

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE ON ANTISEMITISM
UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

Bulgarian Replies

1. Judaism Within the State: the Right of Freedom of Religion or Belief

a) Judaism is not defined by the law but the Religious Denominations Act in Bulgaria from 2002 (last amended in 2019) provides for the right to freedom of religion, its protection, the legal status of all religious communities, institutions, and their relationship with the State. According to the main principles of the law, stemming from the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the individual subjective right to freedom of religion shall be regarded as fundamental, absolute, and inalienable. Multi-faceted, the right to freedom of religion shall extend to the freedom of all to form their religious convictions, to freely choose, change, and confess, respectively to practice, their religion, either alone or in community with others, in public or private, in worship, teaching, observance, and rituals. In addition, the law proclaims that no one shall be prosecuted or find his rights restricted on account of his religious convictions. No restrictions or privileges based on individuals' affiliation or non-affiliation to a certain religious denomination shall be allowed.

b) There is Jewish community in Bulgaria. Officially, there are around 6000 Jews in the state that are living predominantly in the largest Bulgarian cities. The biggest Jewish communities are living in Sofia (1500 Jews), Plovdiv (340 Jews), Varna (200 Jews) and Ruse (140 Jews).

c) See question 1a). The law does not restrict the people to change their religion or to leave the religion. People can freely change their religion to Judaism, abiding the requirements for conversion, as well as the traditions in Judaism.

d) The Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria "Shalom" and the Central Israeli Spiritual Council work closely with the Religious Denomination Directorate to the Council of Ministers. The Central Israeli Spiritual Council is registered as the official representative of the Jewish denomination. The chairman of both "Shalom" and the Central Israeli Spiritual Council are appointed by the Jewish community.

e) There are two functioning synagogues in Sofia and Plovdiv. Both buildings are in use and of significant historical importance. The synagogue in Sofia is the largest functioning Sephardi synagogue in Europe and the largest on the Balkan Peninsular. There are also synagogues in the cities of Burgas, Varna, Ruse, Stara Zagora, Pazardzhik, Vidin and Samokov. Unfortunately, due to their poor condition they are not in use.

f) There are Jewish cemeteries as a separate part of the municipal cemeteries. There is no specific law for their protection. Common rules are applicable.

g) "Dimcho Debelyanov" secondary school in Sofia is a public school, accredited and funded by the state. The school teaches Hebrew and is part of the World ORT funded academic institutions. In 2003 the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation and World ORT opened a Technology Center at "Dimcho Debelyanov" High School. Since the beginning of 2008 a Center for Excellence in Education was also created in the school with the support of Ronald S. Lauder Foundation and the America for Bulgaria Foundation.

In the autumn of 2019, the Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria "Shalom" will open a private primary school for students from grades I – VII (7 to 13 years).

h) There are no legal restrictions on ritual circumcision of males.

i) There are no restrictions on religious slaughter of animals. A special butcherer (schuhet) from Israel visits Bulgaria regularly in order to execute religious slaughtering of animals for holidays and ceremonies.

j) There are no restrictions on importing kosher meat, as long as they meet both the Bulgarian and the EU sanitary and phytosanitary measures. Kosher food is produced within the state and certified by the chief Rabbi.

k) There are no restrictions.

l) There are no restrictions for Jews to create religious charities or humanitarian institutions. There are two organizations of this character functioning at this point – “TSEDAKA Shalom”, a foundation that supports the Survivors of the Holocaust in Bulgaria, as well as the educational foundation “BEYT Shalom”.

m) There are no restrictions on Jewish materials being published or sold in the state. There are no Jewish texts available in public libraries, due to lack of market demand.

n) According to the Family Code only the civil marriage in the form prescribed in the law shall generate the effect associated with marriage by law. A religious ritual has no legal effect.

o) Towards the end of World War II, Bulgarian anti-Jewish laws were abolished and there were efforts to restore Jewish confiscated property. In March 1945, Bulgaria passed a Rehabilitation Law (which went into force in November 1946). Under the law, Jews who had lost property during the country’s Fascist regime were to receive restitution. The law voided the wartime compulsory sales of Jewish property, where the proceeds of the sale had been used to pay a “Jewish tax”.

After 1989, Bulgaria was one of the first Eastern European countries to pass private property restitution legislation. The private property restitution laws from the 1990s generally covered properties seized during Bulgaria’s Fascist and Communist periods. Both Bulgarian citizens and non-Bulgarian citizens were eligible to seek restitution of property confiscated during the Fascist and Communist periods.

