

# ELNET's 3<sup>rd</sup> International Policy Conference

*Paris, May 8-10, 2023*

## Summary Report



The 3<sup>rd</sup> ELNET International Policy Conference (EIPC) was a **major success**. The EIPC is the **most important and largest pro-Israel conference in Europe**. The conference's theme this year was **"A New Era in Europe-Israel Relations."** Held in Paris between May 8-10, 2023, the conference brought together some **450 participants** and **80 speakers** considered some of the most influential policymakers and leading public opinion-makers from Europe, Israel, the US, Canada, and Arab countries to discuss and impact the shaping of Europe's Middle East policy and Europe-Israel relations.

Various sessions tackled policy areas ranging from new security challenges in Europe, the war in Ukraine and its aftermath, Israeli-Arab normalization, the Russian and Iranian threats, energy and food security, climate change, antisemitism and anti-Zionism.

The conference was organized in cooperation with Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM), NGO Monitor, and Brainlab.

**Top European policymakers called for strengthening relations with Israel, increasing defense cooperation, and denounced antisemitism in all its forms.** The discussions addressed **critical issues facing Israel, Europe and the global Jewish community.** The conference **showcased how Israel can be a critical partner for Europe in the fields of defense, energy, food security, and technology.** The discussions highlighted **areas of cooperation between Europe and Israel,** and in the post-COVID era, provided a unique occasion for decision-makers and opinion leaders to **meet face-to-face** in an intimate setting.

The three-day Conference began with an opening cocktail reception and was followed by two full days of plenary and breakout sessions, with a Gala Dinner on the second night for all participants, and two exclusive lunch briefings for high-level donors.

**Keynote speeches** were given by prominent speakers, including French Minister of Economy and Finance **Bruno Le Maire**, President of Israel **Isaac Herzog**, Vice President of the European Parliament **Nicola Beer**, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Intelligence and Security **David Cattler**, Deputy Speaker of the Polish Senate Senator **Michał Kamiński**, Chair of the European Delegation for Relations with Israel MEP **Antonio Lopez-Isturiz White**, former Prime Minister of Israel **Yair Lapid**, Head of the “New Hope” party and former Israeli Minister of Justice MK **Gideon Sa’ar**, Senior Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of Israel **Zvi Vapni**, former Prime Minister of France **Manuel Valls**, former Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. **Michael Oren**, and Ambassador of France to Israel **Eric Danon**. For the full list of speakers, see [here](#).



In addition to the keynote speeches and remarks, the Conference included **nine plenary sessions** compiled of roundtables, panels, discussions, and fireside talks, and a total of **15 breakout sessions**. The topics of the breakout sessions addressed a threshold Iran, NATO expansion, the Abraham Accords and Europe, criticism vs. rejection of Israel, cybersecurity, NGOs and stopping incitement, constitutional controversies in Israel and Europe, terrorist threats, the U.S.-China contest, the war in Ukraine and humanitarian cooperation, the energy crisis in Europe, international law and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, climate change, and digital innovation in healthcare. For the full agenda see [here](#).

During the Gala Dinner the **Voice of Conscience Award** was granted to European Commission Coordinator on Combatting Antisemitism **Katharina von Schnurbein** for her dedicated work to combat antisemitism. It was presented to her by former French Prime Minister **Manuel Valls**. The award symbolized the Shofar, a Jewish artifact used for making public proclamations and calls to action on the individual and collective levels.

As part of the conference, **ELNET arranged a meeting at the French Senate for Members of Knesset** speaking at the EIPC, including MKs Gideon Saar, Merav Ben Ari, Boaz Bismuth, Oded

Forer, and Tsega Melaku. The MKs met with Deputy Speaker of the French Senate Senator **Roger Karoutchi**, who also serves as the President of the France-Israel Friendship Group, as well as 15 other senators.

During the conference, **ELNET's 2<sup>th</sup> Israel Survey** was presented. The survey was shared with European parliamentarians, gathering their perspectives on Israel, the Middle East, and Jewish life in Europe. Over 380 parliamentarians participated from 17 European parliaments and the European Parliament. An overwhelming majority of the participating MPs consider their country's relations with Israel as very good or rather good (66%). 77% call for greater cooperation with Israel, with the focus being on science and education, defense, and homeland security. In addition, European politicians think their countries should assume more responsibility within the framework of the Abraham Accords. Read more [here](#).

## The Abraham Accords

There was much discussion on the Abraham Accords, and the significant potential for Europe actively cooperating with Israel and Arab countries to seek solutions to common challenges



and benefit from shared opportunities. A dedicated breakout session titled **“Abraham Accords – Where is Europe”** with speakers Kerstin Muller, Lord Stuart Polack, and Ambassador Haim Regev, moderated by Robert Greenway placed a spotlight on where and how Europe can be more actively involved. In addition, keynote speeches and sessions on energy, Iran, climate change, cybersecurity provided platform for discussions on where Europe can increase involvement in the Abraham Accords.

