BOND

Online Antisemitic Narratives
Italy Country Report

Building Tolerance,
Understanding and
Dialogue across
Communities

Key findings

- The aim of the research was to analyse online antisemitic narratives perpetrated in the past two years, 2023 and 2024, with a focus on the October 7 Hamas attack and how much this has affected antisemitic narratives.

- Our dataset contained 7053 pieces of content, extracted from SentiOne based on the keywords provided to it.

- Most of the content was user comments (84,2%) on Facebook, followed by online articles (13,4%) and social posts (2,4%).

- The amount of data analysed has increased almost sevenfold from 2023 to 2024, showing the impact of 7 October and the subsequent war.

- About 37% of the analysed content contained either antisemitic or potentially antisemitic narratives, i.e. narratives that can be interpreted as both antisemitic and not antisemitic.

- Most antisemitic and potentially antisemitic content appeared in the comments section of the online versions of mainstream media in both 2023 and 2024.

- The most common narrative category in the Italian data was New antisemitism, followed by Conspirational, Classic stereotypes, Holocaust denial and distortion and, finally, Traditional religion-based antisemitism.

- In 2024, not only did the total number of comments in the dataset increase significantly, but the proportion of antisemitic narratives to the total content analyzed also increased.

- From 2023 to 2024, the percentage distribution of narrative categories changed. Compared to 2023, the percentage of traditional religion-based antisemitic narratives out of the total remained almost unchanged, while the percentages of anti-Semitism related to classical stereotypes (about -1.87%) and conspiratorial antisemitism (about +0.9%) changed slightly.

- Significant percentage changes, on the other hand, should be noted for the categories New antisemitism (+14.7% compared to 2023) and Holocaust denial and distortion (more than doubled from <1% in 2023).

- Hate speech and call for violence are highly present in 2024 in Italy's dataset (hate speech: 11.3 percent of the total, call for violence: 6.2 percent), compared with a negligible percentage in 2023.

- The results of the analysis show that news stories related to Israel, in particular the conflicts in the Middle East, are the main trigger of online antisemitism in Italy.

- Antisemitic narratives of a conspiratorial nature were particularly present in user comments on statements made by top authorities in the Western alliance (heads of European governments, UN secretary general, US president...).

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Introduction

The research aimed to analyse changes in online antisemitic narratives following 7 October 2023—Hamas's terror attack on Israel and the subsequent war. These events led to a rise in antisemitism across Europe, making it necessary to examine how online antisemitic narratives had evolved. The development of the research methodology and categories were completed in late 2023 and early 2024, and the research began in the spring of 2024.

Recognising and defining antisemitism in relation to Israel, i.e. distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate criticism of Israel, has become particularly challenging since 7 October. Our research is based on the working definition of antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA)[1], which is accepted by 43 countries and several international organisations including the EU and most of its member states.

The research was conducted simultaneously in four countries—Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Romania—using the same methodology. It focused on textual content, including articles, comments, and Facebook posts. The content was collected using social listening software from the websites and Facebook pages of the most relevant national media outlets across five media categories: independent (mainstream) media, biased/hyper-partisan media, mainstream tabloids, left-wing sites, far-right pages, and fake news/conspiratorial sites. The scraping process was guided by keywords designed to detect antisemitic content. Four core keywords—Jew, Israel, Holocaust, and Zionism/Zionist—were used in all countries in their respective local languages. Additionally, country-specific keywords were included. In languages where these words could have different endings, their base forms were followed by an asterisk (*), enabling the collection of results for all variations and endings.

The research focused on the period from 1–15 April in both 2023 and 2024, with nearly 7,000 pieces of content analysed in each country. All content was examined by the national research teams and classified as either antisemitic, potentially antisemitic (content that could be interpreted as both antisemitic and not antisemitic), not understandable, or not antisemitic.

Drawing on publicly available resources—such as studies, research reports, and scientific articles—five main categories of antisemitic narratives were defined: classic antisemitic stereotypes, conspiratorial antisemitism, traditional religion-based antisemitism, Holocaust denial and distortion, and new antisemitism (antisemitism based on the criticism of Israel). In addition to these, two supplementary categories were established: hate speech and calls for violence against Jews. Each antisemitic or potentially antisemitic content was thoroughly analysed and assigned to one or more of these categories.

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[1] IHRA working definition of antisemitism: https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism

1. The extent of antisemitic content in the national dataset

1.1 The extent of antisemitic content in the dataset

Antisemitic and potentially antisemitic content was present in 36% of the Italian dataset. Out of a total of 7053 pieces of content, 1994 were labelled as antisemitic, 581 as potentially antisemitic, 3785 as not antisemitic, and 693 as not understandable.

Figure 1:
Proportion of antisemitic content in the full dataset

- Not antisemitic
- Antisemitic
- Not understandable
- Potentially antisemitic
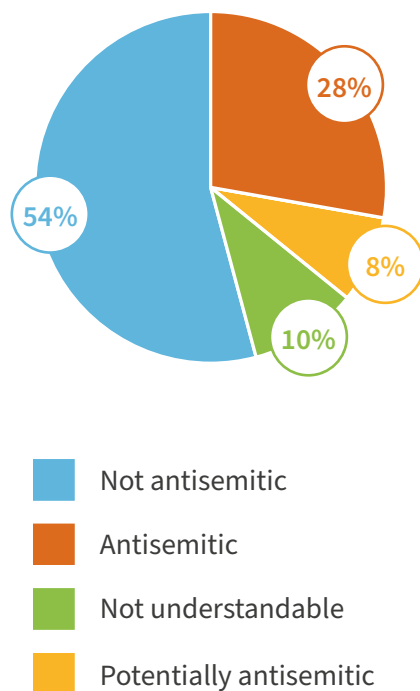
1.2 Distribution of the content examined

The vast majority of the downloaded content were comments, and most antisemitic content appeared in them. antisemitic content appeared in comments. About 68.4% of the downloaded content was comments (5939), about 13.5% were articles (954), and only about 2.4% were Facebook posts (169). Antisemitic narratives appeared predominantly in comments, of which over 32.7% (1947) were antisemitic, 9% (546) were potentially antisemitic, 46.6% (2768) were not antisemitic, and about 11.4% (678) were not understandable. Regarding articles, 90.6% (865) were not antisemitic, 4% (38) were antisemitic, 3% (29) were potentially antisemitic and 1.4% (13) were not understandable. Nearly all posts were not antisemitic, with only 5.3% (9) categorised as antisemitic, 3.5% (6) as potentially antisemitic and 1.2% (2) as not understandable.

Figure 2:
Distribution of the different types of content examined in the full dataset

- Not antisemitic
- Antisemitic
- Not understandable
- Potentially antisemitic
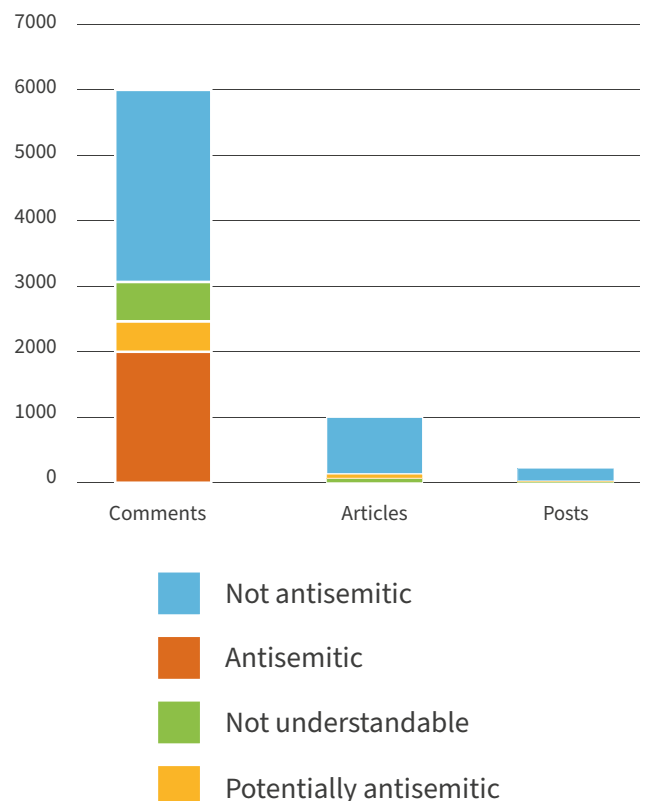
1.3 Antisemitism in the different types of media

With more data in 2024, both the number and proportion of antisemitic content increased in most media categories, except for left-wing and fake news/conspiratorial sites, where the proportion of antisemitic content decreased by 2024.