In addition to private property legislation, Bulgaria also passed a 1992 Decree restoring ownership rights in all of the Jewish community’s property owned by the State to Shalom, the umbrella organization of the Jews in Bulgaria. Obtaining physical possession of some of the properties proved to be a difficult and lengthy process but the matter of Jewish communal property restitution has largely been settled. In the period between 1992 and 2009, 70 pieces of property (synagogues, residential houses, land, etc.) in Sofia and other cities in Bulgaria were restituted to Shalom.

Bulgaria endorsed the Terezin Declaration in 2009 and the Guidelines and Best Practices in 2010.

p) There are no restrictions of this kind.

q) There are no restrictions of this kind.

r) Any direct or indirect discrimination on grounds of gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, human genome, citizenship, origin, religion or belief, education, convictions, political affiliation, personal or social status, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status, property status, or on any other grounds established by law or by an international treaty to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party, shall be banned in accordance with the Protection against Discrimination Act based on the general anti-discrimination principle of the Constitution (Article 6).

2. Antisemitism in Law and Policy

a) In October 2017, the Bulgarian Government took a decision to adopt and apply the IHRA “Working Definition of Antisemitism”. Bulgaria became the fifth EU Member State to adopt the definition. The definition helps to inform the Government's work in this area. The decision tasks the Ministers and Heads of Agencies to take the necessary measures to translate the working definition into operational practice within the areas of their responsibility.

The Government also proposes to the National Assembly (Bulgarian Parliament) to apply the definition in its future work. Therefore, it is for individual public bodies to decide whether and how to apply the IHRA definition.

The decision of the Government includes the appointment of a Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs as national coordinator on combating antisemitism. The national coordinator works with relevant ministries and state authorities, as well as with civil society organizations, to coordinate policies and actions for preventing and countering all manifestations of antisemitism and to assure the application of the IHRA working definition.

The decision of the government represents a starting point for a comprehensive assessment of the problem and consideration of policies and measures to address it. At this stage, most ministries and agencies continue to explore how to implement the definition as relevant.

As a first step, the Government has taken a consistent and strong line in publicly denouncing each and every manifestation of antisemitism and, when doing so it is able to refer to one single definition and its 11 illustrative examples of contemporary antisemitism. Even though the definition has not been legally ratified, it has already served as a powerful tool for public accountability.

While the definition is “legally non-binding”, the competent ministries nevertheless see it as an important tool for criminal justice and as a useful guidance for law enforcement authorities in their efforts to identify and investigate antisemitic incidents more efficiently and effectively.

b) Although the police and the judicial authorities gather statistics on racist, xenophobic and anti-discrimination incidents as criminalised in the provisions of the Bulgaria Penal Code, one of the gaps we still need to address urgently is the methodology for recording and reporting antisemitic crimes and incidents.

Bulgaria participates in the work of the Subgroup on methodologies for recording and collecting data on hate crime coordinated by the EU FRA, and we intend to make use of the Key Guiding Principles published in December 2017 in order to improve the recording of hate crime by law enforcement authorities. To that purpose, on 20-21 June 2019 in Sofia the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a joint workshop with FRA and ODIHR on ways to improve hate crime recording and data collection with the active participation of the police officers, police investigators and prosecutors, IT experts and analysts from the Judiciary and the civil society organisations. A report with recommendations will be drawn on the basis of the proposals and ideas for improvement taken forward by the practitioners. The political engagement was ensured by the participation of the Minister of Interior and the Deputy Ministers of Justice and Foreign Affairs at the high-level panel of the discussions.

c) Main perpetrators of antisemitism should be considered predominantly people on the internet spreading antisemitic propaganda, as well as other sporadic marginal manifestations of antisemitism, that include vandalism, as well as the organizers of “Lukovmarch”.

d) There is no specific legislation. The general protection against all forms of discrimination the Protection against Discrimination Act is applicable as described in question 1r).

e) The international human rights law provisions on prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred are incorporated into the Constitution and the general norms of the national legislation.

The main UN human rights conventions related to this topic are applied directly and they have priority over the internal legal norms. Incitement is also punishable according to Penal Code (Article 20-22) when committed intentionally with the punishment provided for the perpetrated crime, with due consideration of the nature and degree of the participation in the crime. Abettors (including inciters) shall be held responsible only for what they have intentionally assisted.

In addition, in the special part “Crimes against the equality of all citizens” of the Penal Code, in chapter “Crimes against the rights of the citizens” incitement for taking part in a crowd rallied to attack groups of the population, individual citizens or their property in connection with their national, ethnic or racial affiliation is considered an aggravating circumstance punishable with higher penalty.

f) The offences in the Penal Code under which the perpetration of antisemitic crime could be investigated and punished are:

- Crimes against the person:

- Art. 116, Par. 1, p. 11 - murder committed by hooligan, racist or xenophobic motives; - Art. 131, Par. 1, p. 12 - bodily injury out of hooligan, racist or xenophobic motives.