Below is a collection of select comments made during the EIPC:

**Retired U.S. Marine Corps Four-Star General John Allen:**

*Israel's security must be at the heart of Middle East stability and an integral part of the Abraham Accords.*

**U.S. Congressman Brad Schneider:**

*The strategic implications of the Abraham Accords cannot be overstated.*

**Former Minister of State at the German Federal Foreign Office, Kerstin Muller:**

*The Abraham Accords have brought stability to the region. Stability is a precondition for peace.*

**President and Founder of the Emirates Policy Center, Dr. Ebtessam al-Ketbi:**

*Israel should position itself as a strategic player in the Middle East-North Africa dynamics.*

**Founder of the UK Abraham Accords Group, Lord Stuart Polak:**

*The Americans are disappearing; China, Russia, and Iran will plug the gap, so Europe should get involved.*

**Head of the Mission of Israel to the EU and NATO, Ambassador Haim Regev:**

*It's organizations like ELNET that are raising awareness on the Accords and bringing the EU to the table.*

## Iran

The topic of Iran was one of the central strategic challenges discussed during the conference. The first breakout session of the conference was dedicated to a discussion on **“What Strategy for a Threshold Iran?”** with speakers Senior Research Fellow at the Foundation for Strategic Research, Benjamin Hautecouverture; General Staff Project Manager, Operations Division and former Commanding Officer of the Gaza Division, Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Brig. Gen. Nimrod Aloni; President and Founder, Emirates Policy Center, Dr. Ebtessam al-Ketbi; and moderated by Senior Fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, Behnam Ben Taleblu. Additionally, Iran was discussed in depth during panels and discussions related to the dangerous deepening of the Russia-Iran alliance, as well as the newly reinstated diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia brokered by China, and the ensuing security concerns for Europe and for the Middle East region.

Notably, at the time the conference was underway in Paris, Israel faced a relentless barrage of nearly 1,500 rockets launched by the Iranian-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist organization from Gaza. In response, Israel launched Operation “Shield and Arrow.” Amidst this operation, the IDF retweeted an image of Brig. Gen. Nimrod Aloni speaking on the EIPC panel on Iran, underscoring the utmost significance of European-Israeli engagement regarding Iran. This tweet generated an impressive number of over 40,000 engagements.



Below is a collection of select comments made during the EIPC:

**Chair of Foreign Affairs Committee of Latvia, MP Rihards Kols:**

*While we in Europe grapple with how to best achieve the strategic defeat of Russia to ensure sustainable peace, it would be unwise to forget that today's axis of evil consists not only of Russia but also of Iran, and its threats to global security must not be taken lightly.*

**Deputy Speaker of the Polish Senate, Senator Michal Kamiński:**

*You cannot appease Iran. We must be realistic about this. People in the West who say we should appease Iran are wrong.*

**Former Iraqi MP and Founder of the Democratic Party of the Iraqi Nation, Mithal Al Alusi:**

*Israel should not be alone in doing the dirty work. If we do not stop Iran, we will have a new Holocaust in the Middle East.*

**President and Founder of the Emirates Policy Center, Dr. Ebtessam al-Ketbi:**

*Iran hijacked the Jerusalem and Palestinian issues, and we should remove that card from their hands.*

**Chair of ELNET's Forum of Strategic Dialogue and former Head of Israel's Military Intelligence, Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin:**

*The U.S. wants to be behind Israel when they make the decision; they give the green light. If Iran reaches 90%, Israel will act.*

**Chairman of the 'New Hope' party and former Minister of Justice, MK Gideon Sa'ar:**

*Iran is not only a threat to Israel but also to European security; cooperation between Europe and Israel should be strengthened.*

## The War in Ukraine and the Implications for Europe

The prolonged war in Ukraine has had a profound impact across the European continent, significantly influencing European defense strategies. Moreover, within NATO, it has sparked a reevaluation of collective defense measures and the imperative for heightened cooperation among member states. European countries determined to bolster their defense capabilities have taken substantial measures to increase their defense budgets and invest in upgrading their defense systems. Recognizing Israel's possession of cutting-edge

technologies and advanced defense systems, it is ideally positioned to offer invaluable opportunities for collaboration and mutual benefit to address European strategic needs, some of which has already been seen. The energy crisis that Europe now grapples with has opened the door to new partnerships with Israel and Arab countries, while Israeli leading expertise in crisis management and war trauma have contributed to fortifying community resilience.