Antisemitic content (including both antisemitic and potentially antisemitic) was most prevalent on independent media sites, both proportionally (37.4%) in terms of quantity (2,126 pieces), particularly in comments. This was followed by left-wing sites (35.5%), fake news/conspiratorial sites (35%), mainstream tabloids, and biased/hyper-partisan sites.

However, when considering the amount of antisemitic content, significant differences emerged: mainstream tabloids (221 pieces) contained the largest amount, followed by biased/hyper-partisan sites (94 pieces), and left-wing sites (71 pieces) and fake news/conspiratorial sites (56 pieces) had fewer. In far-right pages, antisemitic content was lower both proportionally (17.9%) and quantitatively (7 pieces).

Figure 3: Presence of antisemitic content within the different media categories
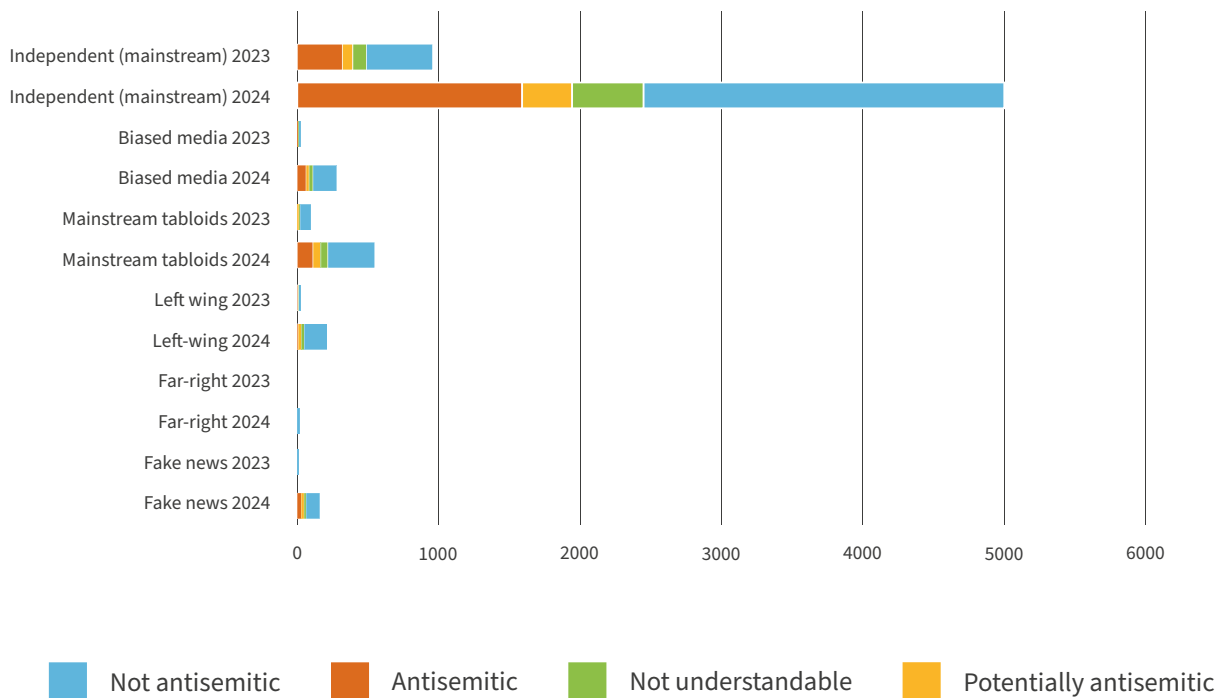
2. Overview and extent of the different types of antisemitic content

2.1 Content with antisemitic narratives

The conceptual framework of the research identified the following five main antisemitic narratives. Within each of these main narratives, sub-narratives were also defined.

- **Classic stereotypes**: Narratives historically rooted in antisemitic prejudice. These encompass hatred of Jews based on their existence as human beings, not simply as adherents of the Jewish religion. It does so through contradictory logic that sees Jews as both overly powerful and weak or even subhuman. Classic stereotypes include for example that Jews are evil, greedy, disloyal or liars.[2]

- **Traditional, religion-based antisemitism (anti-Judaism)**: Traditional religion-based Judeophobia, or traditional antisemitism, refers to anti-Jewish sentiments rooted in beliefs associated with either the perceived Christian or Jewish religion and traditions. Traditional, religion-based antisemitic narratives include for example blood libel/child murder, deicide or Jews are Satanic.[3]

- **Conspiratorial antisemitism**: Conspiracy theories have perpetuated antisemitic beliefs by suggesting that Jews wield undue influence for personal gain and conspire to dominate spheres such as the media, politics, and the economy. Many of these theories are rooted in the antisemitic myth of the "hidden hand," and blame Jews, or actors perceived to be Jewish, for the world's worst tragedies, such as instigating wars or even causing COVID-19. Conspiratorial antisemitic narratives include for example Jewish power/control, Judeo-Communism, Great Replacement Theory[4] or New World Order Theory[5].[6]

- **Holocaust denial and distortion**: Holocaust denial or distortion seeks to deny or misrepresent the historical facts of the Nazi genocide of the Jewish people. Holocaust denial includes denying the scale or methods used by the Nazis and their allies during the Holocaust. Holocaust denial and distortion promote the false idea that Jews invented or exaggerated the Holocaust and they profited from it. Holocaust denial and distortion narratives include for example blaming Jews for the Holocaust or depicting the Holocaust as a positive event.[7]

- **New antisemitism**: New antisemitism refers to the expression of anti-Jewish sentiment directed at Israel. A key function of new antisemitism is to enable the expression of antisemitic views in a way that appears politically acceptable. We define new antisemitism using Natan Sharansky's 3D test: demonisation, double standards and delegitimisation. New antisemitism includes for example Nazi/Apartheid/Colonialism Analogy, claiming that Israel is a terrorist state or that Israeli bears influence on media.[8]

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[2] Matthias J. Becker et al., „Antisemitic Comments on Facebook Pages of Leading British, French, and German Media Outlets", Humanities & Social Sciences Communications 9, 2022 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9520959/#Fn3; Matthias J. Becker et al., „Decoding Antisemitism „ Palgrave Macmillan, 2024, p. 11, 13; ADL Antisemitic Myths. https://antisemitism.adl.org/

[3] Ildikó Barna et al., „Survey of Antisemitic Prejudices in the Visegrád Countries - Research Report", Tom Lantos Institute, 2022, p. 13. https://tomlantosinstitute.hu/files/en-205-sapvc-20220420-done-rc-online-new.pdf

