Jewish civil life emphasised that the Jewish civil and religious spheres in Hungary today are separated. Almost all interviewees mentioned that Jews are politically divided in Hungary and that Jewish churches are politically and economically dependent on the current political situation.



Antisemitism in Hungary

Level and types of antisemitism

In Hungary, after the fall of communism, antisemitism, which had been suppressed until then, resurfaced immediately. Nevertheless, its level did not increase significantly in the two decades that followed – around a quarter of the adult population of the country could be considered antisemitic.¹⁷ The level of antisemitism increased significantly around 2010, which, by several studies, was linked to the rise in popularity of the far-right Jobbik party.¹⁸ According to surveys conducted over several years using András Kovács' methodology – which can be called traditional in Hungary – the level of antisemitism did not change significantly between 2015 and 2019. In 2019, 36% of society was considered moderately or strongly antisemitic;¹⁹ in 2021, according to research by the Action and Protection League covering 16 countries, 42%.²⁰ In Hungary, as in the Visegrad countries, antisemitism mostly appears in the form of conspiracy theories.²¹

Available research distinguishes the following forms of antisemitism:

- **Primary antisemitism**, or traditional antisemitism, covers three categories. **Cognitive antisemitism** – referring to negative misconceptions about Jews – was strongly present in 17% of Hungarians and moderately present in 42% of Hungarians in 2021. **Affective antisemitism** – referring to negative feelings about Jews – was strongly held by 25% of Hungarians and moderately held by 23% in 2021. **Conative antisemitism** – measuring the willingness to act or discriminate based on anti-Jewish prejudice – was strongly present in 15% and moderately present in 34% of respondents in 2021. Combining all categories, Action and Protection League's 16-country survey found that 24% were strongly and 18% moderately considered to be primarily antisemitic in 2021, for a total of 42% of the Hungarian population.²²

- **Secondary antisemitism** refers to statements that deny, distort or relativise the Holocaust. According to the Action and Protection League's 2021 research, 17% of Hungarians were considered strongly and 46% moderately antisemitic.²³

- **The new antisemitism**, in simple terms, refers to antisemitic criticism of Israel or anti-Israel sentiment, which is projected onto Israel, putting Israel at the centre of the antisemitic sentiment and allowing antisemitic statements to be made in a politically correct way.²⁴ This includes expressions that see the State of Israel as inherently evil - demonising it, applying double standards against it and denying Israel's right to exist.²⁵

In Hungary, according to the Action and Protection League's 2021 survey, 13% strongly and 40% moderately held antisemitic views against Israel.²⁶

- **Latent antisemitism**: we call those who try to avoid giving antisemitic answers in surveys measuring antisemitism latent antisemites. In general, they succeed with it at questions measuring traditional antisemitism but not for questions measuring secondary and new antisemitism, which is not necessarily perceived as antisemitic by them.²⁷

In addition, one of the interviewees in the field of antisemitism research distinguished three levels of antisemitism in society: 1) prejudice, negative stereotypes about Jews, 2) the presence of antisemitic language in social discourse and media, and 3) antisemitism for political purposes. These three levels are pyramidally related: a large proportion of those who use antisemitic language presumably are also prejudiced, while not all those who are prejudiced use antisemitic language.

The majority of interviewees defined antisemitism as a feeling of aversion, opposition, or negative expressions towards Jewry. Besides, a first-line practitioner described it as a worldview. As possible manifestations, emotional, verbal, non-verbal and physical antisemitism were mentioned. A distinction was also made between religion-based and ‘race-based’ antisemitism, and more interviewees highlighted that, in their experience, antisemitism often mixes interpretations of Jewishness as religion, people/ethnicity, and culture or tradition. Conspiracy theories were considered by many to be the most typical form of antisemitism in Hungary, and some highlighted that antisemitism most often appears in an economic context. Several interviewees referred to new antisemitism (antisemitic criticism of and opposition to Israel) as a complex area of antisemitism, where it is difficult to determine whether a particular statement is antisemitic and which is more prevalent in Western Europe, but also on the rise in Hungary, especially on the (radical) left. Researchers and members of the Jewish community have also emphasised antisemitism connected to the issue of the Hungarian responsibility in the Second World War and the Holocaust in Hungary.