- Crimes against the equality of all citizens:

- Art. 162 - propaganda or incitement to discrimination, violence or hatred by speech, press or other media, by electronic system or other manner; use of violence against person or property; forming or leading or being a member of an organization or group with the above purposes;

- Art. 163 - taking part in a crowd rallied to attack groups of population, individuals or property; aggravating circumstances are if some participants are armed or an assault which resulted in severe bodily injury or death has been made or for abettors and leaders.

- Crimes against religious denominations:

- Art. 164 - propaganda or instigation of discrimination, violence or hatred on religious basis and desecrating, destroying or damaging religious temple, house of prayer, sanctuary or adjoined building, their symbols or gravestones;

- Art. 165 - hindering citizens by force or threat from freely practicing their faith or from performing their religious rituals and services, which do not violate the laws, the public order and morality;

- Art. 166 - forming a political organisation on religious basis or using the church or religion for propaganda against the public authority by speech, through the press, by action or in any other way.

- Crimes against the labour rights of the citizens:

- Art. 172, Par. 1 - intentionally impeding another to take a job, or compelling him/her to leave a job because of his/her nationality, race, religion, social origin, membership in a trade union or another type of organization, political party, organisation, movement or coalition with political objective, or because of his/her or of his/her next-of-kin political convictions.

- Genocide and Apartheid:

- Article 419a - justifying, denying or grossly palliating a crime committed against peace and humanity and thereby posing a risk of violence or instigating hatred among individuals or groups of people united on the grounds of race, colour, religion, origin, national or ethnic origin.

In 2018, the Bulgarian government has requested assistance from ODIHR to review the Penal Code, primarily provisions pertaining to anti-discrimination, hate crime and hate speech and their compliance with international commitments and standards. While the opinion finds the penal provisions of biased motivated crimes largely in accordance with the international requirements, it also recommends some of them to be enhanced. Based on the ODIHR’s recommendations, a set of draft amendments to the Penal Code is under consideration.

g) The state provides information to the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) on antisemitic crimes for their annual periodic review of the member states.

h) In recent years, Bulgarian law enforcement and criminal justice authorities have been actively participating in training provided by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) and ODIHR in order to improve their ability to counteract effectively hate crime, including antisemitism.

As part of ODIHR's project Building a Comprehensive Criminal Justice Response to Hate Crime, three pilot training courses in Bulgaria for law enforcement personnel and prosecutors have taken place in the first half of 2018 allowing participants to identify and overcome differences in their respective understandings of hate crimes and in their approaches to processing hate crime cases.

At a workshop organized in June 2018 in Sofia, ODIHR launched a Manual on joint hate crime training for police and prosecutors to address hate crimes. The materials in the manual, based on lessons learned from the three pilot courses, are intended for use in the Bulgarian context. The project also opened the prospect of greater inter-agency co-operation on addressing hate crimes among prosecutors, the Ministry of Interior, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, the Ombudsman's Office and civil society.

There are also many training courses for judiciary authorities organized by the National Institute of Justice and in cooperation with the ODIHR, FRA or other international partners. The Academy of the Ministry of Interior (AMoI) provides human rights trainings in the initial and continuous training of the police forces. The topics cover all aspects of human rights, including study of the European Court on Human Rights /ECHR/ case law. MoI conducts regular short on-the-job trainings for police officers dedicated to the police work in multi-ethnic environment.

i) The law prohibits any publication aimed at incitement to discrimination, hatred, including antisemitism. The Penal Code in Art. 162, par. 1 prohibits in particular propaganda or incitement to discrimination, violence or hatred by speech, press or other media, by electronic system or in other manner.

j) According to the Penal Code preaching of fascist or another anti-democratic ideology is punishable (Article 108). Besides, the Bulgarian authorities participating in the contact group to the National Coordinator on the Fight against Antisemitism are working actively to identify other appropriate measures including legislative ones allowing to adequately addressing the incidents of antisemitic nature such as Nazi merchandise selling or neo-Nazi manifestations (Lukov march). Amendments to the criminal legislation, the meetings, rallies and demonstrations legal framework and the commercial activities regulation are considered carefully observing the balance between the right of peaceful gathering and association and the protection of public safety and security.

k) The Jews are allowed to own property and business and to be employed on public and private jobs according to the general rules applicable to all Bulgarian citizens.

l) Throughout the years, Jewish people have occupied high-level official positions. There were Jewish people members of the Government in 2001-2004, as well as members of the Parliament.

m) The subject is included in the regular mandatory educational curriculum. See question 2q).