[4] The Great Replacement Theory is a conspiracy theory rooted in the belief that the white race is under threat of extinction at the hands of Jews and other minorities. This theory also known as white replacement theory or white genocide theory, claims there is an intentional effort, led by Jews, to promote mass non-white immigration, inter-racial marriage, and other efforts that would lead to the "extinction of whites." https://www.ajc.org/translatehate/great-replacement

[5] The New World Order theory is a conspiracy theory claiming that a small group of powerful individuals working in secret to establish all-powerful control. The conspiracy theory behind the New World Order involving Jewish leaders is based on the idea that Jews have formed a power structure in which they control every aspect of humankind — the economy, media, and political landscape. https://www.ajc.org/translatehate/New-World-Order

[6] Ildikó Barna et al., „Survey of Antisemitic Prejudices in the Visegrád Countries - Research Report", Tom Lantos Institute, 2022, pp. 13-14. https://tomlantosinstitute.hu/files/en-205-sapvc-20220420-done-rc-online-new.pdf

[7] IHRA Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion (2013). https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-holocaust-denial-distortion

[8] ADL Antisemitic Myths: Anti-zionism https://antisemitism.adl.org/anti-zionism/

The most prevalent narrative category in the Italian data was new antisemitism, appearing in 26.4% (1861 pieces) of the examined content. This was followed by conspiratorial antisemitic content, present in 7.4% (521 pieces) of the data. Classical stereotypes were third with 2% (138 pieces), while Holocaust denial and distortion was present in 0.8% (58 pieces) and traditional religion-based appeared in 0.5% (38 pieces) of the examined content.

Figure 4:
Proportion of antisemitic narrative categories in the full dataset
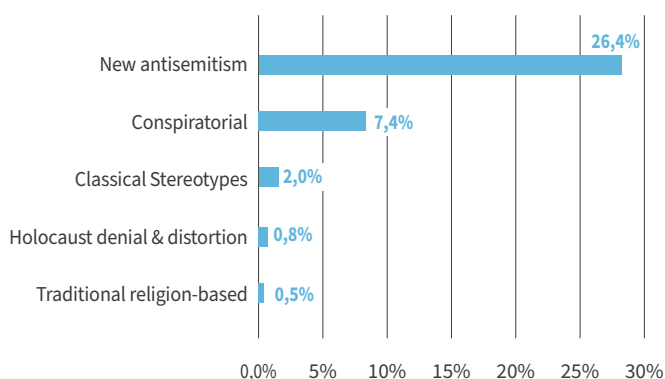
The amount of data had increased nearly sevenfold, and so did the content in all narrative categories both quantitatively and proportionally. The biggest rise was in new antisemitism which proportionally increased from being present in 20% of the data from 2023 to 27.3% in the data from 2024. The presence of conspiratorial antisemitism and Holocaust denial and distortion also increased, while classic stereotypes and traditional, religion-based antisemitism remained more or less the same.

Figure 5:
Proportion of antisemitic narrative categories in the dataset for 2023 and 2024 (separately)
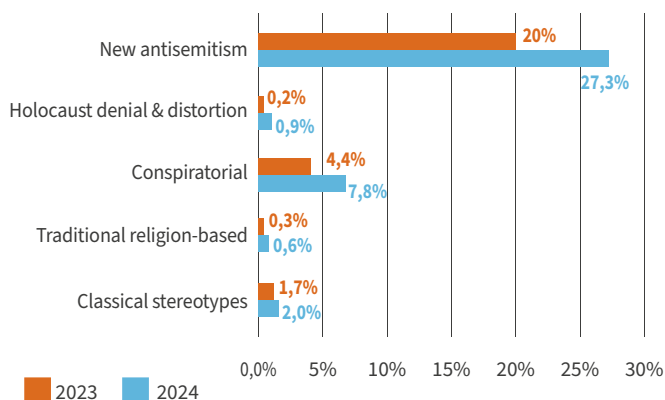
2.2 Antisemitic content beyond narratives

Besides narratives, two other types of antisemitic content were examined by the research: hate speech and calls for violence.

- **Hate speech:** Hateful content aimed against Jews and/or based on antisemitic narratives.

- **Call for violence:** Content that incites violence of any kind against Jews.

Hate speech was relatively common in the Italian dataset, appearing in 4.6% (324 pieces) of content. Content calling for violence against Jews was also relatively common, appearing in around 2.5% (175 pieces) of the data.

Figure 6:
Proportion of antisemitic categories beyond narratives in the full dataset
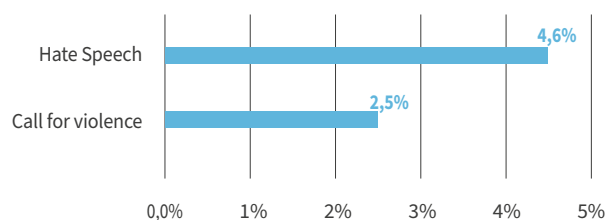
Both categories increased significantly in 2024: hate speech was present in 0.6% of the data from 2023 and 5.2% in 2024, and calls for violence in 0.1% of the data in 2023 and 2.8% in 2024.

Figure 7:
Proportion of antisemitic categories beyond narratives in the dataset for 2023 and 2024 (separately)
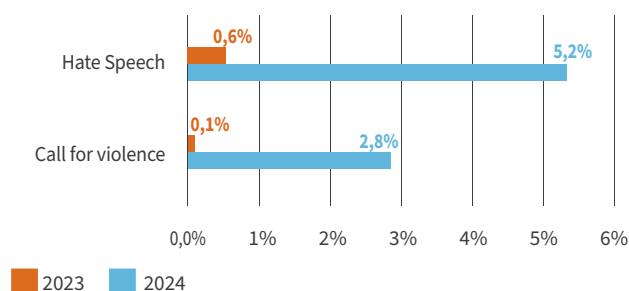
3. Types of antisemitic content in the data examined

3.1 Content of antisemitic narratives

3.1.1 New antisemitism

The category of "New Antisemitism" is the one in which the largest number of comments in our country's dataset fall.

ISRAEL IS A TERRORIST STATE

This sub-category has at least five different versions, including:

1. Israel is committing genocide in Gaza.

2. Israel is like Hamas (if not worse).

3. Hamas is a creation of Israel in anti-PLO function.

4. Israel is an infanticidal regime.

5. Israel deliberately targets health facilities, schools, hospitals and civilians in general.

NAZI ANALOGY

This sub-category has four main versions:

1. Israel is carrying out a new Holocaust against the Palestinians, repeating what Nazism had done with the Jews.

2. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is regarded as being on a par with Adolf Hitler.

3. Gaza has been turned into an open-air concentration camp.

4. Zionism is described as a Nazi ideology.

DELEGITIMATION

This sub-category has three versions:

1. Israel is seen as an artificial state, lacking historical or cultural legitimacy, and therefore should not exist.

2. Zionism is described as a "biblical psycho-pathology" aimed at total control of the "Land of Israel," i.e., the territory that, according to tradition, God promised to Abraham and his descendants.

3. The inhabitants of Israel are called upon to return illicitly acquired land to its rightful Palestinian owners.

DEMONISATION

This sub-category has two main versions:

1. The Israeli government is portrayed as demonic, perfidious and sadistic toward its enemies and the Palestinian people.

2. Israel is a rogue state that constantly threatens war in the Middle East.

These narratives aim to demonize the Israeli state and its government, painting them as inherently cruel entities, suggesting in some cases that they take devilish pleasure in striking civilian targets. In the second version of the subcategory, Israel is accused of provoking third-party states to cause an escalation of the Middle East conflict on an international scale in order to put pressure on its backers.