Most interviewees agreed that antisemitism has increased to some extent over the past 10-15 years. The main reason given for this was the internet, which they said supports the rapid spread of antisemitic content and normalises its presence. Secondly, they mentioned family patterns brought from home, but several also mentioned the deficiencies of the Hungarian education system.

According to several interviewees, Hungarian society is fundamentally receptive to prejudice, including antisemitism. Interviewees agreed that crises – including the COVID-19 pandemic – always have an impact on prejudice, as these subvert the current social order and often result in widespread financial insecurity. In such cases, many people look for scapegoats, which are usually found in minority groups by political actors. In many cases, the COVID-19 epidemic has led to loneliness among young people, which has also made them more open to conspiracy theories against minorities.

According to the experts in the field of antisemitism interviewed and a 2022 study,²⁸ gender is also fundamentally irrelevant to antisemitism. According to the latter research, the effect of gender is only significant in most cases when other attitudinal factors (e.g. prejudice against other groups, populism, nationalism) are not mediated. The study has also shown that gender may still have an effect on different types of antisemitism – for example, in the case of secondary antisemitism, men are more antisemitic.

Antisemitic stereotypes, prejudices, conspiracy theories

Antisemitic stereotypes and prejudices in Hungarian society can be sorted into several categories. A 2022 cross-national research²⁹ surveyed beliefs in different types of antisemitic prejudice. One category studied was traditional, religious-based anti-Judaism. This includes, for example, the claim that the crucifixion of Jesus is an unforgivable sin of the Jews (16% agreed). Another category is conspiratorial antisemitic stereotypes and prejudices. These include, for example, that Jews have too much influence in Hungary (25% agreed), Jews aim to dominate the world (23% agreed) and seek to extend their influence on the global economy (40% agreed), that they are more inclined than others to use shady practices to achieve their goals (18% agreed), and that they often operate in secret behind the

scenes (17% agreed).³⁰ Antisemitic narratives about the Holocaust also appear in Hungary. Examples include that Jews try to take advantage of their persecution during the war and the Holocaust (28% agreed), Jews are to be blamed for their persecution (17% agreed), and they talk too much about the Holocaust (31% agreed).³¹

In addition to these categories, other antisemitic theories are also present. For example, Jews cannot be equal members of a country because they will always remain more loyal to Judaism or Israel than to the nation, with which 35% of the total population in Hungary agreed in 2019.³² There are also antisemitic theories regarding the COVID-19 pandemic: the COVID-19 virus was created and/or spread by Jews for political or economic gain or to take revenge on their enemies and avenge their historical oppressors.³³ Among antisemitic topos on the far right, there is also a narrative that conflates communism and Jewry, blaming Jews for the crimes of the communist regimes against the Hungarian people.³⁴

In the intersection of different prejudicial narratives, Jews are often presented as the “secret power” responsible for the activities of other minority groups in Hungary. According to these narratives, they aim to undermine the Hungarian nation. Narratives from the far right, for example, suggest that Jews (e.g. George Soros) are organising Muslim immigration to weaken Christian Europe and nation-states.³⁵ Besides, Jews use the Roma as a “biological weapon” against Hungarians,³⁶ and as “homopropagandists”, they work to spread homosexuality and deviance in opposition to Christianity and white people.³⁷

Interviewees also mentioned that common stereotypes against Jews include the crooked nose, sideburns, and wearing a hat. Additional stereotypes are also present: Jews are left-wing, smart, influential, insatiable, consider themselves culturally superior, communist, and wealthy, occupy leadership positions, and help each

other to get into these positions at the expense of Hungarians. In line with the above-presented research results, more interviewees mentioned the stereotypes that Jews talk too much about the Holocaust and that they always portray themselves as victims for financial gain. In the context of conspiratorial antisemitism, several people mentioned the blood libel of the 19th century, the stab-in-the-back myth of the 20th century holding Jews responsible for Trianon, the belief that they caused the Great Depression, and the post-COVID New World Order Theory, which holds that Jews aimed to use the pandemic and the following economic problems to expand their influence and power over people and countries.³⁸ Linked to new antisemitism, a common view is that Jews are killing Palestinians.

