



International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism Federal Council REPORT in response to postulate 19.3942, Rechsteiner, 21 June 2019

Recommendations of the report approved by the federal Council

- The Federal Council recognises the value and practical relevance of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism, which can provide guidance in identifying and documenting antisemitic incidents in practice.
- Alongside the antisemitism definition of the Service for Combating Racism (SCRA), set out in Appendix 2, the non-legally binding working definition may also serve as a basis for more specific definitions to be used for particular situations and purposes. Any definitions formulated should be specific and adapted to the context, and appropriate provisos made where necessary.
- Bearing in mind that all definitions need to be contextualised, the Federal Council recommends that all stakeholders, including state and non-state actors, consider the IHRA working definition in the light of current debate surrounding the definition.
- It would be unusual for the Swiss authorities to explicitly endorse a non-legally binding text that has been accepted internationally and such a step is not envisaged by the legislature.

Summary of the report

The Federal Council is publishing this report in response to postulate 19.3942 'IHRA working definition of antisemitism' dated 21 June 2019 from Council of States member Paul Rechsteiner, which called for a report on the IHRA working definition of antisemitism to assess the usefulness of the definition for awareness-raising, advisory, prevention and research purposes and as potential guidance for the courts. The Federal Council recommended then the adoption of the postulate, also noting that the report provides an opportunity to review policy to combat antisemitism in Switzerland and to recommend further measures that may be needed.

The Federal Council report summarises the findings from two studies: a legal analysis of the IHRA working definition and an assessment of measures to combat antisemitism at federal, cantonal and communal level.

The first part of the report explains the background to the working definition, its acceptance by international organisations and other countries, and the ways in which it is used. The report also breaks down the working definition into its constituent elements in order to explore its content, eliminate ambiguities, and identify gaps. In conclusion, the Federal Council recognises the value and practical relevance of the IHRA non-legally binding working definition, which can provide guidance in identifying antisemitic incidents. It notes, in particular, that the working definition may serve as a basis for more specific definitions to be used for particular situations and purposes, albeit with provisos to ensure that freedom of expression is protected. The Federal Council stresses, however, that it would be unusual for the Swiss authorities to explicitly endorse a non-legally binding international text and such a step is not envisaged by the legislature.

The second part of the report assesses and acknowledges the wide-ranging and substantive measures used to combat antisemitism at national and international level. Specifically, it assesses the extent of antisemitism and the level of acceptance and threat posed to Jewish communities in Switzerland, provides a selective, but representative, overview of measures at federal, cantonal and communal level, and concludes with a series of recommendations for more comprehensive and coherent efforts to combat racism and antisemitism in Switzerland.

Better coordination at federal, cantonal and communal level, for example, could clarify roles, tasks and

responsibilities in combating racism and antisemitism, lead to greater sharing of information, and promote joint strategic planning. The Service for Combating Racism (SCRA) and the Federal Commission against Racism (FCR) are responsible for implementing these proposals at federal level within the scope of the powers conferred on them. As part of their coordination responsibilities, they will help to enhance the exploitation of synergies across Switzerland and facilitate the development of a nationwide strategy to combat racism and antisemitism.

Links: [Federal Council adopts report on working definition of antisemitism \(admin.ch\)](#)
[Monitoring and reporting \(admin.ch\)](#)

Service for Combating Racism (SCRA): www.frb.admin.ch