DOUBLE STANDARD

This sub-category has two versions:

1. Israel is considered a state that does not comply with the norms of international law.

2. Israel enjoys preferential treatment compared to other countries. Israel's crimes are not legally prosecuted or sanctioned, as is the case with Russia.

The two versions of the "Double standard" sub-category denounce the existence of a double standard in international treatment between Israel and other states, such as Russia (which, in the imaginations of users critical of Israel, can be compared to it in terms of its crimes) in relation to violations of human rights and international law. The democratic qualification of Israel is, therefore, questioned.

COLONIALISM AND APARTHEID ANALOGY

This sub-category, similar to the previous two, also has two versions:

1. Israel is accused of colonizing Palestinian territory and the West Bank, with the aim of restoring the "land of its ancestors promised by God," perpetuating a form of colonization.

2. Israel, through its control of various territories, allegedly established a racist regime in which Israelis enjoy civil rights and freedoms, while Palestinians are segregated in limited territories and under the control of the Israeli army.

These narratives compare Israeli policies to colonization and apartheid, accusing Israel of racial discrimination and oppression against Palestinians.

OTHER NARRATIVES

Israel is often accused of exercising widespread control over the media, deciding which news to disseminate and which to censor in order to manipulate public opinion and pursue propaganda purposes. Some believe that through the dissemination of distorted information, Israel constructs a narrative favorable to itself, nurturing a positive view among the international community, while omitting or distorting more inconvenient truths. There are also those who argue that Israel buys the silence of journalists, paying them to avoid publishing critical articles, thus creating a narrative that is always favorable to the Israeli government.

Israel and its supporters are also accused of not accepting any kind of criticism and of using the label of "antisemitism" as a means of deterrence.

In the context of the conflict between Israel and Hamas, some deny or downplay the October 7th attack by the terrorist organization, claiming that the event never happened or that it was a maneuver orchestrated by Israel to gain international support, or to create an excuse to justify a premeditated ethnic cleansing operation in Gaza. According to this view, Israel would also be guilty of spreading false news about the atrocities committed by Hamas, or amplifying true news in order to gain global sympathy. For others, the October 7th attack is not considered an act of terrorism, but rather an act of resistance, the result of years of Israeli occupation and oppression.

There are also those who argue that Jews, Israelis, and Zionists are collectively responsible for Israel's actions, accusing them of being complicit in Israeli policies, particularly for having democratically elected Benjamin Netanyahu, for supporting his leadership, and for not opposing in any way the massacre of Palestinian civilians.

Finally, Israel is accused of being the main cause of the conflict with Hamas and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The occupation of Palestine, deemed illegal, is considered the beginning of a chain reaction that has led to an escalation of the conflict. Israel is held responsible for perpetuating a cycle of violence that keeps the region in a permanent state of war.

Comparison 2023/2024: In 2024, compared to the same period the previous year, the incidence of all the sub-categories under the category "New Antisemitism" grew exponentially (Israel is a terrorist state +706,7%, Nazi analogy +1010%, Delegitimation +251,7%, etc...), primarily due to the October 7th Hamas attack in 2023 and the subsequent Israeli military response, which acted as multipliers of antisemitism.

Figure 8: Sub-narratives of the antisemitic narrative category: New antisemitism
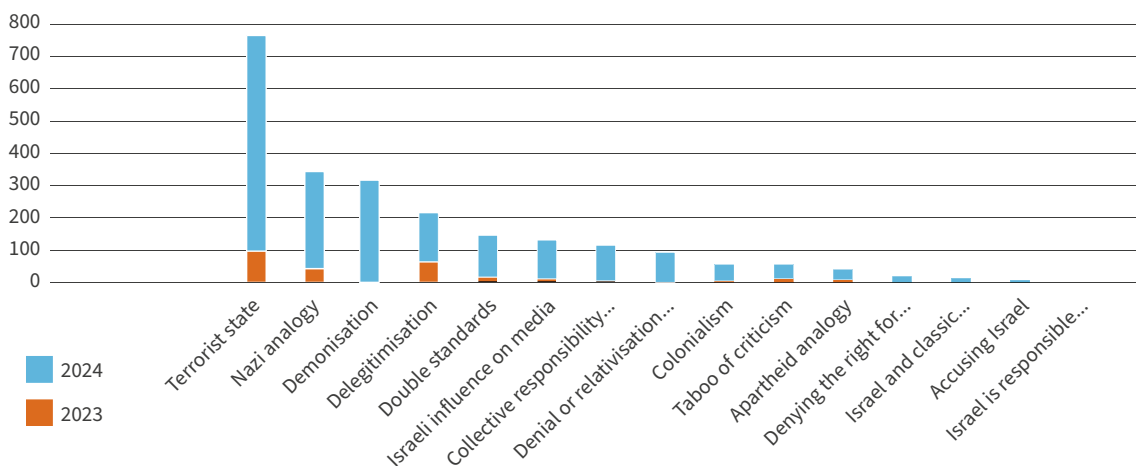
3.1.2 Conspirational

JEWISH CONTROL/POWER

The sub-category "Jewish control/power" presents three versions:

1. Israel benefits from the support and protection of Western countries, particularly the United States, influencing their policies and gaining advantages.

2. Israel enjoys international impunity and does not face sanctions for its actions.

3. Israel exerts control over EU member states and has the power to influence their governments, causing them to fall if they do not align with its interests.

In the "Conspirational" category, the sub-category "Jewish control/power" deserves the most attention, as the other sub-categories do not reach a significant number of comments to provide a comprehensive view useful for drawing meaningful conclusions. Power narratives related to Israel show a significant presence of the United States in the comments, with the idea of a shadowy Israel-USA axis being deeply ingrained in the narratives. The idea of power is more frequently associated with Israel and Zionism than with Jews in general. Many comments reverse the hierarchy of international sources, asserting that Israel de facto exerts more power than organizations like the UN, NATO, and the European Union.

ZELENSKY

Only one comment was catalogued in the sub-category "Zelensky," which supports the idea that the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, benefits from the protection exercised by the so-called "Jewish lobby".

COVID-19

This narrative has several versions, among others very different from each other.

1. Deaths due to the side effects of vaccines are compared to Jews killed by the Nazis. The vaccine is thus a new Holocaust.

2. Jews have been profiting from COVID-19.

3. The Italian minister of health during the pandemic, Roberto Speranza, is a servant of the Rotschilds, in whose London academy he trained, and therefore serves their interests.

SOROS

This narrative is evoked in just two comments, which identify Hungarian Jewish banker George Soros as the top of the pyramid of Jewish financial power.

PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION

Only one commentary was labeled in this way. In this commentary, the "Protocols of the Saviors of Zion" are referred to in a derogatory manner (the "Saviors" are called "Noses" - more information at 3.2 Code Words Used for Jews, Examples). In a conspiratorial mood, it is asserted that this document is evidence of a secret Jewish plot to dominate the world and that anyone who denies its historical validity, e.g., Umberto Eco in his novel "The Prague Cemetery," is in bad faith.

NEW WORLD ORDER THEORY

The accusation that Jews have a covert agenda of world control is present in that form in antisemitic narratives in every country, so it does not have a country-specific connotation.

OTHER

Several sub-narratives, also different from each other, have been assigned to this narrative, which could not fall under other narratives in the category of conspiratorial antisemitism.

1. The American Jewish lobby planned the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center so that the U.S. government would have a free hand in Iraq, whose oil fields were an attraction for Jewish-Americans.

2. Israel agreed with Iran on the latter's missile attack, so that it would be harmless to Israel on the one hand, and silence partisan demands by the Iranian people to be vindicated on the other.