Antisemitic hate speech and hate crime

In Hungary, state authorities do not publish official data on hate speech and hate crimes differentiated for minority groups. The available official statistics treat all cases of violence against members of minority groups as one and do not necessarily reflect reality.³⁹ Based on these, the number of hate crimes is negligible.⁴⁰ In Hungary, there is no systematic and comprehensive monitoring. Still, according to NGOs working on the issue, there are roughly 30-60 antisemitic incidents per year in the country – the most common being hate speech. At the same time, physical violence against persons or property is negligible.⁴¹

All interviewees agreed that antisemitism in Hungary is mainly verbal, but some also mentioned the vandalism of cemeteries and synagogues. According to the interviewees, antisemitism primarily appears in the form of conspiracy theories, but several emphasised that covert, hidden antisemitism appearing as allusions and antisemitic humour are also widespread.

Antisemitism in politics

The presence of antisemitism in Hungarian politics in the years after 2010 is mainly related to the far-right Jobbik party (before its mainstreaming⁴²). However, the increasing public appearances and growing popularity of the extremist party in the years before 2010 had already noticeably increased the presence and acceptance of antisemitism in public discourse and then had also demonstrably strengthened antisemitic attitudes.⁴³ Although in 2013, the Fidesz government proclaimed zero tolerance of antisemitism,⁴⁴ an integral part of the party's electoral and communication strategy is to borrow topics of the far right, which are then disseminated to the whole society through the government-controlled media.⁴⁵ Such antisemitism-linked topics include conspiracy theories about George Soros, glorification of Horthy, distortion of the memory of the Holocaust, and the constant rhetoric that Fidesz is protecting the nation from an external, global enemy.⁴⁶ In addition, since 2015, several public figures known for their extremist, antisemitic statements have received high state awards (e.g. Zsolt Bayer, Ernő Raffay).⁴⁷ Among political actors, the far-right Our Homeland (Mi Hazánk), which split from Jobbik in 2018, is the most prominent to use antisemitic elements, although instead of the previously typical for Jobbik, sometimes openly antisemitic statements, Our Homeland coded, covert, largely conspiratorial antisemitic language (e.g. attacking the Rothschilds, promoting the New World Order theory). The political presence of antisemitism is strongly connected to the kuruc.info portal linked to Előd Novák, formerly a prominent politician of Jobbik and now a prominent politician of Our Homeland.⁴⁸

According to several interviewees, antisemitism in Hungary is a politicised topic. Many highlighted the Fidesz government's campaign against George Soros as having had an impact on antisemitism. Although the government did not consider the campaign to be antisemitic,⁴⁹ most interviewees perceived it as such, as the campaign portrayed George Soros with traditional antisemitic

stereotypes. The impact of the campaign also reinforces the antisemitic interpretation: as many times antisemitic slogans and symbols (e.g. "stinking Jews", Star of David) were drawn on the anti-Soros posters,⁵⁰ the campaign undoubtedly mobilised antisemitic sentiments. According to several experts, those who have antisemitic feelings decoded the campaign as antisemitic, while for those who don't have such feelings, it did not carry antisemitic connotations. In addition, several mentioned that the Hungarian government's inadequate remembrance policy could also have an impact on antisemitism.

More interviewees with a Jewish identity highlighted that the government does a double-talk on antisemitism: while proclaiming zero tolerance for antisemitism and supporting Jewish organisations and causes with large amounts of money, albeit selectively, it also supports antisemitic individuals and collaborates with actors who promote antisemitic ideas.⁵¹

Antisemitism in the sporting sphere

In the Hungarian sporting sphere, antisemitism is most prevalent in football. The discriminatory and racist behaviour of Hungarian football fans has caused problems several times: during the 2020 European Football Championship, it caused international repercussions, and in 2021, UEFA, among other things, fined the Hungarian Football Association (MLSZ) €100 000.⁵² According to a survey, 57% of respondents found fine right, and only 38% thought it was too harsh.⁵³ In 2022, UEFA classified depicting Greater Hungary as a political symbol and banned banners and accessories picturing it at UEFA-organised competitions.⁵⁴

