



The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism

A Guide to Implementation
for Sporting Institutions

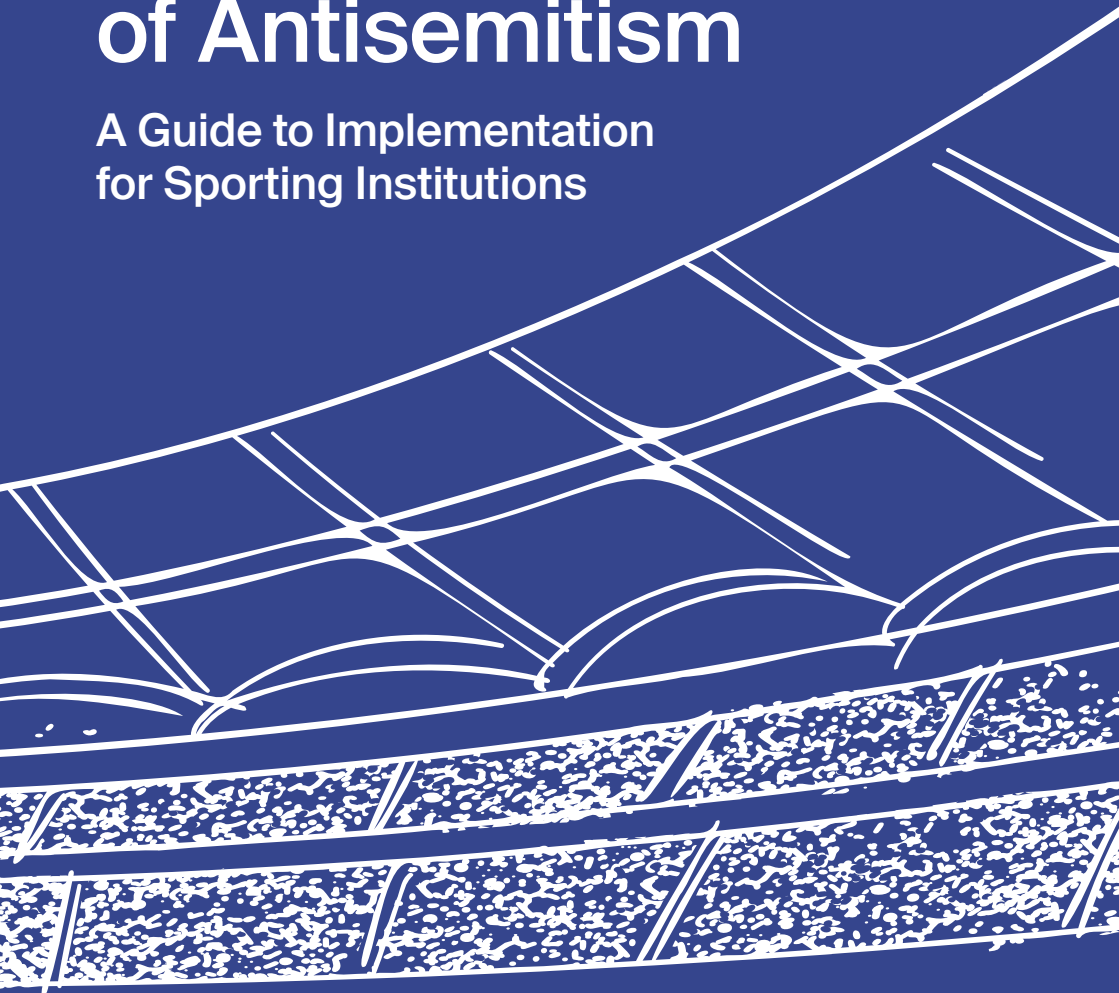


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Introduction

Sport serves as one of the most visible and influential global platforms for uniting people of all ages, faiths, nationalities, and backgrounds. This makes it a powerful tool for addressing social issues via campaigns and educational initiatives.

Leveraging the influence of the sporting community not only impacts those directly involved in the sporting world but also extends into the daily lives of people across society. Each weekend, countless sporting events take place, drawing millions of fans to stadiums and sporting venues. It is this unique ability to engage a diverse audience that presents a distinct opportunity to combat racism, discrimination, and antisemitism.