3. The Mossad was aware of Hamas' plans to cross the barrier between Israel and the Gaza Strip and carry out a massacre, but did not intervene to give its government an alibi to bomb the Strip persistently.

Comparison 2023/2024: From 2023 to 2024, narratives associated with the idea of Jewish control and power saw a percentage increase of 1235,9%. The news that catalyzed conspiratorial antisemitism in 2024 were primarily the Israeli attack on the Iranian consulate in Syria, where seven officers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps were killed, along with five Iran-backed militants, one member of Hezbollah, one advisor, and two Iranian civilians. Another triggering factor was the lack of condemnation of the attack by European leaders, particularly Giorgia Meloni, the current Italian Prime Minister, and António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General. Finally, the hypocrisy — always presumed by users — of U.S. President Joe Biden in urging Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu to show moderation further fueled these narratives.

Figure 9: Sub-narratives of the antisemitic narrative category Conspiratorial antisemitism
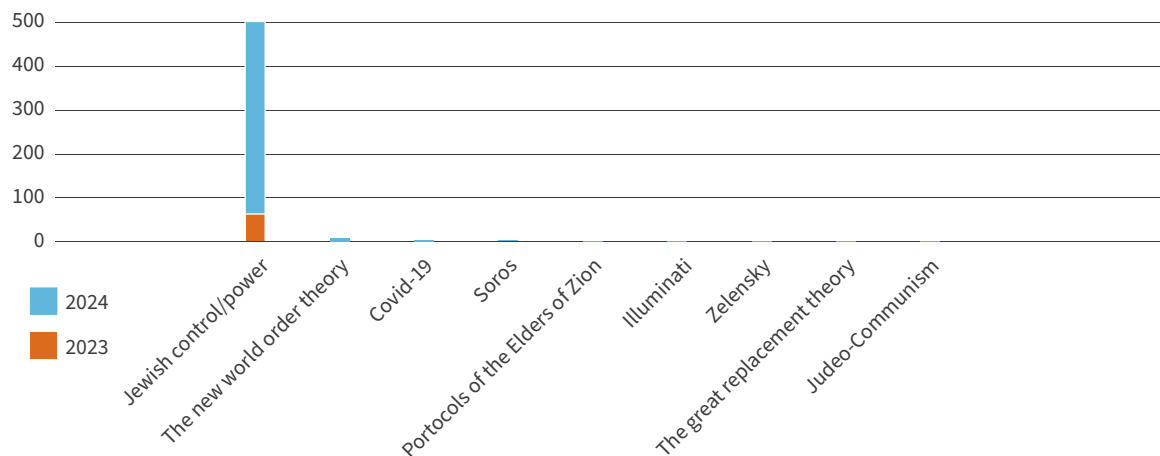
3.1.3 Classic stereotypes

EVIL

The sub-category "Evil" aims to describe Jews as evil, particularly through the tone of the comments. Terms like "Zionist" or the adjective "radical" associated with "Jew" take on a threatening charge in the context in which they are invoked. Users tend to make sweeping generalizations, generating a sense of fear towards Jews among those reading the comments.

DECEIT AND LIE

In our country, the sub-category "Deceit and Lie" is used in a targeted manner, almost always in isolated narratives that do not blend with other types of discourse. In these narratives, as in other categories, Israelis are often targeted more than Jews themselves. It is often questioned everything that is claimed by those defending Israel, as, according to a widespread view, "Zionists/Israelis/Jews lie." While one could reasonably suspect that such comments intend to limit their attack to the Israeli government alone, it is equally undeniable that stating that Zionists are inherently false or that "lying is part of their DNA" is a clear derivation of the stereotype that Jews are naturally skilled deceivers. For this reason, such narratives are included in this sub-category.

GREED AND WEALTH

The sub-category "Greed/Wealth" in our country is associated with "Hate Speech" or "Call for violence" in about a quarter of the cases. Frequently, it refers to some of the wealthiest Jewish families (e.g., the Rothschilds and Rockefellers) as negative models of "speculative finance." Wealth, in these antisemitic comments, is automatically associated with malice and dishonesty. Less frequent, but still present, are references to the stereotype of Jews as usurers, bankers, and merchants, portraying them as individuals driven solely by the greed for profit.

Comparison 2023/2024: In 2024, the number of antisemitic comments related to the "Classic Stereotypes" category significantly increased compared to the previous year. Again, as with the other categories, the events of October 7th and their consequences played a key role in increasing antisemitic comments from users. However, available news does not provide a clear specific trigger for this type of antisemitism. The narratives have remained largely unchanged, with a growing tendency in 2024 to focus more on Israelis rather than Jews in general. It can be said that traditional antisemitic stereotypes have been directed with greater intensity towards Israelis and Zionists.

Figure 10: Sub-narratives of the antisemitic narrative category: Classic antisemitic stereotypes

3.1.4 Holocaust denial and distortion

BLAMING JEWS

The analysis conducted in our country shows a small but significant number of comments accusing either Zionists or the Ashkenazi Rothschild family of financing Adolf Hitler and his plan to exterminate the Jewish people in exchange for a Jewish state in Palestinian land.

NAZI ANALOGY

Although the sub-category "Nazi Analogy" has a significantly higher incidence within the category of "New Antisemitism," it is also one of the most prevalent in the category of Holocaust denial and distortion. In these narratives, Jews are compared to Nazis because, while the former consider themselves the chosen people, the latter considered themselves a superior race. In some cases, it is even claimed that Jews are the natural heirs of Nazi culture. Such discourse not only minimizes the suffering of the Jewish people but also contributes to fostering a climate of hate and intolerance.

HOLOCAUST AS A POSITIVE EVENT

This sub-category presents three main versions:

1. Hitler was right to consider Jews a problem to get rid of.

2. Concentration camps were "works of art."

3. The Holocaust should be repeated.

It is no surprise that such narratives are frequently placed in the context of "Hate speech" or "Call for violence," given the inherent violence of such extreme content.
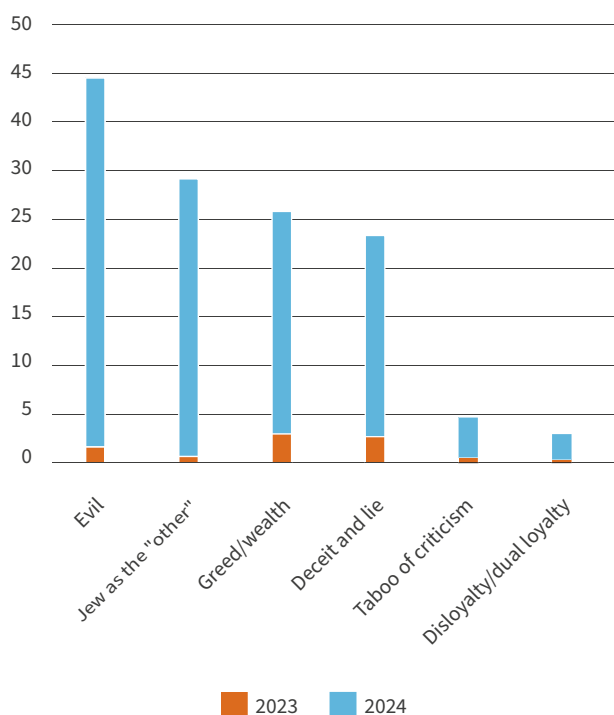
DENYING OR DISTORTING THE HOLOCAUST IN ANY WAY

During the monitoring phase in our country, no Holocaust denial comments were detected under the category "Denying or distorting the Holocaust in any way."

However, two alternative versions emerged within this sub-category that deserve analysis:

1. The memory of the Holocaust is being used instrumentally by some members of the Jewish community to justify the violent actions of the State of Israel.