According to the expert interviewed, there are three types of antisemitism appearing on the football stands: 1) open antisemitism (e.g. against Israeli athletes); 2) conspiratorial antisemitism (e.g. alleged Jewish interests behind punishments); 3) the use of the word "Jew" as a negative adjective

without ideological or political content. In sporting games, the most common manifestation of racism is anti-Gypsyism; antisemitism is less frequent, but the content of racism is always heavily influenced by the current political discourse.

The Jewish community's experiences and perceptions of antisemitism

According to a 2017 survey,⁵⁵ 48% of Hungarian Jews have experienced antisemitism during their lives, which is a significant decrease compared to the 1999 survey,⁵⁶ where this rate was 75%. In contrast, according to Hungarian Jews' perceptions, antisemitism in Hungary has increased since 1999: in the 2017 survey, respondents were more likely to perceive Hungarian society as antisemitic and considered more likely the persecution of Jews to happen than in 1999.⁵⁷ Although Jewish organisations believe that the government adequately guarantees the safety and physical integrity of the community, they think it does not do enough to combat prejudice in areas such as education, media and intercultural dialogue.⁵⁸

All interviewees with Jewish identity had encountered antisemitic comments about them, either in verbal or written (online) form. Many of them mentioned that they hid their Jewish identity to avoid antisemitic incidents. Despite this, several interviewees with a Jewish identity considered the level of antisemitism in Hungary to be low and did not perceive it to have increased in the last 10-15 years. Besides believing that the country is safe for Jews, several of them also experience – due to the double-talk in politics – a constant sense of uncertainty that the current situation could change at any time. A Jewish religious leader highlighted that there are several antisemitic narratives among Christians rooted in religion, which churches could reduce by providing adequate information. According to several young interviewees with Jewish identity, Jewish communities and churches also tend to build their Jewish identity on the trauma of the Holocaust, which, in their opinion, does not help to reduce antisemitism in the country.

Prejudice against other minorities

Hungarian society is quite exclusionary towards minority groups; prejudices and stereotypes are widespread against many of these. According to surveys, Jews are one of the least rejected groups. While until 2014, the highest level of rejection was the highest against Roma, later immigrants/migrants have become the most rejected group.⁵⁹

According to several interviewees, prejudices generally have the same roots, such as insecurity (social, economic, existential), lack of information, education problems, political attitudes, bad experiences, and envy or lack of solidarity. All interviewees perceived rejection against minority groups in Hungary as the strongest towards Roma, migrants and the LGBTQ+ community. Many of them felt that anti-Gypsyism is a part of everyday conversations, and anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-migrant sentiments are also considered acceptable by society, which is not the case for antisemitism. A leader of an LGBTQ+ community emphasised that while the Hungarian government considers Jews and Roma as equal in political terms, it is not the case for the LGBTQ+ community and migrants.

Anti-Gypsyism sees Roma as a grassroots economic, cultural and physical threat; it appears primarily in dehumanisation and agreement with negative stereotypes.⁶⁰ A first-line practitioner explained that antisemitism and anti-Gypsyism position these groups both economically and socially: while antisemitism is motivated by envy of the perceived or real better position of Jews, anti-Gypsyism is motivated more by fear of being placed in the perceived or real worse position of the Roma.

