

## EXODUS Blogpost #6

### Supporting Victims of Antisemitic Crimes A Trauma-Informed Framework from the EXODUS Project

Antisemitism remains one of the most persistent and harmful forms of hatred in Europe. Despite robust legal frameworks at both national and EU level, antisemitic crimes are still widely **underreported**, leaving many victims invisible and without adequate support.

The European project **EXODUS**, coordinated by the Hellenic Police, seeks to address this gap by developing a **prototype criminal justice and victim support framework** grounded in human rights, trauma-informed principles, and intersectoral cooperation.

#### Why Are Antisemitic Crimes Underreported?

According to the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2024):

- Over **80% of Jews in Europe** believe antisemitism is worsening
- **90%** have encountered antisemitism online
- Only **3 out of 10 incidents of antisemitic violence** are reported to the police

Key reasons include:

- Fear of retaliation
- Lack of trust in public authorities
- Normalisation of “low-level” incidents and microaggressions
- Silence or passivity from bystanders

Underreporting not only denies justice to victims but also allows antisemitism to persist unchecked.

#### The Psychological Impact of Antisemitism

Antisemitism causes more than immediate harm. It leaves **deep psychological scars**, even when it takes indirect or subtle forms. Repeated exposure to insults, exclusion, jokes, or hostile comments can be profoundly traumatic.

Common reactions among victims include:

- Avoidance of public, social, or religious spaces
- Shame and humiliation
- Chronic anxiety and fear of revictimisation

- Feelings of inadequacy or self-blame
- Silence and concealment of Jewish identity

A trauma-informed perspective helps us understand that these responses are **normal reactions to threat and power imbalance**, not signs of weakness.

## What Does Trauma-Informed Support Mean?

Trauma-informed victim support:

- Recognises the lasting impact of trauma
- Avoids retraumatisation
- Shifts responsibility from the victim to the perpetrator
- Prioritises safety, dignity, and empowerment

In practice, this involves:

- Respectful and sensitive victim interviews
- Early identification of hate-crime indicators
- Cooperation with Jewish and community organisations
- Clear information for victims about their rights and available support

## The Role of Police and the Justice System

The EXODUS framework provides **practical guidelines** for:

- Police officers and first responders
- Prosecutors
- Judges

Key priorities include:

- Building trust with affected communities
- Properly documenting bias indicators
- Consistent application of hate-crime aggravating circumstances
- Ensuring victim support throughout the justice process

Effective institutional response is essential to restoring victims' confidence and preventing repeat victimisation.

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## The Power of Community Response

Silence empowers perpetrators.

**Active community engagement** can:

- Reduce fear
- Increase reporting
- Interrupt the cycle of violence

Public awareness, education, and accountability are critical. Bystanders, institutions, schools, and workplaces all play a role in challenging antisemitism - both in its overt and subtle forms.

## Towards a Culture of Safety and Respect

Supporting victims of antisemitic crimes is not only a legal obligation. It is a matter of **human rights, mental health, and democratic values.**

The EXODUS project points toward:

- Stronger victim protection
- Meaningful recovery and empowerment
- Deeper cooperation between authorities and civil society

No society can be truly safe while some people feel forced to hide who they are.

