

SPEAK PEACE!

Hate speech
is not an
option!



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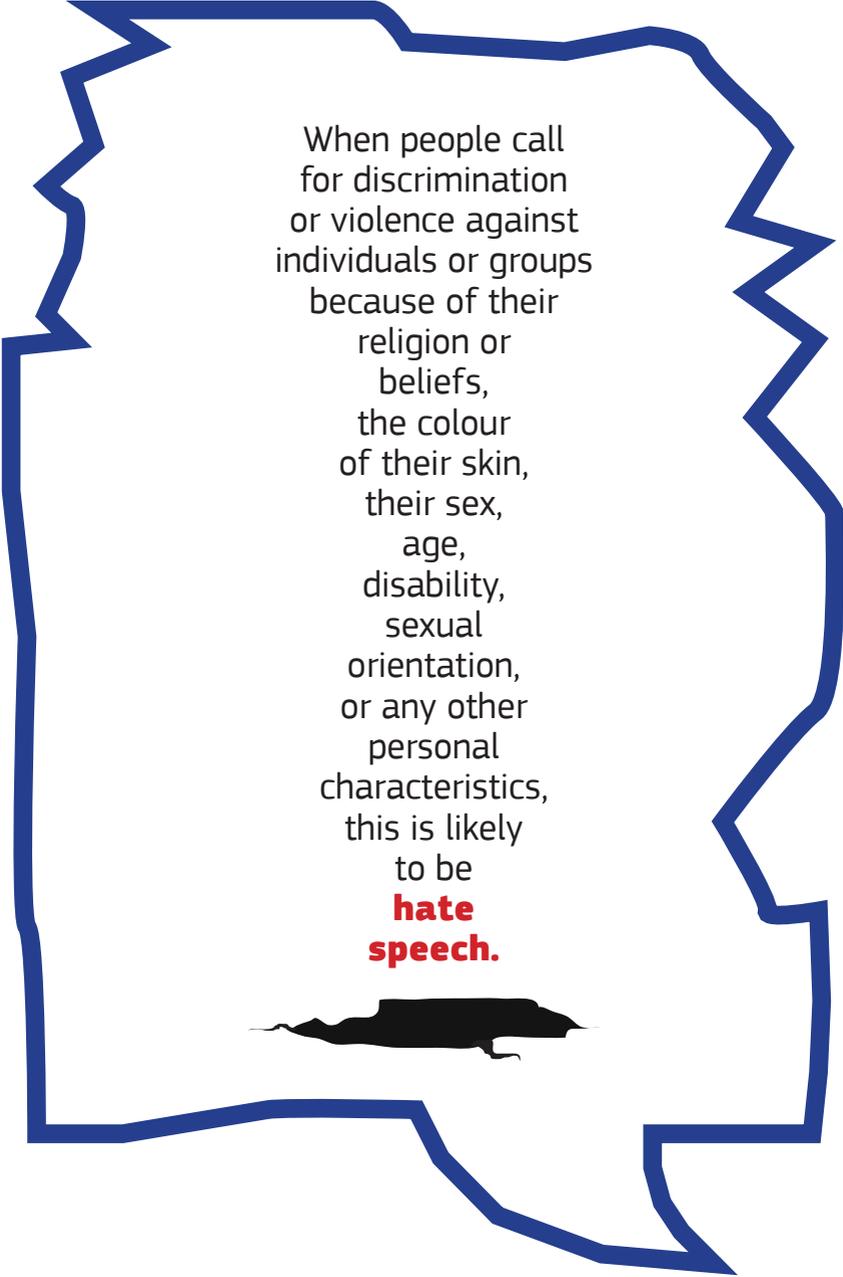
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Council of Europe

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF SOMEONE USED HATRED TOWARDS YOU OR PEOPLE YOU CARE ABOUT JUST BECAUSE OF WHO YOU ARE? DOES ANYBODY HAVE THE RIGHT TO DISCRIMINATE AND HUMILIATE US BECAUSE OF WHO WE ARE? SHOULDN'T WE ALL BE TREATED WITH RESPECT?