n) On 10th March Bulgaria marks the Day of the Rescue of the Bulgarian Jews and of the victims of the Holocaust and of the Crimes against Humanity. The date marks the anniversary of the historical events of March 1943 when a powerful grassroots movement, including protest marches and petitions, staged and supported by the Deputy Speaker and members of parliament, politicians, the leaders of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, intellectuals and ordinary citizens, openly challenged, resisted and finally prevented the pro-Nazi regime's plans for imminent deportation of Bulgarian Jews to death camps. Also in March 1943, under Nazi Germany pressure, 11,343 Jews from the Bulgaria-administered and controlled territories of Aegean Thrace, Vardar Macedonia and southern Serbia were deported and transferred into German custody and sent to certain death. 10 March is an occasion to pay tribute to the

"Righteous Among the Nations" and all those who helped prevent the deportation of Bulgarian Jews and to honour the memory of the deported 11,343 Jews, as well as of all the victims of persecution and the Holocaust during Second World War and subsequent genocides.

Wreath-laying ceremonies are also held at the monument to the "Righteous among the Nations" Dimitar Peshev – a former Deputy Speaker who headed the resistance against the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews, as well as at Holocaust-related monuments, museums and memorial plaques in a number of other Bulgarian cities. For the first time in 1993, and again every year since 2003, the National Assembly (Parliament) holds a special commemorative session with an address by the Speaker and a minute of silence to honour the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. On the occasion of the 60th and 70th anniversary, in 2003 and 2013 respectively, the National Assembly issued special declarations. Memorial services are held occasionally at Christian Orthodox churches and the Central Synagogue in Sofia. The commemorative events often include the display of dedicated exhibitions. In recent years, two important exhibitions - "The Power of Civil Society - Fate of the Jews in Bulgaria 1940-1944", developed jointly by the State Institute of Culture at the Bulgarian MFA and the Center for Jewish Studies at Sofia University, and "The Fragility of Tolerance", created by the Archives State Agency (with a mobile version), have been showcased in Sofia and several other Bulgarian cities. In March 2018, a documentary exhibition "1943: Persecution and Protection. The Fate of the Bulgarian Jews", produced by the Archives State Agency, was the first exposition highlighting the personal stories of the 20 Bulgarian Righteous Among the Nations. It also features the first manifestations of antisemitism predating the adoption of the Protection of the Nation Act, Bulgaria's anti-Jewish legislation effective between 1941 and 1944.

Throughout 2018, a number of commemorative events were held in many Bulgarian cities and towns with mayors and local governments in attendance. Five new monuments and commemorative plaques were installed in the country in 2018 as public-private partnership projects.

In addition on 27 January Bulgaria commemorates the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. In 2018, Vice PM and Foreign Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva hosted the central commemorative event which included opening of the exhibition "Beyond Duty: Diplomats Recognized as Righteous among the Nations", developed by the MFA of Israel and Yad Vashem and translated into Bulgarian. During the event, the US Ambassador announced the 2018 winners of "Thanks to Scandinavia Scholarship Fund" grants which are awarded to Scandinavian and Bulgarian students in recognition of the acts of courage protecting Jews during the WWII. The President of "Shalom" conferred the Shofar award on the Bulgarian Writers' Union for the courageous moral stand taken by their predecessors and active role in preventing the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews. Minister Zaharieva and the MFA leadership were joined by more than 100 Bulgarian diplomats to participate in the WJC's "We Remember" campaign. In 2019, the State Cultural Institute to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, together with the Embassies of Israel and Slovakia in Sofia, organized an event to commemorate the International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the accession of Bulgaria as a full member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The event included the screening of the movie "Niki's Family".

o) High-level representatives of the Government, the Parliament and local authorities participate in the commemorative ceremonies and events. Participating central and local government and other state authorities, issue advance notices of the upcoming commemorative events with detailed information on the content and timing of events which are largely disseminated by media outlets. On the day, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issues a press release on its official website and in social media raising awareness about the Holocaust, the rescue of the Bulgarian Jews and the present day implications of the lessons learned. Throughout the day, government officials talk to media on the significance of the Holocaust Memorial Day, and commemoration activities receive significant media coverage.

The organization of the Jews in Bulgaria "Shalom" is always a co-organizer of the commemorative events, with representatives of the Organization always being present alongside state officials.

p) A national Memorial to the rescue of the Bulgarian Jews by the Bulgarian people during the Holocaust with a sculpture by Momchil Tsvetkov was unveiled on 7 July 2016 by the Presidents of Bulgaria and Israel, in immediate proximity to the Parliament's building. In 2001, a house museum and monument to the "Righteous among the Nations" Dimitar Peshev – a former Deputy Speaker of Parliament who headed the resistance against the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews, were established in Kyustendil. In 2008, a memorial to the deported Jews from Aegian Thrace, Vardar Macedonia and Pirot was placed in the port of Lom on the Danube River at the site of their deportation to Nazi Germany.

q) Recently, Bulgaria has embarked on an important educational reform by adopting the Pre-School and School Education Act, which entered into force in August 2016. According to the Act, pre-school and school education shall pursue the objectives of acquiring of competences for understanding and applying the principles of democracy and the rule of law, human rights and freedoms, and active and responsible civic participation; as well as forming tolerance to and respect for the ethnic, national, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of every citizen. Thus, human rights education forms an explicit part of the education curricula, and is introduced into different subjects in all forms of schools and at all levels.