Government communications on the 2015 refugee crisis portrayed refugees and migrants as a physical, security, health, social, labour market, and cultural/civilisational threat.⁶¹ Since the mid-2010s, social attitudes towards the LGBTQ+

community have also been heavily influenced by government policies and communications that have framed LGBTQ+ and gender as a cultural, value system, and demographic threat.⁶²

Hate speech and hate crimes against other minority groups

Hungary's official number of hate crimes is negligible,⁶³ although the actual number certainly and probably significantly exceeds the statistics.⁶⁴ The Ministry of Interior does not allow these data to be differentiated by minority groups, but according to data and research sent to the OSCE, the vast majority of these are crimes against Roma, followed by homophobic incidents.⁶⁵ While there is no data on hate speech against Roma,⁶⁶ members of the LGBTQ+ community experience a large amount of hate speech.⁶⁷

Discrimination against Roma is everyday and institutional: they face discrimination in everyday life in the labour market, housing, health, education, guardianship, and law enforcement. The lack of access to legal protection and representation compounds these.⁶⁸



Antisemitism and education

Antisemitism and other prejudices in schools

First-line practitioners and young people agree that the extent to which antisemitism is present in the educational environment is very school-specific. They also agreed that if antisemitism is present among students, teachers rarely become aware of it. In schools, antisemitism is most often verbal. According to many of the first-line practitioner interviewees, the root of this is superficial online content consumption and family patterns. In their opinion, behind most of the antisemitic statements of the students, there are no real antisemitic sentiments, but rather a rebellion against prohibitions, ignorance, or the use of “Jew” as a slur (the same applies to the words “gipsy” and “faggot”). Many have questioned the extent to which such statements can be considered antisemitic. Rarely, classical antisemitic narratives are also used by students who are more interested in and knowledgeable about Jewish history and traditions. Non-antisemitic students also often have misgivings about the Holocaust, not understanding what it has to do with them and why they should learn about it. Young people highlighted that it is often unclear to them how to talk correctly about socially sensitive issues.

According to the interviewees, anti-Gypsyism is more prevalent in schools than antisemitism. Several first-line practitioners highlighted that politically motivated social polarization and government campaigns spreading hateful messages also have an impact on young people, as exemplified by the rise of anti-migrant sentiment among students in the wake of the 2015 anti-refugee campaign.

Topics related to Judaism, antisemitism and the Holocaust in the official curriculum

In 2012, the government created a new National Core Curriculum and a unified textbook system.⁶⁹ In the process, it consulted the Jewish Community Roundtable,⁷⁰ which includes Jewish NGOs and congregations, on relevant curriculum changes. The curriculum was amended again in 2020, but the Roundtable was not involved. Although parts of Jewish history were not removed, antisemitic historical figures (e.g. Albert Wass or Joseph Nyíró)⁷¹ were included in the curriculum. Teaching topics necessary to counter antisemitism, such as human rights, critical thinking, acceptance and intercultural dialogue, is inadequate, not only because of the deficiencies of the curriculum but also because of the lack of adequate support and guidance for teachers.⁷²

Several interviewees criticised the National Core Curriculum for omitting authors who could be used to talk to students about the Holocaust and antisemitism effectively.



The role and possibilities of education in combatting antisemitism and other forms of prejudices

Research has shown that in secondary school, students' prejudice is strongly influenced by whether they perceive prejudice or acceptance as the norm in their community. While, in general, the majority tends to be unprejudiced, if the community is perceived as prejudiced, it makes prejudice the norm.⁷³ Establishing intergroup and extra-group relations also helps to ensure that prejudice does not become the community norm in school.⁷⁴ Teachers and schools, therefore, have a crucial role in reducing prejudices. It can be assumed that if a teacher is able to support the development of inclusive community norms among students that reject prejudices, for example, by giving space to unprejudiced voices already existing in the community, it is likely to reduce prejudices among students.⁷⁵

Several interviewees identified education as one of the most important tools to reduce prejudices, as it is a way to reach many young people in a targeted way. Foreign language teaching and human rights education were seen as important subjects in this regard, and young people highlighted critical thinking, the ability to recognise fake news, and self-awareness. They also emphasised the importance of training teachers to react appropriately to prejudice among students. According to several interviewees, NGO project days and cultural, artistic, and encounter-based programmes work well in sensitisation. Many interviewees stressed that reducing prejudice is a slow process, takes time and energy, is essentially achieved through face-to-face discussions, and it is important to involve the whole school staff.

