G U V E R N U L R O M Â N I E I
Institutul Național pentru Studierea Holocaustului din România "Elie Wiesel"
Bucureşti, Bd. Dacia 89, sector 2, Tel/Fax +40-21-318 09 39
*http://www.inshr-ew.ro/ *, e-mail: office@inshr-ew.ro

Press Release

The snowball of antisemitism has not stopped rolling…

MONITORING REPORT

2025–2026

The "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania is releasing **its annual report monitoring antisemitism and manifestations of Holocaust denial or relativization, as well as the glorification of war criminals.**

The report aligns with the objectives of the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization, and Hate Speech 2024–2027.



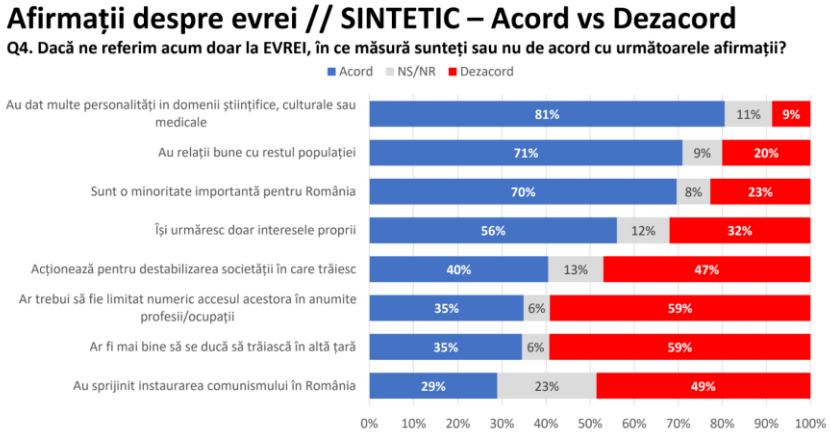
From **May 2025 to April 2026, there was a noticeable increase in the public sphere of messages and attitudes that were anti-Semitic, Holocaust-denying, or that promoted the cult of individuals convicted of war crimes or of prominent leaders of the Legionary Movement.** Particularly online, on social media and video platforms, classic antisemitic narratives and conspiracy theories adapted to various local or global contexts circulated, amplified by accounts with tens or hundreds of thousands of followers.

At the same time, the response from public authorities has become more visible, both in terms of interventions regarding online content and in terms of investigations and the conclusion of judicial inquiries, although it is difficult to assess the actual impact in terms of combating these phenomena.

It seems reasonable to assume that the unchecked spread of such messages in cyberspace contributes to the public's negative perception of the recent history of Jews in Romania, as well as to the dynamics of relations between the ethnic majority and Jews today.

An opinion poll conducted by Social Monitor for the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, between November 1 and 15, 2025, based on a sample of 1,004 people, revealed several concerning trends regarding perceptions of the relationship between the majority and ethnic minorities, the image of Ion Antonescu, knowledge of the history of the Holocaust, and other issues.

By the end of 2025, 40% of Romanians—18% more than four years earlier—had come to believe that Jews "are working to destabilize the society in which they live." The number of those who believe that "their access to certain professions or occupations should be limited" (35%) is also on the rise, as is the number of those who blame Jews for "the establishment of communism in Romania" (29%). Today, 11% of Romanians consider the Jewish minority to be "a problem" or "a threat," double the percentage recorded in 2021.



Over 40% of Romanians subscribe to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories—some centuries-old and others more recent, such as the claim that millions of apartments have been prepared for Jews who are supposedly coming to Romania. Efforts to debunk this misinformation through occasional reports in the press or statements from certain public authorities do not seem to be keeping pace with the rate at which it is spread, and the European Digital Services Act (DSA) is proving, in practice, ineffective in combating the wave of online hate.

The memory of the Holocaust victims is also significantly affected by the rise in anti-Semitism, with the percentage of those who believe it should be preserved down by 8% compared to 2021. At the same time, more Romanians than in previous years believe that "Jews are using the Holocaust to blackmail Romania" (30% of respondents, compared to 24% in 2021), and 39% of them believe they are doing so "for their own interests."



The topics that dominated public discourse during this period were the amendment to the Government Emergency Ordinance No. 31/2002, introduced by Representative Silviu Vexler, the memory of the Legionnaires or war criminals, and the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the death of the Legionnaire poet Radu Gyr. Also noteworthy during this period was an unprecedented symbolic aggression directed against the "Elie Wiesel" Institute.