The new law puts forward a series of changes to the educational system. Several state educational standards were adopted, and new curricula for general subjects are being developed with a view to gradually entering into force until 2020. The curricula define the core objectives and expected results from the instruction in terms of students' competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and establish guidelines for their attainment.

As part of civic education, the teaching of the Holocaust is further regulated by a state education standard, which represents a set of mandatory requirements for the results of education, as well as for the conditions and processes of their attainment. The state education standard for civic education is defined in an Ordinance of the Minister of Education and Science issued on 21 September 2016. The mandatory framework requirements for the results of civic education include mastering of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for, inter alia, identifying different forms of racism as well as successful practices for their overcoming; understanding the importance of democratic values and democratic institutions for the formation of civilian national identity; appreciating the importance of equality and tolerance in public life and evaluating phenomena in the public life in Bulgaria, Europe and the world in terms of the concepts of pluralism and tolerance.

Under these reforms, the Holocaust education is integrated into the national mandatory education curriculum. The Holocaust is taught within the context of Bulgarian and world history during the Second World War at the lower (grade VII) and upper (grade IX and grade X) secondary level, Teachers of other subjects, such as philosophy and literature, also include lessons on the Holocaust as an elective subject or extracurricular activities. The new history textbooks for grade VII (Bulgarian history) and grade IX (European and world history) published in 2018 have introduced important changes in both the volume and the content of the Holocaust teaching in secondary schools. The Holocaust has grown to a sustainable theme (with some of the textbooks featuring more than 10 pages of Holocaust-related material).

Definitions of the Holocaust, racism, antisemitism, and genocide have been specifically set out. In addition, these have been further clarified in the course of the outline of historical events. The curriculum is designed so that students have opportunity to learn about Holocaust issues not only from the contents of the textbook but also from additional creative assignments, from independent projects and from additional sources.

r)

s) As a rule, all university BA and MA programmes in European and Bulgarian history of the interwar and WWII years include the topic of the Holocaust. In Sofia University, Holocaust studies are also

embedded in a BA programme in Jewish Studies established in 2015. One of the programme's three core modules (on history, sociology, political sciences and religious studies) includes a mandatory course on "Antisemitism and the Holocaust" and an elective course on "The Bulgarian Jewish Community and the Holocaust". Currently, 30 students are enrolled. A mandatory course on "Bulgaria and the Holocaust" is included in an MA programme "Modern Bulgaria" within the History Faculty. The curriculum of Public Administration at BA level includes a course on "Ethnic Aspects of Governance" with special focus on the Jewish community in the context of human rights; a course on "Politics and Public Power" with the Holocaust included intensively as a philosophical and empirical basis, and an English language course on "Administration and Politics of the Jewish Question in Bulgaria and the Balkans: History and Modern Aspects" (with about 30 students enrolled each year). The curriculum of Public Administration at MA level includes a section on the anti-Jewish repressive policies of the government and the prevention of deportations from Bulgaria within the "Leadership" compulsory course (repeated in 3 MA programmes with 20 students each). The Centre for Jewish Studies (CJS), established in 1998 at Sofia University as an interdisciplinary team of scholars from various backgrounds has become the leading academic centre for Jewish Studies, including Holocaust-related research and educational activities. The CJS has organized several teacher-training seminars and activities on the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, involving educators, university professors, secondary school teachers, educational experts from the Ministry of Education and students. The centre has developed different academic courses, included in the university curriculum.

t) Bulgaria has no specific law applicable to Holocaust denial. However, provisions governing denial conduct have been introduced in April 2011 with a new Article 419a in the Criminal Code which aims to bring the national law in conformity with the provisions of the EU Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 to combat, by means of criminal law, certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia. The new article reads:

Article 419a (New, SG No. 33/2011, effective 27.05.2011) (1) Anyone who justifies, denies or grossly palliates a crime committed against peace and humanity and thereby poses a risk of violence or instigates hatred among individuals or groups of people united on the grounds of race, colour, religion, origin, national or ethnic origin shall be punishable by imprisonment from one to five years. (2) Anyone who abet another person to commit a crime under Paragraph 1 shall be punishable by imprisonment of up to one year.