2. We need to stop "crying" about an event that happened more than eighty years ago. Comments in this sub-category tend to insist on the perception that Israel is adopting the victim rhetoric, which seems inappropriate given the temporal distance from the Holocaust.

3. Additionally, there is a confusion between past and present, where the Holocaust is reduced to an event that no longer needs to be remembered because it is no longer relevant, blending the suffering of the Jewish people with the current policies of the State of Israel. In other words, not only is the historical memory of the Holocaust denied, but the Jewish figure in the historical context of the Holocaust is being conflated with the State of Israel, creating a short circuit that undermines the distinction between the two and risks distorting the understanding of historical and political facts.

Comparison 2023/2024: In 2023, narratives that could be classified under "Holocaust denial and distortion" were practically absent in our country. One year later, a significant change was observed in the dataset of analyzed comments. In 2024, there was a noticeable spread of such narratives, largely fueled by news related to ongoing conflicts, including the war between Israel and Hamas and the escalation of tensions with Iran.

Figure 11:
Sub-narratives of the antisemitic narrative category: Holocaust denial and distortion

Legend: 2023 | 2024

3.1.5 Traditional, religion-based antisemitism

Excluding the "Hate speech" and "Call for violence" categories, the category "Traditional religion-based antisemitism" is the least present in the dataset of comments analyzed in our country. Due to the scarcity of comments available, we decided to conduct a single analysis that includes all the narratives in this category. In these narratives, Jews, and more often Zionists, are accused of being Satan worshipers. They are also blamed for the killing of Jesus Christ, and practicing Jews are ridiculed for their religious rituals. Sometimes the criticism is ambiguously directed at Israel, described as a state that rejects and discriminates against anyone who professes a different religion. The most radical part of the Jewish community is accused of justifying Israel's military actions through religion, described as a necessary evil carried out in the name of a "holy war against the infidels." Finally, the myth of the "promised land" and the concept of the "chosen people" are frequently ridiculed, even using emoticons and colorful expressions, further reinforcing a narrative of contempt and derision toward Jewish faith and culture.

Comparison 2023/2024: The category "Traditional religion-based antisemitism," like all the others, has seen a spike in antisemitic comments in recent times. Some sub-categories, such as "Other," "Jew as Satan/Devil," and "Blood libel/Child murder," which were completely absent in 2023, have appeared in 2024, indicating a worrying increase in narratives associating Jews with Satanism and sacrificial rites.

Antisemitism, in this context, was primarily fueled by news with a religious backdrop. These included the pilgrimage to Mecca by the Italian singer Ghali, which had already caused controversy due to his comments during the Sanremo music festival; the broadcast of the Via Crucis by Radio Maria, which was blocked by Facebook for "nude images"; the closure of a footwear factory in Padova during Ramadan; and finally, the Molotov cocktail attack on a synagogue in northern Germany.
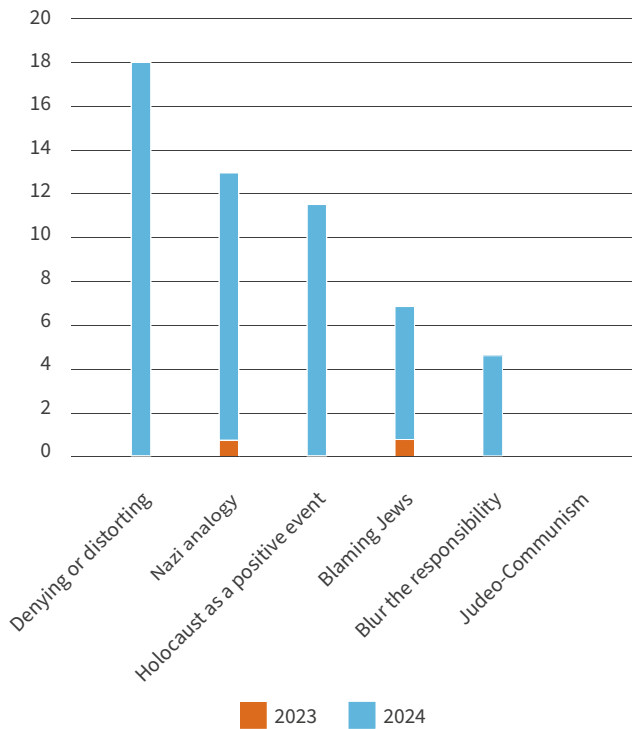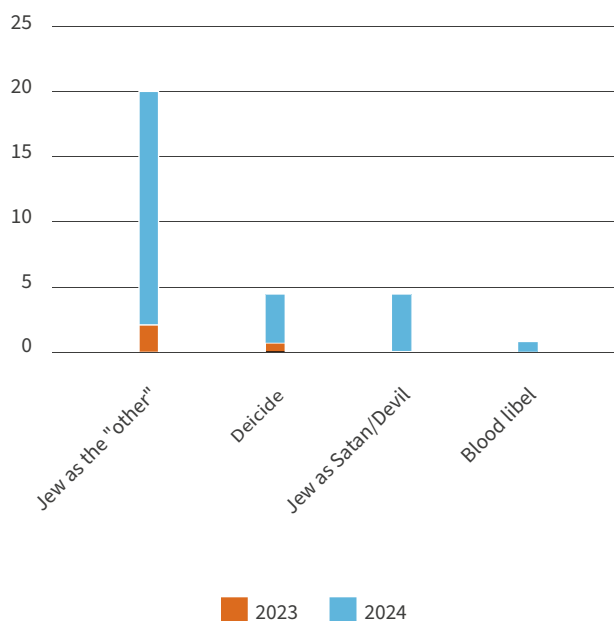
3.2 Antisemitic content beyond narratives

3.2.1 Antisemitic hate speech

The analysis conducted showed that the hate speech detected was predominantly focused on Israel rather than the Jewish community in general. This phenomenon was almost always related to updates on the various war fronts in which Israel is engaged (Iran, Lebanon, Gaza, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, West Bank). The media category in which antisemitic hate speech appeared the most is the hate speech-call for violence combination. Next, the media category "New antisemitism," with the "Israel is a terrorist state" sub-category predominating, is quite a lot in our country's monitoring file. The most recurrent accusations against Israel were that it commits war crimes and benefits from favorable treatment by the international community.

The analysis also showed that the social platform Facebook was the main platform for the spread of this type of hate speech, compared to the websites of the monitored media outlets. As for hate speech directly aimed at Jews, this was often in the form of gratuitous and pithy slurs, devoid of further narrative or subtext. Such disparaging expressions were characterized by foul and offensive language.

3.2.2 Antisemitic violence

Analysis of content classified as "call for violence" revealed a similar pattern to that found in hate speech. The statistics on the media categories most prevalent under the label "call for violence" replicate what we have already seen for antisemitic hate-speech in the paragraph above. "New antisemitism" is the media category most found in phrases encouraging violence against Jews. Predominantly, threats and incitements to violence were directed at the State of Israel, rather than the Jewish community as a whole.

News about conflicts in the Middle East and Israeli military interventions acted as catalysts for this type of speech, generating a climate of tension and fueling feelings of hatred. Users who posted these comments often incited Arab countries to take violent action against Israel, going so far as to call for its destruction.

Importantly, although rare, cases of generalization of hatred were also found, with attacks directed at the Jewish community as a whole. However, as mentioned above, most of the comments had Israel as their primary target.

A recurring narrative in the comments categorized as a "call for violence" was one that portrayed Israel as a criminal state, treated favorably by the UN, NATO and supranational bodies, and deserving instead of severe punishment. This narrative, accompanied by violent and offensive language, contributed to a climate of polarization and intolerance around Israel and, indirectly, around its inhabitants and supporters.