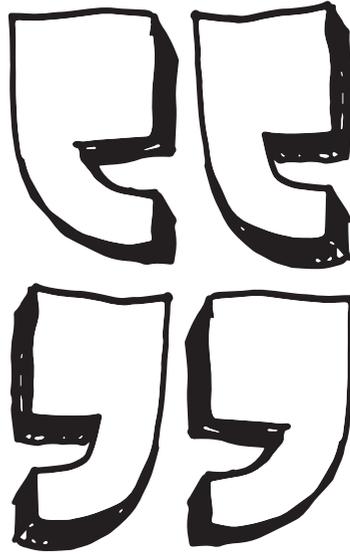


When people call for discrimination or violence against individuals or groups because of their religion or beliefs, the colour of their skin, their sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any other personal characteristics, this is likely to be **hate speech.**



HATE IS MORE THAN 'JUST WORDS': OFFLINE AND ONLINE!

Hate may be communicated on TV, in newspapers, during public gatherings, at school, work, or in the neighbourhood, on the street or within families, it can also appear online on websites, apps, blogs, social media, or in email or chat. The Internet can become very hostile with hate appearing in videos and photographs, songs, cartoons, manipulated images, and so on.



HATE SPEECH IS A THREAT TO HUMAN RIGHTS

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights

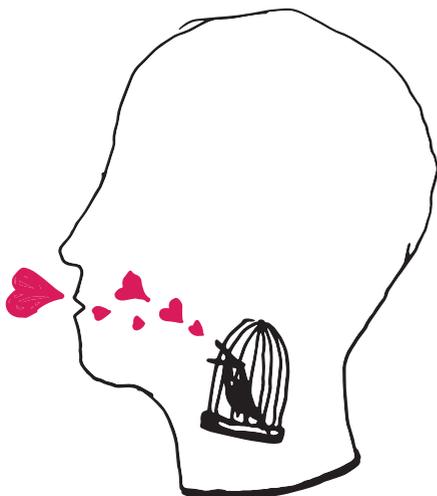
International human rights law guarantees equality and non-discrimination for all people. Protection of dignity, without discrimination, is what protects us from hate speech. This means that hate speech is a threat to human rights and in most countries severe forms of hate speech are illegal.



WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION?

All people are equal in rights. Discrimination is the opposite of equality. When someone is treated differently without any objective and reasonable justification, this is discrimination. Hate speech targets people, as individuals or groups, because of who they are. It alienates, marginalises, and undermines personal dignity, often of those who are already vulnerable in many other ways.

Remember: Not all discrimination is caused by hate speech, but nearly all hate speech is based on discrimination, on the assumption that a person or a group of persons are superior to others.



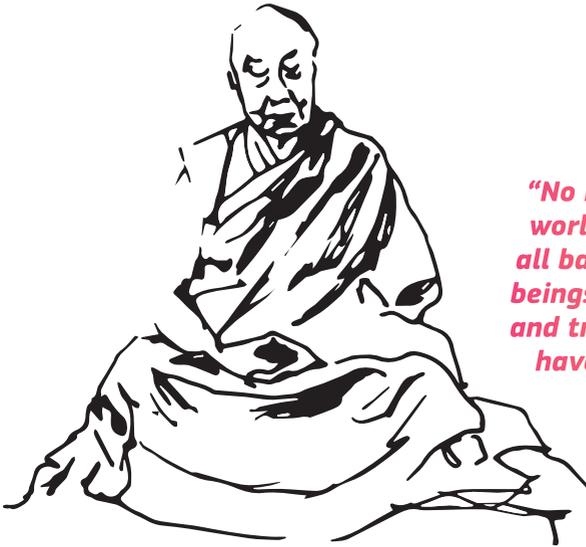
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND HATE SPEECH

“There is a fine line between free speech and hate speech. Free speech encourages debate, whereas hate speech incites violence.”
Newton Lee,
Counterterrorism and Cybersecurity: Total Information Awareness

When we say freedom of expression, we refer to the fact that everyone has the right to express themselves, impart or receive information and ideas freely. Freedom of expression is a human right, for example included in the Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights. This right is an essential foundation of a democratic society and important for each individual’s self-fulfilment.

Freedom of expression includes the right to express ideas that may be regarded as critical, offensive, insulting or controversial. However, freedom of expression is not a right without limits. States may sanction or prevent forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify hate, to protect the rights of other people. There needs to be a balance between allowing people to express their thoughts and ensuring that it does not undermine the rights of others, or cause disorder or crime.