These subjects were extensively discussed at the EIPC. Both full days opened with a plenary session addressing Europe's new defense reality. The first, titled **"The Ukraine War and its Aftermath, What Security Architecture for Europe?"** heard from speakers NATO Assistant Secretary General for Intelligence and Security, David Cattler; Retired U.S. Marine Corps four-star general and former commander of the NATO International Security Assistance Force, General John Allen; and moderator Chairman of ELNET's Forum of Strategic Dialogue and former Head of Israel's Military Intelligence, Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin. The second, titled **"New European Security Challenges: Israel as a Key Partner"** heard from Chair of Foreign Affairs Committee of Latvia, MP Rihards Kols; Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin; and moderator Director of ELNET's Forum of Strategic Dialogue, Pascaline Wagemans.

Several breakout sessions also analyzed the ramifications of the war in Ukraine from different angles, including: **"From Brain-dead to No-brainer: NATO Revival and Expansion," "Israel, Europe, and the War in Ukraine: Geopolitical Dilemmas and Humanitarian Cooperation,"** and **"How can New Middle East Partnerships Help Europe Face its Energy Crisis and Security Supply Chains?"** Below is a collection of select comments made during the EIPC:



**NATO Assistant Secretary General for Intelligence and Security, David Cattler:**

*Israel is a long-standing NATO partner. Defense is a key field that Israel is leading in and can contribute greatly to others. We've discussed the idea of Israeli hi-tech and defense sector working with allies, especially in the area of air defense and that is a key area for cooperation. I hope the nature of the relationship between Israel and NATO will grow because there's a lot that we can do for each other in terms of mutual security and knowledge exchange.*

**Chair, Delegation for relations with Israel, European Parliament, MEP  
MEP Antonio López-Istúriz White**

*Ukraine was our wakeup call, even though there were many previous cases - Crimea, Georgia, etc. We can no longer just live under the umbrella of American protection. Now we realize we need friends - loyal, democratic friends - and Israel obviously is one of them.*

**Deputy Speaker of the Polish Senate, Senator Michal Kamiński:**

*We will not have a free and safe Europe without a free and safe Ukraine. And we will not have a free and safe Europe without a free and safe Israel.*

**NATO Head of Policy Planning, Dr. Benedetta Berti:**

*We are in a transformative state as the transatlantic and as Europeans. We took our security for granted. There has been a strategic mindset shift. The world is forcing us to go back to speaking the language of power.*

**Spokesperson for the Majority Renaissance Group, French National  
Assembly, MP Benjamin Haddad:**

*This war in Ukraine is not only geopolitical, but also ideological. And this has similarities with Israel – Israel is attacked because it is a democracy in the Middle East. We share the same values.*

**Head of Government Relations and Communications, Accelerate  
Estonia, Anett Numa:**

*Israel is one of the best countries in cybersecurity. Why not include it in NATO exercises?*

**Member of Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of the Knesset, MK Boaz Bismuth**

*Humanitarian aid is a very important aspect of international cooperation. This is not an Israeli matter or Ukrainian matter – it is a matter for the whole world.*

**Political Counsellor, Mission of Israel to the EU & NATO, Tal Gat:**

*Israel can serve as an important facilitator to strengthen NATO's awareness of the South through all of its challenges.*

**Chair of Foreign Affairs Committee of Latvia, MP Rihards Kols, on Twitter:**

*"...That's what forums like ELNET's EIPC do – via in-depth talks, we understand more, learn, and find that many of the solutions we seek are already known somewhere else. Europe and Israel have a lot to learn from each other, and I for one am glad for the opportunity."*

## Antisemitism and the Delegitimization of Israel

Discussing how to ensure the security of Jewish communities in Europe and beyond, European and Israeli policymakers addressed the growing threats of extremism, antisemitism, and the delegitimization of Israel. The first full day of the conference featured two plenary sessions on



this subject. The first, titled **"Israel's Legitimacy: Under Assault in the International Arena"** heard from Vice-President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Edwin Shuker; Member of Knesset and former Permanent Representative of Israel to the UN, Danny Danon; former French Ambassador for human rights, Ambassador François Zimeray, and moderated by Catherine Perez-Shakdam. The second, titled **"The IHRA Definition: Still a Long Way to Go"** heard from Max Webb Senior Rabbi of Sinai Temple, Rabbi David Wolpe; Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish

Life in Germany and the Fight against Anti-Semitism, Dr. Felix Klein; European Commission Coordinator on Combatting Antisemitism, Katharina von Schnurbein; UK Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues and Co-Chair of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, The Rt Hon Lord Eric Pickles; Chairman of Yad Vashem, Ambassador Dani Dayan, and moderated by ELNET-UK CEO Rt Hon Joan Ryan.