The article does not expressly refer to the Holocaust or to the crimes defined in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court but according to our legal experts, the Holocaust denial is subsumed under these provisions.

u) The immunity of MPs, including criminal impunity while in office, is regulated in the Constitution. There are also ethical norms for the Members of the Parliament behavior in performing their functions, in the Rules of Organisation and Procedure of the National Assembly.

v) In 1998, the specialized Cyber Crime Division of the MoI Directorate General on Combating Organised Crime was set up, which deals *inter alia* with preaching or instigating discrimination, violence or hatred based on race, nationality or ethnicity. Its officials interact with government organizations, private companies, NGOs and citizens to timely counteract offenses using high-tech means and techniques. Since February 2007, within the framework of the Cyber Crime Division, the National Contact Point has been functioning 24/7. It was set up under the Budapest Council of Europe Convention against Cybercrime. Its primary objective is to make timely and direct contact with police and other law-enforcement officers directly involved in the fight against cybercrime all around the world. The Division has set up and maintains the Internet crime website www.cybercrime.bg. Through the website signaling forms it is possible to report computer crimes and other threats on the Internet. Up-to-date news and ways to protect against cyber-threats can be found on facebook.com/bgcybercrime.

w)

x) See question 2b).

y) No exclusion of Jews whatsoever.

z) In December 2017, Bulgaria's President elect Roumen Radev came to the Hanukkah Celebration at the Central Synagogue in Sofia to continue the tradition of his predecessor in lighting the candles for Hanukkah. High-ranking government officials, including three deputy foreign ministers, MPs, the head of the Bulgarian delegation to IHRA, attended a Hanukkah celebration hosted by the Israeli Ambassador. See also question 4f).

3. Antisemitic Incidents

a) In the last several years, there were a few incidents of political figures depicting alleged antisemitic actions. A deputy minister resigned and others publicly apologized. One leader of a political party was investigated for using hate speech and preaching discrimination against certain groups of society such as Roma, Turks, and Jews. The case is referred by the claimants to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (ECHR) and is expecting a decision.

b) No

c) According to the Radio and Television Act, media service providers shall undertake to abide by the standards of the Ethical Code of the Bulgarian Media, developed by the National Council for Journalistic Ethics Foundation, and by the National Ethical Rules for Advertising and Commercial Communication, developed by the National Council for Self-Regulation Association. The Ethical Code of the Bulgarian Media was signed on November 25, 2004 by more than fifty representatives of about 200 print and electronic media. The Code proclaims that no material shall be published or broadcasted that instigates or promotes hatred, violence and all forms of discrimination.

d) Perhaps the most high-profile issue of all in Bulgaria is the "Lukov March". First held in Sofia in 2003, it honours a pro-Nazi Bulgarian general who led the fascist Union of Bulgarian National Legions. The scale of the march has grown over the years, attracting supporters not only from within Bulgaria but also neo-Nazi groups from elsewhere in Europe. Supporters of the march routinely make the disingenuous claim that they are honouring a national military hero. The sub-text of the march, in which participants are careful not to display Nazi insignia that would put them in breach of the law is, however, clear. Further, the practices of the march - the dark clothing, the torchlight procession, the act itself of marching, underline what lies behind the tribute to Lukov. In the past two years, the march drew widespread condemnation, in the strongest possible terms, not only from Bulgarian and international Jewish groups, but also from the government, the largest parties in Bulgaria's Parliament from the ruling majority and the opposition, Sofia mayor, and civil society. The government and Sofia Municipality engaged with the Bulgarian Jewish community and civil society organizations in a series of active efforts to curb the procession, supported by the WJC and other international Jewish organizations. While the calls for the march to be suspended did not stop the event, they limited its scope and challenged the assertion of the organizers and supporters of the march that Lukov was a national patriotic hero and not a pro-Nazi antisemite. The government has pledged to address the legislative gaps and elaborate an appropriate legal framework to prevent such acts of incitement in the future.

e) See question 2b).

- f) See question 2b). The general statistics include information about the penalties imposed on perpetrators.
- g) No, the state does not collect such information. See question 2b).
- h) There is a Jewish community security group. The community also works with a private company providing the security of community sites. During major events, the community works with the police and they complement the security and provide additional security. On certain occasions the municipalities deem necessary to send police patrols in front of certain community buildings. There is also a formalized relationship between the Ministry of Interior and the Jewish community in Bulgaria. The Minister of Interior has appointed the head of “Security Police” department at the General Directorate “National Police” as a liaison officer of the Ministry with the Jewish community.
- i) A few cases in the last years could be indicated as antisemitic desecration targeting Jewish cultural and religious sites.