HATE DOES NOT BELONG TO ANY GROUP: ANYONE CAN BE A TARGET OF HATE SPEECH!



“No matter what part of the world we come from, we are all basically the same human beings. We all seek happiness and try to avoid suffering. We have the same basic human needs and concerns...”
Dalai Lama

Whilst anyone can be a target of hate speech, there are several groups in Europe that are regularly targeted, for example: LGBT, Muslims, Jewish or other religious groups, women, migrants and ethnic minorities, Roma, people living in poverty, persons with disabilities, etc. Targeted groups differ from country to country. Hate speech has significant and wide-ranging consequences on the individual victim, on the targeted group and other vulnerable groups, as well as on the community as a whole. People can be also targeted based on more than one characteristic, for instance as women and as migrants.

Let's take an example. The COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to a new wave of hate speech, discrimination and stigmatization. At the beginning of the pandemic, individuals perceived as ethnically Chinese or Asian, migrants and foreigners, have been blamed for spreading the virus. The pandemic has also created new vulnerable groups: persons infected with coronavirus are exposed to social exclusion, isolation, stigmatization and hate speech.



REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES OF SPREADING HATE SPEECH THAT BECOME VERY POPULAR IN THE MEDIA: INFLUENCERS/ POLITICIANS



“Getting the entire group of people to hate, requires convincing them that another person or group of people are evil or dangerous.” from the “MODERN-DAY HATRED” poster

When we think of hate speech, we need to think of its impact and damage on individuals, groups, or society as a whole. This impact is amplified in the public arena, because public figures have an influence over a wide audience. This is also why they have a responsibility to refrain from using hate speech and stigmatising language and to condemn the use of hate speech by others.

Any type of hate speech needs to be recognised as bad to some extent, while there are cases that can be worse. For example, it may be more offensive, may affect larger numbers of people and be potentially more damaging, just because it is expressed by people who have a wide audience on social media platforms. These people may use the language of hatred and get more engagements and followers.

ACTIVITY: FROM BAD TO WORSE

Have a look at the following examples, are they familiar in your context? Can you think of some examples of hate speech in your country? Who are the target groups? What impact does hate speech have?

"Hitler did not kill enough of them!"

Public statement of a mayor about the Roma population in his town.

"They have nothing to contribute, other than proved documentation of more crime and rape."

Comment to an online article about the refugee crisis in 2015 in Europe. 622 likes and many more views.

"Homosexuality, which is a disgusting disease must be fought and stopped."

From a Facebook group with 300 members

"No one invited you Jews to our country. So, why should you make us feel bad?"

Comment under a blog post. The blog post expressed sadness about vandalised memorial of victims of the Holocaust.

"Women should earn less than men, because they are weaker and not as intelligent."

Member of European Parliament



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO COMBAT HATE SPEECH?

“I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.”
Martin Luther King, Jr

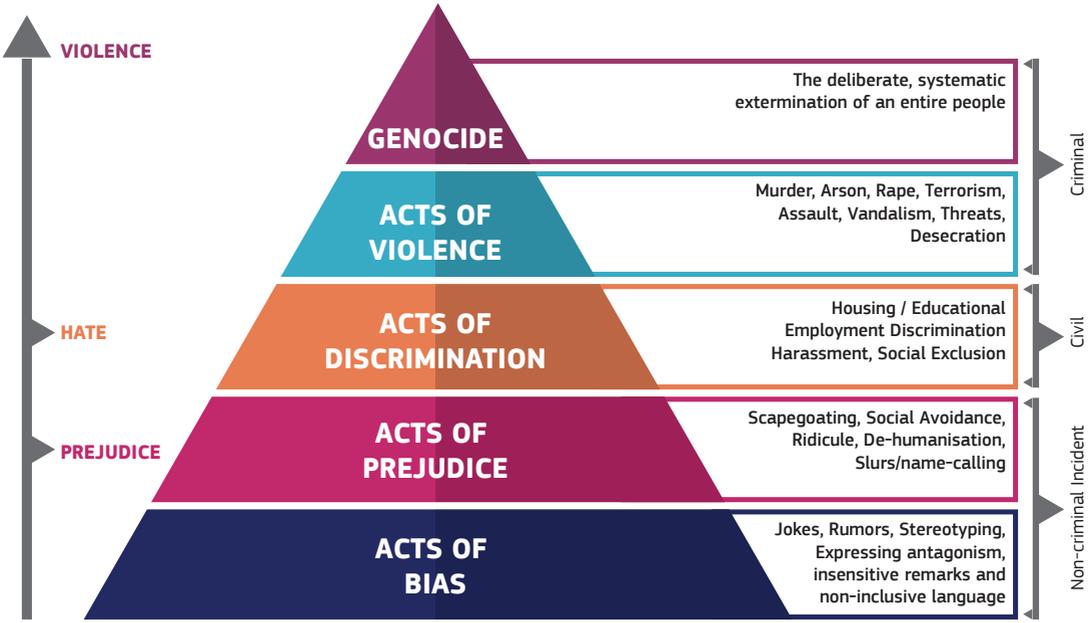
Why should we do something about hate speech? Here are some reasons:

- **to prevent serious violations of human rights**
- **to promote peaceful, inclusive, democratic and just societies**
- **to contribute to fighting violence against women**
- **to prevent armed conflicts, atrocities and other crimes.**

Hate speech needs to be addressed not only when it shows its face, but also at the roots. In other words, at the level of attitudes and relations between different groups in society. Hate thrives on racist attitudes, sexism and negative stereotypes. If it is unchallenged, it can feed back into society, reinforcing stereotypes and making further abuse more likely, including, in some cases, physical violence. In this latter case, hate speech can be transformed into hate crime. Mass violations of human rights, such as genocide and ethnic cleansing, are preceded or accompanied by hate speech.

ACTIVITY: WHERE DOES HATE SPEECH LEAD TO?

The pyramid of hate is sometimes used to explain the consequences of hate speech and also why it is necessary to regulate its different forms, in order to support democratic values and prevent violence. Think of your context: do you recognise any forms of hate speech from this pyramid?

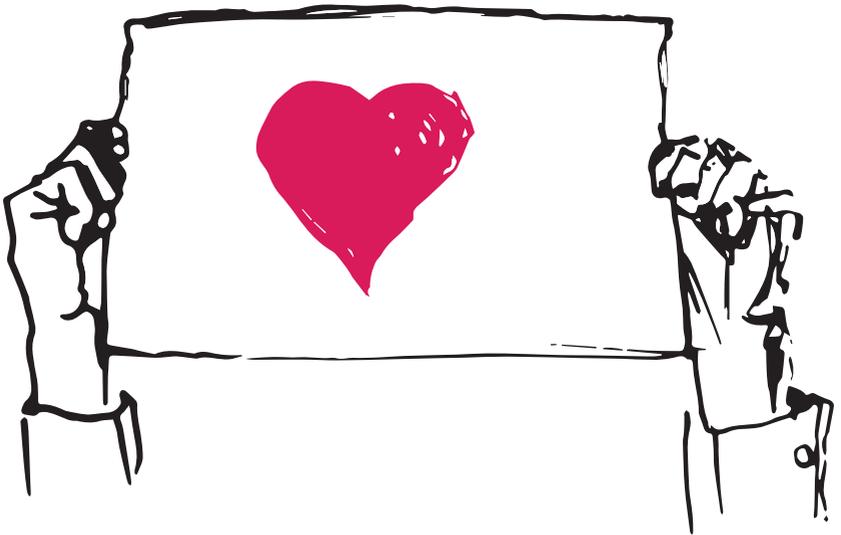


Source: Anti-Defamation League

TAKE A STAND AGAINST HATE SPEECH

“How about we don’t see ourselves based on how we look, what religion we practice, or where we live... but based on what we value? Humanity, kindness, an innate sense of our interconnectedness. And the belief that we are the guardians, not only of our home and our planet, but also the guardians of each other.”

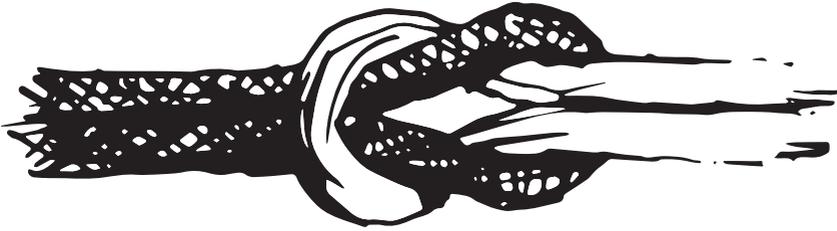
Jacinda Ardern, prime minister of New Zealand



Everyone can stand against hate, let’s see how.