In addition, several breakout sessions analyzed these subjects, including: **“The Dividing Line Between Criticism and Rejection of Israel,” “NGOs and Education: How to Stop Hatred and Incitement,”** and **“International Law & The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Exposing Double Standards.”**

As noted above, at the Gala Dinner of the second day of the conference, The Voice of Conscience Award was granted to European Commission Coordinator on Combatting Antisemitism, Katharina von Schnurbein for her deep commitment to combating antisemitism in Europe.



Below is a collection of select comments made during the EIPC:

**Senior Rabbi of Sinai Temple, Rabbi David Wolpe:**

*The first thing to say about antisemitism is that it is a protean hatred...and that reality is incredibly important because every time we try to pin down the origins or manifestations of antisemitism it slips out from underneath us. Antisemitism is a constantly changing reality.*

**Founder of the UK Abraham Accords Group, Lord Stuart Polak:**

*I'm sick to the death by the sentence 'I recognize Israel's right to exist.' Enough.*

**Director of UK Lawyers for Israel, Natasha Hausdorff:**

*If there are international legal norms they must be uniformly applied, and by abusing Israel as a separate standard, you deflate international law as a whole.*

**Chairman of Yad Vashem, Ambassador Dani Dayan:**

*The difference between 'Never Again' as a shallow cliché and 'Never Again' as a meaningful stance is policy action.*

**European Commission Coordinator on Combatting Antisemitism, Katharina von Schnurbein:**

*The IHRA definition is disputed today – because it works.*

**UK Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues, The Rt Hon Lord Eric Pickles:**

*Especially in the media, we need a strong and robust narrative that makes antisemitic opinions look ridiculous.*

**Member of Knesset and former Permanent Representative of Israel to the UN, Danny Danon:**

*I want to encourage you all to bring people to Israel. I would speak to many people at the UN, but it was only after they visited Israel that they understood the full picture.*

## Conference publicity and media coverage:

The conference received wide media attention, with **over 25 articles** featured in news outlets across Europe and Israel. Coverage of the conference as well as the Israel Survey presented at the conference appeared in **English, French, Hebrew, German, Lithuanian, Italian and Norwegian languages.**

Leading media outlets have echoed the success of the conference and interviewed its speakers. **France's three top weekly magazines published interviews with speakers** invited to the EIPC: **L'Express** quoted General John Allen, Retired U.S. Marine Corps Four-Star General and former commander of the NATO International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, on the war in Ukraine; **L'Obs** published a long interview with MK Gideon Sa'ar, Head of the 'New Hope' party and former Minister of Justice; and **Le Point** referred in length to Major General (ret.) Amos Yadlin, Chair of ELNET's Forum of Strategic Dialogue, on Iran's nuclear program. In addition, **Le Figaro** published an interview with Dr. Sarah Fainberg, Head of Great Powers Research Program, ELROM Center for Air and Space Studies in Tel Aviv University, and new member of the ELNET-Israel Board, on the Russia-Iran relationship; and

*The Jerusalem Post* featured the EIPC while quoting at length MP Rihards Kols, Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Latvian Parliament.

An extensive social media campaign prior to the conference featured flyers with confirmed speakers and topics, as well as videos. During the week of the conference there was a significant influx in social media engagement. On Twitter alone, a total of **70 original tweets** were posted on the ELNET global and Hebrew channels, generating **85,000 engagements** and many new followers. On LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram an additional **80 original posts and videos** were shared, generating further engagements and followings across all platforms. All ELNET affiliate offices and their CEOs also shared extensively throughout the EIPC in their local languages. Additionally, prominent participants and policymakers with large followings posted about their participation in the EIPC on their social media platforms. All this **significantly boosted ELNET's exposure** and strengthened its reputation as **the leading pro-Israel organization in Europe**.

An entire YouTube Playlist with all highlights videos, keynote speeches, as well as select plenary sessions and breakout sessions was shared online, and is available [here](#). The global ELNET website reconfigured **a designated page dedicated to ELNET's Policy Conferences** with a large section focused on the 3<sup>rd</sup> EIPC, including videos and other publications, which can be visited [here](#).

### **Impact:**

The conference led to considerable impact, including new collaborations and initiatives among participants and with ELNET, some of which have already begun to be put into action.

Following the EIPC a survey was shared with participants. The results of the survey showed very high satisfaction rates, with a score of more than 4.5 out of 5 on various aspects of the conference (selection of topics, quality of debates and presentations, organization, logistics, and overall impression). All of the breakout and plenary sessions received a score of more than 4 out of 5.