User comments emerge as the main channel of dissemination of such content, clearly distinguished from posts and articles, which rarely feature antisemitic narratives.

3.3 Code words used for Jews, examples

In Italy, as in many other parts of the world, the use of terms to describe Jews has often been exploited to spread prejudice and discrimination. In our country there are no specific and local linguistic codes as there are in other countries where antisemitism is more entrenched[1], so the terms used to refer to Jews more or less allusively are the same as those used in any other corner of the world.

Terms used:

- **Sionista (Zionist)**: Originally related to the political movement that led to the creation of the State of Israel, this term is often used derogatorily to refer to all Jews, regardless of their political views.

- **Giudeo (Jew)**: Derived from the biblical name Judah, this term has acquired a negative connotation over time, often associated with antisemitic stereotypes.

- **Nasoni (Noses)/Usurai (Usurers)**: These terms, based on centuries-old stereotypes, are used to denigrate Jews, associating them with physical traits (the nose) and alleged economic activities (usury).

- **Kippato**: Neologism derived from the Yiddish term for kippah, the Jewish headdress. It is used in a derogatory sense to identify Jews in a stereotypical way.

Narrowing the field to Israel, however, a location found in some comments is "banana republic," a journalistic term originally used to describe small Latin American states considered politically unstable and economically dependent. It has been used derogatorily to refer to Israel, with the intent of discrediting its legitimacy and democratic nature. In this case, the term is not a Jewish-specific language code, but is used in an antisemitic context to associate Israel with negative stereotypes and spread prejudice.

3.4 Topics provoking antisemitism

In 2024, there was a significant increase in hateful and contemptuous comments towards Israel and Jews, closely linked to the Hamas terrorist attack on October 7th. This attack triggered a series of events, including Israel's military response and the escalation of the conflict. Although antisemitic comments increased, it is important to contextualize this data. In fact, what grew significantly after October 7th was the number of articles about Israel in Italian newspapers, suggesting that antisemitism did not increase directly but that pre-existing sentiments found an "easy" target in Israel. The intensification of the debate about Israel gave voice to pre-existing grievances, not only related to Israeli politics but also to broader prejudices.

In 2023, before the incursions of Palestinian militias across the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, the main news stories were the Israeli police raid on the Al-Aqsa mosque in April, the missile launches from Gaza and Lebanon, and the subsequent Israeli bombings on Hamas, as well as the terrorist attack in Tel Aviv that resulted in the death of an Italian tourist and the wounding of five other people.

In 2024, the news that most triggered antisemitic reactions included the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza, the death of World Central Kitchen humanitarian workers during an Israeli raid, the bombing of the Iranian consulate in Damascus, the preventive closure of Israeli diplomatic missions after the announced Iranian retaliation, Iran's missile attack on Israel, Israel's use of artificial intelligence systems to identify Hamas militants, and the banning of Al Jazeera.

Although most of the antisemitic comments were directed at Israel and Zionism, these news stories also fueled antisemitic reactions targeting the entire Jewish community. Traditional antisemitism blended with political narratives, signaling that there is still confusion among users regarding the various figures that populate the Jewish imagination (Jews, Israel, Israeli government, Zionists). This phenomenon is concerning, especially due to the widespread dissemination of such comments through social media.

4. Conclusion

During the monitoring period, a rather alarming picture emerged regarding the spread of antisemitic narratives on social media and other online platforms in Italy. The most widespread narratives are attributed to the so-called "new antisemitism," which is intolerance and hatred directed at Zionism and the State of Israel.

Specific characteristics of our country

Italy displays peculiar characteristics in the expression of antisemitism online. The presence of hate speech and incitement to violence remains the most troubling aspect of such a multifaceted phenomenon as antisemitism. However, the majority of users have directed disdainful, stereotypical, or hateful comments towards Israel, rather than towards Jews, masking antisemitic intentions under the socially accepted guise of anti-Zionism.

Most affected media

Social platforms, particularly Facebook, appear to be the primary channels where antisemitic narratives proliferate. Analyzing content on traditional media, however, revealed that the press and online news sites are often involved, but more indirectly, as access channels for user comments.

Countering online antisemitism

To effectively counter online antisemitism, it would be essential to adopt a strategy targeted at multiple fronts:

- **Education and Awareness:** Promote a culture of respect and historical knowledge of the Holocaust and the roots of antisemitism to reduce the spread of prejudice, fake news, and conspiracy theories about Jews, Israel, and Zionism.

- **Active Monitoring and Moderation:** Strengthen the presence of moderators on social media and improve algorithms to identify and remove hate content.

- **Collaboration between Institutions and Platforms:** Local and international institutions must work together with digital platforms to ensure a timely and effective response against antisemitic content.

In conclusion, the fight against online antisemitism requires collective commitment that unites the government, media, and citizens. Improving historical understanding and promoting a more inclusive dialogue are key steps in reducing the influence of these dangerous narratives.

5. Methodology

The research aimed to examine antisemitic narratives in online textual content - such as comments, articles and Facebook posts - before and after 7 October 2023. We analysed content from websites and Facebook pages of previously defined media outlets. The content was collected using social listening software based on pre-defined keywords, covering the same period in both 2023 and 2024. The research was conducted in four countries (Hungary, Italy, Poland and Romania) by national research teams coordinated by Political Capital, using the same methodology.

Definition of antisemitism

The basis of the research was the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism: *"Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."* A detailed explanation of the definition, along with illustrative examples, is available on the IHRA website[9].

5.1 Data collection

In our research, we analysed online textual content: articles, posts and comments from websites and Facebook pages. The data was collected using social listening software, SentiOne. SentiOne scrapes data in a given timeframe, from the given media sources based on the given keywords.

5.1.1 Keywords

We defined four keywords that we used to identify potentially relevant content in all countries: 1) Jews, 2) Israel, 3) Holocaust, 4) Zionism/Zionist. In addition, we included specific keywords relevant to each country. In Italy, these were: *Rabbin*, *Talmudist*. In languages where these words could have different endings, we used the base form of the keywords followed by an asterisk (*). This approach allowed SentiOne to identify results for all variations and endings of the keywords.

5.1.2 Sources monitored

With input from the national research teams, Political Capital identified six categories of online media to monitor content from: 1) independent (mainstream) media, 2) mainstream tabloids, 3) (hyper-)partisan/biased media, 4) right-wing/far-right sites, 5) fake news/conspiratorial sites, 5) left-wing/far-left sites. We collected pages for each category in all countries, including media outlets' websites and Facebook pages. In all countries, we selected the three media outlets per category with the most results for our keywords in the same time period. In Romania, we monitored the following media outlets' websites and Facebook pages:

- **Independent (mainstream) media**: Corriere della Sera; Il Fatto Quotidiano, Ansa

- **/Mainstream tabloids**: Il Messaggero: Include mainstream media that are widespread and reliable, ensuring quality information through rigorous verification of sources. In the analysis of our country, two online newspapers, which also come out on newsstands, and one news agency were included. Editorials are balanced and non-partisan, avoiding partisan stances.

- **Far-right pages**: Il Primato Nazionale; L'Italia Mensile; Il Missino. Include online media that promote sovereignist, traditionalist, anti-European, and anti-globalist ideologies. The two online newspapers analyzed in Italy show affinities with neo-fascism, sometimes recalling Mussolini's fascist government. These media have been criticized for spreading fake news and polarizing public debate.