This guide, created for the UK Presidency of IHRA, aims to provide direction for the implementation of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism by stakeholders across the sporting world. It outlines potential initial steps, summarises previous experiences and examples of good practice, and provides entry points to engage in dialogue with and learn from institutions and ongoing initiatives. The vast majority of the cases outlined here are connected to European football. In developing this guidebook, we have tried to demonstrate how this wealth of knowledge can be transferred to other forms of sport.

To enhance readability, we have omitted references and compiled all relevant resources and documents at the end.

The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism

The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism, though its roots were in previous European anti-racism efforts, was developed by International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), a global organisation dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust and combating contemporary forms of antisemitism. It was first adopted in 2016 and has since been taken up by numerous countries, organisations, and institutions worldwide. The definition provides a clear and comprehensive understanding of antisemitism, setting out how various forms of discrimination, hatred, and prejudice against Jews can take shape. It serves as a valuable tool for governments, law enforcement agencies, and civil society organisations to identify and address antisemitic incidents and behavior. By establishing a common framework, the IHRA definition facilitates international cooperation and solidarity in the fight against antisemitism and helps practitioners to keep accurate records of racist incidents.

The core definition of antisemitism includes the text in bold and the eleven illustrative examples of antisemitism which follow it.

“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.”

Manifestations of antisemitism can include the disproportionate targeting of the State of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collective. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm the rest of humanity, and it is often used as a weapon of blame to paint Jews as a scapegoat for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, literature, visual depictions, and physical acts and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits. Antisemitism is not simply a variant of racism but contains specific elements that urgently require deep understanding and recognition as a separate phenomenon to address it appropriately.

For example, in contrast to racism, antisemitism exhibits a distinctive dual orientation. Antisemitic thinking not only attributes negative, inferior qualities to both Jews and individuals or institutions perceived as Jewish, devaluing them, but also harbors the belief in an increased power of this imagined group, which is perceived as threatening and corrosive, even overpowering, which led to the justification of persecution and exclusion throughout time.

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective – such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world global Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government, or other societal institutions.

- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g., gas chambers), or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterise Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the state of Israel.

The Relationship Between Antisemitism and Sports: Progress in the Field and Potential Obstacles

For many years, the fight against antisemitism was an underrepresented topic in the sporting community.

Fans have historically served as a driving force behind initiatives that shaped anti-discrimination efforts in sports, particularly football. At the grassroots level, various educational programs and campaigns have recently emerged across European football, exemplifying community spirit.

Simultaneously, sports clubs and associations have begun to actively engage in anti-discrimination efforts, amplifying the impact of these grassroots initiatives over the past two decades.

Significant progress has been made in the past decade. In numerous countries, stakeholders in football have become particularly active. To give an example, launched in 2018, Chelsea's pioneering "Say No to Antisemitism" campaign garnered remarkable visibility for the fight against anti-Jewish hatred both in the United Kingdom and Europe Union. Other clubs and national bodies followed suit with the adoption of the IHRA definition – an important building block.

Since 2020, the definition has been successfully adopted and used by English, German, Italian, Austrian, and Argentinian football leagues, and associations. It has been cited as a pillar of anti-discrimination efforts by numerous professional clubs in England, the German Bundesliga, Italy's Serie A, and by clubs in Sweden and Austria.

Notwithstanding this crucial progress, it has become clear that the act of adoption brings about challenges, particularly in developing an understanding amongst relevant parties about how to implement the

definition and establish a foundation for sustainable work against antisemitism in the sporting context.

In 2021, the *Changing the Chants* initiative served as a stepping-stone by proposing methods to combat racist and antisemitic chants during football matches across Europe. Spearheaded by Borussia Dortmund, Feyenoord Rotterdam, the FARE Network, and the Anne Frank House, this international project developed educational strategies aimed at addressing discriminatory behavior within football stadiums. Through a combination of publications, multiplier events held across Europe, and a conference at the Auschwitz Birkenau State Museum, *Changing the Chants* raised awareness, established networks for sharing best practices, and led to further initiatives.