In August 2017, a monument erected in northern Bulgarian town of Vidin by Israelis from the town was defaced, daubed with the words “Allah”, “Palestine”, “Hamas” and the star and crescent moon symbol. The Thanksgiving Monument was put up in 2003 by Jews as an expression of gratitude to the Vidin community for acting to prevent the deportation of Bulgarian Jews from the town to the Nazi Holocaust death camps. The vandalism case was reported to the Shalom Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria, which in turn approached Sofia municipality.

A month later, in September 2017, a number of Jewish graves in Sofia Central Cemetery were vandalized. Bulgarian Foreign Ministry condemned the vandalism of gravestones in the Jewish section of Central Sofia Cemetery. The Foreign Ministry said that desecration of religious memorial signs was an act of vandalism, which was a violation of human principles and virtues, as well as the most treasured merits of the Bulgarian spirit.

In 2019, in the city of Stara Zagora, unknown perpetrators painted black swastikas on the memorial plaques of the Jewish Cemetery in the city. The deed was done in the eve of April 20th and was most probably related to the 130th anniversary of the birth of Adolf Hitler.

Also in 2019, there was a case, in which the window of the synagogue in Sofia was broken. The perpetrator was identified, a preliminary investigation was initiated.

- j) See question 2b).
- k) There is a special unit in the Government with such responsibilities –Directorate of Religions Denominations to the Council of Ministers. The law regulating the matter is the above-mentioned Religious Denominations Act.
- l) The Public Libraries Act and the Community Centers Act are regulating the activities of the libraries and community cultural centers. As mentioned, there is a general prohibition in the Penal Code of propaganda or incitement to discrimination, violence or hatred by speech, press or other media, by electronic system or in other manner.

4. Information on States to promote tolerance and understanding including public-private initiatives

a) Bulgarian legislation provides protection and conditions to promote competition and free economic initiative, including the media market. Several authorities monitor the situation on the market. The Commission for Protection of Competition is empowered to enforce the law. The Council of Electronic Media supervises the activities of media service providers (radio and television) and the compliance with the Radio and Television Act. In the performance of its duties, CEM is guided by the interests of the society to protect freedom and pluralism of speech and information. CEM guarantees the right of information for the citizens and creates favorable conditions for the diversity of the media environment and preservation of the national identity.

b) Being part of the EU, Bulgaria applies all policy related documents and guidelines. The international commitments undertaken by Bulgaria are implemented through the adoption of individual measures and initiatives included in the national action plans for the respective thematic dossiers.

c) The Ministry of Interior in cooperation with the State Agency for National Security, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Education and Science are the competent authorities for the development of measures to prevent and counter radicalization among young people.

d) No

e) Bulgaria is pursuing a consistent policy aimed at preventing and eliminating any forms of discrimination and creating understanding and tolerance among persons belonging to different ethnic, religious or linguistic groups of the population. The forming of positive attitudes towards citizens belonging to any ethnic group, and addressing any prejudices in this regard, is generally practiced in Bulgarian society. In this context, important measures have been taken to encourage the promotion of tolerance and cultural pluralism. The Bulgarian authorities consistently combat stereotypes and prejudices, if and when such are manifested against persons belonging to any ethnic, religious, linguistic or sexual minority groups. Good cooperation between the Government, local authorities and NGOs is another important mechanism of addressing the problem. An example of such cooperation was the appointment of the Ombudsman as a National preventive mechanism. During its first Presidency of the Council of the EU, Bulgaria has put a specific priority on the fundamental rights policy such as enhancing the ethnic and religious tolerance, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion and belief and combating antisemitism. The main Presidency event dedicated to Antisemitism took place in Sofia in May 2018 in cooperation with Yad Vashem, FRA, Council of Europe and ODIHR with the participation of all MS and candidate countries and the European Commission Coordinator on Antisemitism. The aim was to raise awareness and share good practices among policy makers and law-enforcement authorities to effectively counteract antisemitic incidents and hate speech.

The Bulgarian EU Presidency initiatives were taken forward by the succeeding Presidencies of Austria and Romania and led to the adoption and ongoing implementation of the Council Declaration against antisemitism from December 2018.

f) Building on the momentum created by the “Sofia Says NO to Hate Speech and Extremism” International Forum (February 2018), a public campaign “Sofia – City of Tolerance and Wisdom” under the auspices of Sofia Mayor started on 11 September 2018 with the launching of a Manifesto “Together Against Hate Speech”, signed initially by Sofia mayor, the national coordinator on combating antisemitism and the president of the Shalom Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria. The manifesto committing the signatories to combat intolerance and hate speech and to support a vision of a Bulgaria that embraces all, irrespective of ethnic, religious or other identity. was opened for signatures by high-profile personalities and the wider community. In early 2019, a number of prominent figures and people from various walks of life posted videos on Facebook publicly stating support for the manifesto. At a ceremony in the Cabinet building on 16 February 2019, entitled “Together for Bulgaria. Together for