- **Fake news/conspirational pages**: Luogocomune; La Cruna dell'Ago; Maurizio Blondet blog. Include online media that spread false or misleading news, presenting it as revelations. Two online newspapers monitored in our country offer themselves as an alternative to traditional media, which have been accused of manipulation. They spread conspiracy theories and narratives without scientific foundation, presenting themselves as the only reliable source.

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[9] IHRA working definition of antisemitism: https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism

- **(Hyper-)Partisan/biased media**:__Osservatorio internazionale per i diritti; Il Tempo; La Verità. Include online, originally print media with a strong ideological alignment and a partially partisan approach. They are inspired by liberal conservatism, with conservative positions on social and cultural issues, and liberalist ones on economics. In our case, they approach the national center-right and share its values and priorities.

- **Left-wing/far-left pages**: Potere al Popolo; Contro Piano; L'antidiplomatico. They include communist- and Marxist-inspired newspapers critical of modern capitalism and modern imperialism. In our context, they refer to two online magazines and a political blog that criticize the EU and globalization. They support Palestinian resistance and denounce Israel as an "apartheid state."

5.1.3 Monitoring period

Based on our previous experiences in coding textual content into previously defined categories and the resources available to the project, we set a goal of analysing 7,000 pieces of content per country. Because we wanted to examine changes in antisemitic narratives after 7 October 2023, we chose the same time period in both 2023 and 2024.This was determined by identifying the country with the least data for our keywords and calculating how many days were needed, starting from a chosen date (in this case, 1 April), for the downloaded data in that country to exceed 7,000 pieces of content. As a result, data collection in all countries was standardised to the same timeframe: April 1 and April 15, 13:00.

5.1.4 The amount of data analysed

We filtered each dataset to include more than 7,000 pieces of content, maintaining the original proportions of keywords, sources (websites and Facebook pages), and years within the dataset. This approach resulted in the following proportions of the total downloaded dataset being analysed in each country: Romania - 100%, Hungary - 73%, Italy - 44%, and Poland - 35%.

In all countries the amount of data collected in 2024 was higher than in 2023. The smallest increase was in Hungary, where the data increased by about one and a half times in 2024. In Romania the data increased by almost three times, in Poland by almost five times and in Italy by almost seven times. In all countries most of the data consisted of comments.

The amount of data also varied between countries by media category:

- Hungary: The majority of data came from far-right pages, followed by mainstream media, biased outlets, tabloids, and minimal data from conspiratorial and left-wing sources.

- Italy: Most data came from mainstream media, followed by tabloids, biased outlets, left-wing and conspiratorial sources, with very little data from far-right pages.

- Poland: Most data came from tabloids, followed by biased outlets, mainstream media, far-right pages, conspiratorial sites and very little from left-wing sources.

- Romania: Most of the data came from mainstream media, followed by conspiratorial sites, tabloids, far-right sources, biased outlets and a small amount of data from left-wing sources.

		Examined content in media categories							Total amount of data
		Mainstream	**Far-right**	**Conspiratorial**	**Biased**	**Tabloid**	**Left**	**Total amount of data/year**	
Hungary	**2023**	671	1300	38	626	130	22	2787	
	2024	1410	1949	49	646	86	81	4221	7008
Italy	**2023**	704	1	9	19	142	15	890	
	2024	4987	38	151	284	518	185	6163	7053
Poland	**2023**	310	137	51	63	674	1	1236	
	2024	601	224	253	1041	3697	2	5818	7054
Romania	**2023**	809	191	469	85	293	0	1847	
	2024	3332	361	959	127	385	1	5165	7012

5.2 Coding the data

5.2.1 Conceptual framework

Using publicly available resources, such as studies, research reports, scientific articles, etc., Political Capital developed a conceptual framework to define the theoretical background of the research. In addition to stating that the research was based on the IHRA's working definition of antisemitism, the document thoroughly presented the main categories of antisemitic narratives and sub-narratives on which the research was based. All partners had the opportunity to discuss, comment on, and add to the content of the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework was also discussed with members of the BOND project's Advisory Board and external experts.

5.2.2 Finalising the methodology and creating a methodology guide

Finalising the research methodology involved multiple discussions - including consultations with an expert member of the BOND Advisory Board and several attempts to analyse and code online texts in different ways. From these efforts, the final categories for coding the data were established. Four classifications were defined for the nature of content:

1. Antisemitic – Content that contained at least one antisemitic narrative.

2. Potentially antisemitic – Content that included a narrative that could be either interpreted as both antisemitic and non-antisemitic, or it appeared antisemitic only in light of the context (the article/post it was responding to).

3. Not understandable – Content that was incomprehensible (this category was almost only applicable to comments).

4. Not antisemitic – Content that did not include any antisemitic narratives.

Based on the conceptual framework, five main categories of antisemitic narratives were identified, each containing sub-categories:

- Classic antisemitic stereotypes,

- Traditional, religion-based antisemitism (anti-Judaism),

- Conspiratorial antisemitism,

- Holocaust denial and distortion,

- New antisemitism (antisemitism based on criticism of Israel).

Two additional categories were defined: "hate speech" and "call for violence".

The coding process was described in detail in a methodology guide.

As part of the coding process, coders were required to document the antisemitic phrases identified in the content. For comments, they also had to record the context - specifically, the subject of the article or post under which the comment was written.

5.2.3 Training of the coders

After sharing the conceptual framework and the methodology guide with the national research teams, Political Capital organised a meeting to explain and discuss these documents and the process and to provide space for questions. Throughout the research process, the research teams met regularly to discuss issues and questions that arose during the research process.

To ensure a common understanding of the theoretical framework and to increase the reliability of the research - within the constraints of resources and team capacities - the research process included a learning phase. During this phase, 350 pieces of content were filtered from the dataset while maintaining the original proportions of results by keyword, media category, and year. A slight overrepresentation of results for the keyword "Israel" was included, based

on the assumption that identifying new antisemitism would be the greatest challenge. In each country, two members of the national research teams coded these data independently. Their results were then compared and discrepancies were discussed to reach an agreement. In cases where agreement could not be reached, they were given the opportunity to consult with Political Capital for further clarification.

5.2.4 The coding process

Coding the data followed the same procedure across all countries. The national teams received their content in an Excel file, which included all relevant properties (e.g., comment/article/post, date of publishing, source, context, etc.). During the coding process, coders read the content itself and, for comments, also examined the context.

If antisemitic narratives were identified in the content, coders labelled it as either antisemitic or potentially antisemitic, defined the antisemitic narrative, and categorised it into a main antisemitic narrative category along with one of its sub-categories. A single piece of content could be categorised into multiple (maximum four) narrative categories, as it was possible for more than one antisemitic narrative to appear within the same text. If the content did not contain any antisemitic narratives, or if its meaning was not understandable, it was not assigned to any category.

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Introduction to the BOND project

The BOND (Building tOlerance, uNderstanding, and Dialogue across communities) project10 was implemented from January 2023 to December 2024 in Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Romania. Its primary goal was to address deep-rooted prejudices, hateful attitudes, and behaviors within society, particularly those targeting European Jewry. The project also aimed to foster understanding, tolerance, and dialogue. A significant focus was placed on educating young people about Judaism and antisemitism, as well as promoting intercultural and inter-religious dialogue. Its activities included researching antisemitism, monitoring antisemitic narratives, developing educational curricula, training teachers, organising youth education and exchange programs, facilitating inter-faith and inter-community dialogue, and hosting local roundtables on tolerance and social inclusion. The project was guided by the definition of antisemitism established by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). 11

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10 Webpage of the BOND project: https://www.bond-project.eu/
11 IHRA working definition of antisemitism: https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism

Project Facts

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01/2023 to 01/2025

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