Fighting hate speech with love, empathy, compassion, and strength, may not eliminate it entirely, but the more steps we can take to educate and support human beings, and speak out against injustice, the better this world will become. If we collectively respond to hate speech, it will not become a norm!

STRONGER TOGETHER IN COUNTERING HATE SPEECH



Some people prevent hate because they help communities come together, know each other better and live together respectfully. Others react to hate speech by giving counterarguments to it. Others educate young people to behave respectfully towards differences. Some people show solidarity and support the groups attacked. Others speak against injustice with counter narratives. Some organisations monitor hate speech. Some people bring hate speech cases to courts. Some institutions can apply fines to TV stations that spread hate speech and even to social media. All these examples show that there are often actions people can take against hate speech, even before it happens!

In order to counter hate speech, we all have to work together: policy makers, civil society, those involved in education, media, religions and beliefs, youth sectors, police, and so on.

Civil society has often been at the frontline in recognising the early signs of, and fighting against all forms of intolerance and discrimination.

Civil society:

- **advocates for governments to address hate speech, for example by improving laws**
- **reports hate speech**
- **acts as a voice for victims and provides them with legal advice or counselling**
- **educates, raises awareness and campaigns for action to combat hate speech.**

RESPONDING TO HATE

“We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.”

James Baldwin



We need to keep in mind that human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and indispensable for every human being, even for those who use or promote hate speech! It also happens that people say things, particularly online, without properly weighing them up or causing offence without meaning to, and then regret it, and perhaps even retract their words. However, in other cases, hate speech is spread willingly as part of hate campaigns, for example.

We have to bear in mind that every response to hate speech needs to recognise that ‘hate’ falls along a spectrum. It means that, although all expressions of hate may be bad to some extent, one case can still be worse than another (more offensive, affecting a larger number of people, more inflammatory, potentially more damaging, etc). Responses to hate speech need to take into account differences in the degree of hate expressed.

At the same time, when we are addressing hate speech, we need to make sure that our arguments do not diminish someone else’s human rights and do not dehumanise others! Responding to hate with hate will not solve the problem.

10 HELPFUL STRATEGIES TO FIGHT HATE SPEECH IN EVERYDAY LIFE

“We are all born with the capacity for aggression as well as compassion. Which tendencies we embrace requires mindful choice by individuals, families, communities and our culture in general. The key to overcoming hate is education: at home, in schools, and in the community.”
psychologist Bernard Golden

What can you do once you’ve encountered a hateful message? Which strategies work and which don’t? How do you respond? Take a look at some helpful steps to follow below!

• TAKE A STAND AND MAKE IT CLEAR THAT YOU DON’T AGREE:

show that there are people who won’t tolerate statements like these. Being silent can mean that you agree with them so hate will continue to spread... Especially if you know the person who used hate speech, you can always ask why someone would say such things. Asking questions forces the person to think about their statements.

• USE NON-OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE IN RESPONDING AND DON’T RESPOND IN THE SAME WAY AS THE TONE OF THE INITIAL HATEFUL MESSAGE:

no matter how much you want to, don’t take revenge or respond in an inappropriate way, even when the situation is particularly painful. Do not target the author, rather the content of the statement!

• SHOW EMPATHY TO THOSE WHO ARE TARGETED BY HATE SPEECH:

show that you think hate speech is crude and insulting. Besides being supportive to the victim, your message might encourage them to realise that they don’t have to accept hate and report it to the authorities.



• CORRECT FALSE INFORMATION:

whenever you have the space to add correct information, do so and prove false claims with facts! It might not convince the hater, but you might convince other listeners or readers.

• REMOVE IF NECESSARY:

no matter if you prefer not to respond directly, you can always report online content as hate speech or remove the post, especially on your own wall or page. Report it to the online platform (social media, forums). If they don't know about it, they can't do anything about it. Avoid reposting since you will only make the hateful message more popular and widely visible.