Europe”, Bulgarian intellectuals, civil society leaders, senior government officials, municipal leaders and diplomats were among those who gathered to show support for the manifesto. At the close of the ceremony, participants queued to add their signatures to the manifesto. A first-ever march of tolerance and unity "Together for Bulgaria, together for Europe" drawing more than 1,500 people from across Bulgarian society onto the streets of Sofia took place on 10 March 2019, the 76th anniversary of the rescue of the Jews in Bulgaria proper from being murdered in the Holocaust. The march was initiated by WJC President Ronald S. Lauder, who traveled to Sofia to take part, and was organized in cooperation with its affiliate, the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria Shalom and the Sofia municipality in response to the neo-Nazi Lukov March that takes place each February despite strong government opposition. The public campaign is intended as a long-term project to unite institutions and civic organisations in opposition to hate speech and discrimination building upon a number of initiatives, events and educational activities. The campaign included the initiative “Let’s Clean Hatred off the Streets of Sofia” to clean swastikas and other offensive graffiti off walls in the Bulgarian capital.

g) See questions 4h).

h) In 2008, a Council for Inter-religious dialogue was created. Among the founders of the council are the representatives of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the Muslim denomination, the Catholic Church, the United Evangelical Churches in Bulgaria, the Armenian Church and the Israelite Spiritual Council. One of the main priorities of the Council is to develop inter-religious dialogue as a means of building partnership and isolating aggression and fundamentalism.

For the second time in April 2019 the Foreign Minister Zaharieva hosted a Passover dinner (the first one was held in April 2018) gathering representatives of the Bulgarian Jewish community, leaders of other religious communities, leaders of the Jewish communities in the Balkan countries, guests from the Parliament, Government, WJC, civil society and the diplomatic corps in Sofia and thus turning the initiative into a traditional event. The gathering of four Balkan Jewish communities is seen as a symbolic step toward building bridges and exposing the truth about the darkest period in European history.

In addition the Minister of Foreign Affairs also hosts an Iftar dinner for members of diplomatic corps and all representatives of the religious denominations in Bulgaria. The dinner on the occasion of Ramadan promotes dialogue and tolerance between different religions in Bulgaria.

For a sixth consecutive year, the President of Bulgaria hosts an Iftar dinner on the occasion of the beginning of the holy for the Muslims month of Ramadan. For several years now (since 2014), the head of the Bulgarian state traditionally invites at the beginning of the month of Ramadan representatives of all official religious denomination in Bulgaria for an Iftar dinner.

i) See question 3c).

j) N/A

k) See question 2v).

l) The Religious Denominations Act provides that religious institutions within the system of pre-school and school education shall be funded from the state budget via the Ministry of Education and Science, whereby the amount of funds allocated shall be determined by a decree of execution of the state budget. Religious institutions within the system of pre-school and school education, as well as higher schools of religious learning, can be funded by the registered religious denomination on whose behalf they operate. Such funding shall be provided for support of tuition activities, for pupils’ allowances and student scholarships, for covering the costs of placement of pupils in boarding schools, as well as for maintenance of the physical environment of such institutions. Through its budget, the Ministry of Education and Science may also fund educational programs approved by itself, which can be pursued by religious denominations in an extracurricular environment.

m) Excellent cooperation is established between the government, different human rights institutions and the Jewish community in Bulgaria, including through the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government, the World Jewish Congress and the Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria “Shalom”, signed in November 2018. Many of the mutual activities between the Government and the Jewish community are listed above. In 2016-2017, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) had implemented a project “Preventing Discrimination and Creating Equal Opportunities” under the EU Human Resources Development Operational Programme. The project was part of the CPD activities to prevent existing forms of discrimination, as well as of its efforts to identify emerging forms of discrimination in cooperation with the local authorities and civil society. The overall goals of the project were to increase the capacity of CPD and its regional divisions, and to step up the effects of its activities in the field of prevention, identification and avoidance of discrimination against groups and communities at risk and to raise the credibility of the Commission. One of the outcomes of the project was elaborating a methodology and a toolkit for the prevention and avoidance of discrimination for groups at risk. As an additional part of the methodology, CPD has drawn up an appendix representing a sample action plan: “Action Plan under the Methodology and Toolkit for the Prevention, Identification and Avoidance of Discrimination to Address the Target Groups and Communities of the Study, Taking into Account the Specific Features of their Profiles, their Particular Characteristics and the Risks Identified in respect of them by a Nationally Representative Sociological Survey”.