According to several interviewees, experience has shown that antisemitism cannot be curbed by prohibition, as this way, prejudice is only eliminated, not suppressed, and leads to rebellion against prohibition. At the same time, direct sensitisation can be easily counterproductive if the wrong tool is chosen. Methods based on emotional

empathy and personal contact are much more effective than fact-based information. According to many interviewees' experiences, sensitisation about the Holocaust works better with personal stories to which the student can relate than with dry facts and figures. A trauma-based narrative is very strong in Hungary, which is often ineffective for young people.

According to a first-line practitioner, the majority in a student community is usually not prejudiced or accepting but thinks nothing of these issues. Therefore, one of the aims of education should be to educate them to be people of feeling and solidarity.

According to several interviewees, the possibilities of education to reduce prejudice in Hungary are limited. The education system is in crisis with a shortage of teachers, large class sizes, centralised management, changes in the National Core Curriculum, and a general lack of time. Although some schools consider it important to tackle prejudice, these efforts are also hindered by a lack of appropriate knowledge and methods.

In addition to emphasising the importance of education, interviewees identified several possible ways to reduce prejudice, including antisemitism. Examples include community building, self-awareness and experiencing diversity. Giving people the chance to learn about Jewish religion and culture and to interact with Jewish people can also help to reduce antisemitism. Among young people, but also at the societal level, it is of utmost importance to counteract offensive and hateful narratives against minorities and ensure their proper representation in the media.

Educational materials and programmes

Several NGOs have created educational materials to help reduce prejudice or have held regular school sessions for professionals working with young people. Regarding antisemitism, the examples include but are not limited to, the Zachor Foundation, the Haver Foundation, the Centropa Foundation, and the Action and Protection League. Regarding reducing prejudices against other minorities, some of the organisations are the UCCU Foundation, the Menedék Association, the Labrisz Association, the Symposium Association, the Foundation for Democratic Youth, the Network of Human Rights Educators, the Down Foundation, the Menhely Foundation, the Independent Theatre, and Amnesty International Hungary.⁷⁶

In addition to textbooks, a range of digital teaching materials on Jewry and the Holocaust are available for teachers. However, teachers need to be provided with methodological training and familiarisation with digital teaching materials to use these materials properly. It is also necessary to provide schools with the appropriate technical background for using such teaching materials, to develop relevant curricula, teaching, and materials, and to provide enough time.⁷⁷ Creating an environment in education and public life that does not urge teachers and school administrators to self-censor, fearing the reaction of educational authorities, politicians or parents, but encourages and supports them to be active in reducing prejudice and raising awareness of minority groups.

References

- 1) The BOND project website: <https://www.bond-project.eu/>.
- 2) “Antisemitism is a view of Jews that can be expressed as an expression of hatred towards them. Verbal and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed at Jewish or non-Jewish persons and/or their property, Jewish communal institutions and religious institutions.” IHRA, “IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism,” accessed December 19, 2023. <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>.
- 3) All phases of the research were completed by September 2023.
- 4) The main characteristics of the focus groups were: 1) young people with Jewish identity in the capital: aged 18-25, 8 persons - 5 boys, 3 girls; 2) young people with non-Jewish identity in the capital and in the countryside: 18 to 25 years old, 6 persons - 3 girls, 3 boys; 3) professionals working with young people in the capital and the countryside: 9 persons - 6 men, 3 women; 4) leaders and staff of Jewish NGOs in the capital: 7 persons - 4 men, 3 women; 5) Jewish religious leaders in the capital and the countryside: 4 persons - 3 men, 1 woman. The interviews were conducted between 30 May and 4 July 2023 and the focus groups between 31 May and 14 June 2023.
- 5) A limitation of the research was that several of the people we wanted to interview individually or in focus groups could not be reached or appointments could not be made.
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“In the estimation, the researchers projected the demographic characteristics of the Budapest population as a whole - the live birth and death rates of the age-grouped Budapest population - onto the Jewish population of the country, because two-thirds of the surviving Jews were Budapest residents, and the majority of rural Jews gradually moved to the capital. Estimates of population growth (in our case, decline) were based on female population figures, in accordance with the rules of demographic calculation. Available data on emigration were taken into account in the estimation.”
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