Online discourse has become more aggressive, with an increase in death threats and other violent messages with anti-Semitic undertones. The most common targets of these threats were the member of parliament and president of the FCER, Silviu Vexler, as well as journalists and public figures who have publicly condemned antisemitism, the cult of the Legionnaires, or individuals convicted of war crimes.

A considerable wave of hatred was set in motion through various organizations, groups, politicians, political parties, journalists, and public figures, in the context of the debates and adoption of Law No. 241/2025 amending and supplementing Government Emergency Ordinance No. 31/2002 and Law No. 157/2018 on certain measures to prevent and combat antisemitism, initiated by Silviu Vexler. **Instead of a legislative debate, many of these public reactions personalized the legislative initiative, turning into attacks with anti-Semitic undertones, incitement to hatred, discrimination, and violence, or death threats.** Such personalized incitement continued even after the law was adopted, including as part of political campaigns such as the "Stop Vexler" campaign initiated by Claudiu Târziu and his party, ACT. We emphasize that the law was passed by an overwhelming majority of parliamentarians; it is an expression of the democratic will.

In the context of the debates during the legislative proceedings, numerous positions emerged from the far right aimed at downplaying or rehabilitating certain historical figures with a fascist past or who had been convicted of war crimes, such as Radu Gyr, Mircea Vulcănescu, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, and Octavian Goga. These efforts at rehabilitation—which often deliberately contrast with the spirit and letter of the law—have been supported by both politicians in the Romanian Parliament and certain intellectuals in the public eye, who have disseminated incomplete historical information while promoting misinformation frequently circulated in far-right circles.

Regarding the portrayal in the public memory of figures associated with Romania's fascist past or the Holocaust, the most polarizing topics online were related to the removal of paintings depicting Radu Gyr, Valeriu Gafencu, and Mircea Vulcănescu from a church in Bucharest, the controversies surrounding the song erroneously attributed to Radu Gyr that was performed at the National Cathedral, and the decision by the Banat Philharmonic to remove Radu Gyr's carols from its Christmas concert repertoire.

Some public institutions, such as the Cluj-Napoca City Hall, the Timișoara City Hall, and the Bucharest City Hall, **have for years refused to rename the streets** named after Radu Gyr and Mircea Vulcănescu, as well as other streets named after figures from the fascist past. In response to a letter sent by INSHR-EW to the Turcinești City Hall in Gorj County regarding the existence of a street named after Ion Sichitiu—a person convicted of war crimes— the local authorities responded more than a year later, claiming that the street's name is Ioan Sichitiu and not Ion Sichitiu—as it appears in the conviction. The Botoșani Court of Appeals upheld the decision of the Havârna Commune Local Council to name the Cultural Center after Gică Manole—an individual who has systematically expressed anti-Semitic and Holocaust-denying views in public. We also note that, among several major public institutions, there persists a lack of knowledge regarding the history of the Holocaust and a fundamental misunderstanding of the incompatibility between memorial policies—protected by current legislation—and the heroic portrayal of individuals responsible for fostering the hatred that led to genocide.

In 2026, there was also a request for the rehabilitation of Marshal Ion Antonescu was filed, which was rejected by the Bucharest Court of Appeals on the grounds that the petitioner did not meet the conditions set forth by law for rehabilitation requests. We are therefore witnessing active attempts to erase and rewrite the memory of and accountability for the Holocaust in Romania. All these manifestations of a resurgence in radical right-wing rhetoric and attitudes are fueled by the rise of extremist parties in parliament and the lackluster responses of the justice system.

FOTO/VIDEO Cum au comemorat simpatizanții Mișcării Legionare 87 de ani de la moartea lui Zelea Codreanu: „De ce să nu fie voie? Jandarmi, polițiști, nu ne-a zis nimeni nimic. Am aflat de pe TikTok"



Un simpatizant al Mișcării Legionare face salutul nazist la comemorarea de la Tâncăbești din 30 noiembrie 2025 Foto: Laurențiu Ungureanu/ HotNews

In public spaces, there has been a continued display or dissemination, in various forms, of anti-Semitic or pro-Legionary messages, whether during protests by radical right-wing parties, at certain anti-communist commemorations, through artistic or cultural events or works, through the distribution of stickers or the creation of graffiti, or through the sale of Legionary symbols in bookstores, online stores, or record labels.