In the same year, the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, in cooperation with the World Jewish Congress, published a guide for measures to address antisemitism in sports. As both these efforts gained traction, collaborations between football organizations and other groups intensified.

In 2023, the *Together Through Sport* initiative was launched by the World Jewish Congress and its partner NGO, *what matters*, at a United Nations Human Rights Council event in Geneva. This pioneering long-term initiative seeks to mobilise a diverse network of stakeholders to implement activities focused on the nexus between sports, the fight against antisemitism, and ensuring that the Holocaust is never forgotten. Through partnerships and collaborative initiatives with sporting organisations, leagues, and stakeholders, *Together Through Sport* represents a concerted effort to combat antisemitism within football and beyond. The initiative also aims to serve as a hub for previous international activities and as a catalyst for pilot projects and transnational exchanges.

Combating Antisemitism in and Through Sport.

Today, the football landscape presents a complex terrain for addressing antisemitism. Unlike other forms of discrimination, antisemitism is not always well understood, making it challenging to identify and combat. However, it is imperative to recognise the interconnectedness of individuals within the sporting realm and wider society, acknowledging the potential influence of sport in shaping societal attitudes and behaviors.

To that end, we distinguish between two fundamental approaches.

1. Combating Antisemitism in Sports

Combating antisemitism in sports, means looking at fan work, athletes, and structures. Antisemitism is found in fan rivalries, derogations of opponents as “Jews” or “Jewish” attacks, and hostility towards both Jewish and athletes and clubs or those perceived as such. However, it also manifests within small and large fan groups, in person or online, on the way to the stadium, in buses and trains, in pubs, and in conversations in the stands.

The challenges of measuring and collecting data are evident. Many countries or national football associations fail to gather data and report on antisemitic incidents, a notion supported by extensive research on the topic.

Antisemitism in football is widespread but varies in prevalence and nature between countries. An international conference on antisemitism in professional football in 2015, organised by the Anne Frank House, concluded that while there are many differences and similarities between the Netherlands, Germany, England, and Poland, football-related antisemitism is a deep-rooted, international phenomenon that is highly complex and difficult to address, making the focus on the local and national levels ever-important.

Documenting incidents can be difficult, the manifestations by be complex and diverse. To that end, we encourage a broad focus, and one that does not solely focus efforts to counter antisemitism in the world of sports but on incidents that occur within the confines of an individual sporting institution. Experience dictates that linking the issue to specific incidents within a particular club or a specific event, leads other clubs and associations to deem activity on the issue unnecessary because there are "no incidents" in their own environment. This is not correct. It simply means that no incidents have been documented or recognised yet, and this might simply result from a poor understanding of antisemitism. To break this cycle, we aim to position and understand activity against antisemitism in sports as a broader effort, and a positive contribution to a democratic and diverse society.

2. Combating Antisemitism Through Sport

The approach to combating antisemitism **through sports** views sport, both at the amateur and professional levels, as a platform to influence society. As we have made clear, sport provides access to millions of athletes and fans. The structure of a sports club enables outreach to its athletes and officials, its employees, fans, and sponsors.

Fan groups are of particular interest: these comprise people from different parts of society with different social backgrounds who come together and share their passion. The shared love for both sport and club and the reach of club and sport outwards acts as a bridge between the two. Therefore, sport connects people who cannot always necessarily be reached in traditional educational settings.

Through affinity for their sporting clubs, fans can have high levels of identification with, for example, a hometown, or a set of colours. This provides an opportunity to be creative with educational measures and resources.

This might include a link to a local history of the Holocaust, the Jewish history of sports, or persecuted and excluded athletes.

Fans from the local Jewish community can be a natural part of the local fan base, and there are opportunities to engage such communities and run educational events or celebrate festivities.

Sport can harness its influence to take a stand, provide visibility and support to Jewish people and organisations, and through educational initiatives outside traditional educational institutions, raise awareness, educate, and bring individuals together with the aim of fostering a more equal society.

For both approaches to **acting in and through sport**, a definitional foundation of the subject is crucial for a common understanding. The IHRA working definition of antisemitism provides such an understanding.