• DON'T GET LOST IN ENDLESS DISCUSSIONS:

express your disbelief and displeasure and stick to a calm statement. Keep it short, but powerful.

• LEARN AND SPEAK ABOUT DIVERSITY, EQUALITY, INCLUSION:

the more people are educated on these issues, the more we can prevent hate speech.

• VOLUNTEER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND BE PROACTIVE:

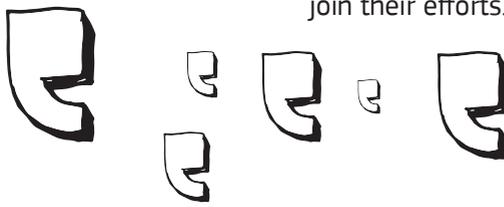
join online communities or organisations that promote human rights. Check in your context if there are organisations that work for example for inclusion, democratic values and peace or against racism, sexism and discrimination, and join their efforts.

• REPORT HATE SPEECH TO THE AUTHORITIES:

in case any of these steps are not helpful and you feel threatened for your security and life, report hate speech to the authorities.

• DON'T LOSE HOPE:

roots of hate are deep and strong, and no matter how hard you try, the risk of hate speech is there. What is important is to act and join others who work on the same cause.



WHAT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE DOES ABOUT HATE SPEECH

*“The aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity between its members...”
Article 1, Statute of the Council of Europe*

Founded in 1949, the Council of Europe has 47 member countries. It promotes common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other human rights conventions and documents.

When it comes to hate speech, the Council of Europe:

- has adopted human rights standards and its European Court of Human Rights has dealt with several cases of hate speech, creating jurisprudence on this topic valid for all its member countries
- its different bodies have adopted recommendations and guidelines to help countries deal with hate speech and support its victims; it has adopted a definition of hate speech already in 1997
- monitors problems of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination in the member states, through the work of the [European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\)](#). ECRI had a General Policy [Recommendation No.15 on combating hate speech](#) which provides guidelines to member states on how to counter this problem
- supports policy development, and provides training to national institutions and civil society on combating hate speech, for example through the work of the [No Hate speech and Co-operation Unit](#)
- organises campaigns and educational activities to combat hate speech, such as the [No Hate Speech Movement youth campaign](#)

The EU and the Council of Europe, through their joint cooperation programmes such as the Partnership for Good Governance and the Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey, provide assistance to beneficiaries in bringing reforms forward on combating discrimination and hate speech; increasing institutional capacities and redress to victims, and raise awareness of the general public on the subject.

- develops educational manuals, such as “Bookmarks“ and “WE CAN“, to support educators to explore and combat hate speech with young people through human rights education and counter and alternative narratives
- works on combating discrimination with many different angles, like [education](#), [sport](#), [Roma rights](#), [gender equality](#), [sexual orientation and gender identity](#), the [media and internet governance](#), [employment](#), [combating sexist hate speech](#), and so on.

The [No Hate Speech Movement Youth Campaign of the Council of Europe](#) was a Europe-wide campaign during which many people and organisations did educational activities for and with young people to combat hate speech and promote human rights online, organised discussions with human rights activists about how to combat hate, reported hate speech to social media or authorities, and organised thematic online action days to inform people about the groups targeted by hate speech. Many organisations involved in the campaign continue their work, such as the No Hate Speech Network.

Are you looking for inspiration on how to combat hate speech? Have a look at the following examples www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign

Useful links:

Council of Europe website: www.coe.int

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: www.coe.int/ecri

Council of Europe’s Inclusion and Anti-discrimination Division: www.coe.int/en/inclusion-and-antidiscrimination

This brochure explores the concepts of hate speech, its manifestations, its risks for human rights and democracies. This brochure was developed for any person and also for civil society organisations and others who feel the need to understand the phenomenon of hate speech better and wish to do something to combat hate speech. The brochures provides explanations about hate speech as well as proposals for actions to prevent and fight hate speech.



This brochure was developed as part of joint programmes co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe, the Partnership for Good Governance(PGG) and the Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey (HF); in particular the action "Promotion of diversity and equality in the Western Balkans" (HF) and the project "Strengthening access to justice through non-judicial redress mechanisms for victims of discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes in the Eastern Partnership" (PGG). The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of either party.

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

www.coe.int

The Member States of the European Union have decided to link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

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