The recent trend of an increasing number of artists adopting a musical genre associated with neo-Nazi ideology—as well as the plan to organize such an international festival in Romania—is a cause for concern. Although there are clear legal provisions prohibiting Nazi propaganda, we note that music and clothing associated with neo-Nazi black metal are being sold online.



As for public events in the sports arena, we have observed a substantial increase in anti-Semitic, racist, xenophobic, and pro-Legionary messages, whether in stadiums, online, or in actions carried out by far-right ultras. Furthermore, there is a growing number of youth groups that practice contact sports such as MMA or engage in physical training while simultaneously promoting anti-Semitic, neo-fascist, and white supremacist messages. This trend is not unique to Romania; it is gaining popularity in many Western societies, a situation that makes the phenomenon even more concerning.

Another worrying trend is the increase in the number and frequency of anti-Semitic and Holocaust-denying messages in the media, in local newspapers, tabloids, or pro-Legionary newspapers and their online platforms, as well as on some television stations. These news sources, which, by virtue of their journalistic mission, enjoy heightened credibility, risk extending that credibility—in the eyes of their audience—to the anti-Semitic messages they disseminate, which is, of course, contrary to journalistic ethics and the public interest.

We do not see any improvements in the online environment either, despite the European regulations and national provisions currently in force. On the contrary, some online platforms are showing increasing signs of disinterest in combating hate speech in the virtual space, even though this is their responsibility. Despite the increased mobilization of some of the authorities responsible for enforcing legal provisions, we observe that this fails to deter such anti-democratic manifestations, while they are fueled and legitimized by a significant number of political, media, and state actors, and amplified by a poorly managed online environment.

It is also worth noting the number and diversity of online audiovisual channels that, in most cases, systematically promote anti-Semitic, Holocaust-denying, or apologist content. We note that the promoters of these ideas increasingly prefer to disseminate them in the form of online audiovisual discussion programs or talk shows, rather than through traditional articles on websites, blogs, or social media posts. Such audio-visual content often enjoys much greater popularity,

sometimes reaching tens of thousands or over 100,000 views—even more than some professional journalistic publications.

Year after year, the authors of anti-Semitic, Holocaust-denying, and apologist messages that have a public impact tend to be the same, though there are also new voices emerging. Furthermore, there is a growing number of online channels and media platforms willing to uncritically broadcast their messages or invite them as guests on their shows. A relevant example is that of a former politician and media mogul who, between May 2025 and April 2026, hosted several shows featuring guests known for their anti-Semitic or Holocaust-denying messages. Such sensationalist programs, hosted by platforms with a wide audience—such as the tabloid Cancan—regularly reach tens of thousands of views.

Social media and video platforms help amplify these messages through mechanisms such as sharing or promotion via the platforms' algorithms. The National Audiovisual Council (CNA) has become more active in combating anti-Semitic, Holocaust-denying, and pro-Legionary content in the audiovisual sphere, particularly online; however, the capacity and tools at its disposal significantly limit the actual impact and effectiveness that a single public institution can have in managing online content, just as is the case with trusted flaggers. This responsibility must fall, first and foremost, on online platforms, including through proactive measures to identify and restrict content that violates their standards or the provisions of the DSA. In reality, the effectiveness of these provisions proves to be limited, and the commitment of some social media networks to comply with them is merely formal.



In most cases, **classic forms of antisemitism remain the most prevalent**; however, we also observe a growing trend of disguising classic antisemitic prejudices as anti-Zionist rhetoric, in which the term "Zionist" serves merely as a cover for the term "Jew." Such cover-ups for overt anti-Semitism also appear to include certain references to individuals or institutions associated with Jewish identity or the memory of the Holocaust, which have become the targets of a widespread wave of hatred, threats, and incitement to violence during the period in question. Often, these manifestations clearly exceed the limits of what constitutes a critical stance in a democratic society that respects the constitutional rights and freedoms of its citizens.

Also of concern are the repeated attempts to repeal the legislation designed to prevent or combat the phenomena mentioned above, which are the subject of this report.

The full report on the monitoring of antisemitism and instances of Holocaust denial or relativization, as well as the promotion of the cult of war criminals, can be viewed here: https://www.inshr-ew.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Raport-monitorizare-2025-2026-27-iulie-2026.pdf

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Communication and Administrative Office
Public Relations, cultural and educational programs Department
E-mail: office@inshr-ew.ro
Phone. + 40-21-318 09 39