What does it mean for a sports club or institution to adopt the IHRA definition?

The adoption of the IHRA definition by a sports club means that the club commits to acknowledging and considering the definition of antisemitism as set forth by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in all relevant contexts. This includes recognising and combating antisemitic expressions, actions, and attitudes within the club-context, as well as in interactions with other clubs, fans, and the public. It also means that the club actively promotes tolerance, respect, and diversity and stands against all forms of discrimination.

In short, the adoption of the IHRA definition by a sports club is a commitment to combating antisemitism and creating an inclusive and respectful environment in sports.

However, adopting the IHRA definition is not an end in and of itself, and should be aligned with coordinated next steps.

We strongly recommend engaging in dialogue with internal institutional structures beforehand to ensure not only acceptance among staff, athletes, and fans but also to create ownership for this step. In tandem, it can and should also be discussed how to settle on the additional measures that ought to be taken beyond the adoption of the IHRA definition.

What are measures that can be associated with the adoption of the IHRA definition?

1. Internal engagement and capacity building.

It is recommended that internal measures are planned and communicated publicly following the adoption of the working definition. This may include workshops on antisemitism for employees, fan groups, and influencers. Maccabi GB as an example, in partnership with Lord Mann established the 'Tackling Antisemitism in Sport' project to educate the football community about contemporary antisemitism by offering educational workshops to Premier League and English Football League clubs and local Football Associations.

Special training can be offered for groups of stakeholders who may encounter the subject matter in their daily work, including:

- Equality, diversity, and inclusion, and supporter liaison officers, security staff and stewards, so they can better recognise antisemitic behavior and language in the confines of stadiums and respond appropriately during competitions, games, and events.
- Employees working in social media departments, to enhance responsiveness on club or institutional channels.

- Coaches and trainers of (youth) teams, who can be sensitised to and develop behavioral confidence when encountering antisemitism on or off the field.

2. Building internal structures and establishing standards.

Sports clubs and associations have various statutes, for example, member and stadium regulations or codes of conduct. These should generally address the basic principles for dealing with discrimination. They serve as the rulebook for the institution, dictating how to respond to incidents.

- It is crucial that these documents do not remain vague but clearly identify phenomena including antisemitism, racism, or sexism. The IHRA definition should act as a useful set of guidelines and a tool for all areas of civil society, rather than as a prescriptive legal definition, to help determine whether an incident may be antisemitic, depending on individual contexts. While simply referencing the IHRA definition does not provide legal certainty, it does offer an important and transparent foundation to apply a clear, parameter-based definition in the event of an incident. Moreover, any training sessions should be aligned with these internal institutional statutes.
- Reporting and sanctions: Sports must have robust, fair, and well-publicised complaints procedures that enable and empower Jewish fans, staff, and grassroots players to raise complaints of antisemitism when they occur. Implementing the IHRA definition will help governing bodies and sports clubs set clear guidelines and act as a reference point for employees, stewards, and fans on what might constitute antisemitism. It can also act as a tool for clubs to determine appropriate sanctions, where necessary.

- A recent survey conducted as part of the EU Commission-funded project “Bridges – Combating Antisemitism Together” gathered valuable insights from stakeholders in European football, including leagues, associations, and clubs. The aim was to collect information on Holocaust remembrance initiatives, efforts towards the prevention of antisemitism, and the promotion of Jewish life in football. The survey carried out by what matters, in coordination with the World Jewish Congress, found that sustainable efforts by sporting institutions can only be ensured if credible work is undertaken on various issues pertaining to discrimination and the intersections of these phenomena are acknowledged.
- Recognition of the historical impact of antisemitism is a meaningful and visible way to demonstrate the sporting community’s modern-day commitment to addressing antisemitism. For professional and amateur sporting bodies looking for an entry point in developing substantive initiatives, this can be done through the observance of International Holocaust Remembrance Day (27 January).

3. Positioning of the club or institution.

The public positioning of the club, association, or institution can extend beyond announcements and become a permanent practice in communication, which can take place in various forms. Especially when a quick response is needed, the aforementioned structures and capabilities can assist action rooted in a shared understanding of antisemitism.

- **Solidarity with victims of antisemitic violence after publicly recognised incidents:** Such solidarity from public institutions is often lacking but can mean a great deal to the affected individuals and communities. For example, the Bundesliga clubs’ public expressions of solidarity with the victims of the Hamas terrorist attack on October 7th were extremely appreciated by sports

stakeholders in Israel. Solidarity and public statements can also have a significant impact on incidents on a local level, showing support for the victims and encouraging other societal institutions to take a stand as well. The local Jewish community should always be the first point of contact and, in turn, know who they can contact within the club. This should be established before any incidents arise.

- **Including Jewish holidays in communication materials**, for example, sending well-wishes to the community or Jewish employees during Hanukkah, makes Jewish life visible and normalises it. Small gestures often have an outsized impact. Promoting Jewish festivals and other religious holidays through communication channels and activities can help educate other fan groups and fans about their fellow supporters' cultures and religions.
- **Sporting bodies should also be aware of potential timetabling and dietary requirements** for fans who are religiously observant. Particular attention should be given to the dates of Jewish festivals (that change year-to-year as Judaism follows a lunar calendar) and the Sabbath times when the sun sets in the afternoon.
- **Act together, not alone.** Adoption of the IHRA definition should preferably be done collectively within the framework of league associations or other coalitions. Relevant stakeholders include local Jewish institutions and, through a united front, emphasise the contribution of sports to an inclusive and democratic society.

4. Engagement in local and national networks.

Stakeholders within the realm of sports should acknowledge their influence, which extends beyond sports. Professional sports clubs can appear challenging to engage with for some smaller entities.

Civil society organisations, including volunteer groups, advocacy

bodies, and others representing local, regional, and international communities, are instrumental in multiplying the activities and messages of clubs within their respective societies and regions.

Particularly noteworthy are Jewish organisations and experts in antisemitism, who not only monitor and confront antisemitism but also share personal narratives of suffering and adversity. These organisations operate across various levels, ranging from local to international, and encompass a diverse array of entities:

- **Jewish Fans:** Engaging with Jewish fan groups can help ensure that Jewish fans feel supported, heard, and celebrated, and it can provide sports with a gateway to their Jewish fans to address any queries or issues that may arise.
- **Local Jewish Communities and Organisations:** Partnering with these groups can provide valuable insights and support for educational initiatives and community engagement.
- **Non-profit Organisations:** Diversity roundtables, museums, and historical research institutions, especially those dedicated to Holocaust, Jewish, or antisemitism education.
- **Educational Institutions:** Schools, governmental bodies, and state administrations.
- **Sponsors:** Often possessing significant audiences and financial resources, are well-equipped to provide support for projects and demonstrate their commitment. They could, endorse educational resources or publicly reinforce clubs' pledges of zero tolerance towards antisemitism. Alongside sports stakeholders, employees of sponsors can also participate in capacity-building measures, thereby extending the activity through sports into the realm of corporations.

Where to find information?

IHRA working definition of antisemitism

<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism>



Antisemitism Policy Trust: A Guide to the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism and IHRA Policy Briefing

<https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/IHRA-Explainer-Web-Pages.pdf>



Community Security Trust: Understanding Antisemitism

<https://cst.org.uk/antisemitism/educational-resources/understanding-antisemitism>



Maccabi GB: Tackling Antisemitism in Sport

<https://www.maccabigb.org/antisemitismsport>



Handbook for the practical use of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d3006107-519b-11eb-b59f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>



Initiative “Together through Sport” by World Jewish Congress (2023)

<https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/together-through-sport>



Survey project “Bridges – Combating Antisemitism together” (2024)

<https://whatmatters.de/en/projekt/55/exploringantisemitismineuropeanfootball.htm>



“Changing the Chants” Project Guidelines (2021)

<https://changingthechants.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Guidelines.ENGpdf.pdf>



“Changing the Chants” Project Compendium of Good Practices (2021)

<https://changingthechants.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CompendiumV2.pdf>



Educational Material: Football Players in Focus

<https://arolsen-archives.org/content/uploads/football-players-in-focus.pdf>



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