

Compilation of promising practices on combating hate speech at national level



Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI)
Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Compilation of promising practices on combating hate speech at national level

Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI)

Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)

**Study prepared by:
Jennifer Jackson-Preece**

French edition: Compilation de pratiques prometteuses sur la lutte contre le discours de haine au niveau national

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

The reproduction of extracts (up to 500 words) is authorised, except for commercial purposes as long as the integrity of the text is preserved, the excerpt is not used out of context, does not provide incomplete information or does not otherwise mislead the reader as to the nature, scope or content of the text.

The source text must always be acknowledged as follows “© Council of Europe, year of the publication”.

All other requests concerning the reproduction/translation of all or part of the document, should be addressed to the Directorate of Communications, Council of Europe (F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex or publishing@coe.int). All other correspondence concerning this document should be addressed to the Anti-Discrimination Department of the Council of Europe.

Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex France
E-mail: cdadi@coe.int

Cover design and layout:
Documents and Publications Production
Department (DPDP), Council of Europe

Cover photo: Shutterstock
& Council of Europe

This publication has not been copy-edited by the SPDP Editorial Unit to correct typographical and grammatical errors.

© Council of Europe, October 2024
Printed at the Council of Europe

II. Key Actors

A. Public officials, elected bodies, and political parties

66. The Recommendation highlights the crucial role of public officials, elected bodies and political parties in addressing hate speech because, due to their position of influence, they have broader possibilities for spreading their speeches (§ 28 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and § 115 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16). For the purpose of the Recommendation, the term ‘public officials’ is understood to include ‘members of the legislature, the government, the judiciary, and other public authorities’ (§ 28 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and §§ 115-117 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16). Public officials should avoid using, endorsing, or promoting hate speech and instead foster a culture of human rights. They should be encouraged to uphold ‘freedom of expression’, including both ‘information or ideas’ that are ‘favourably received’ or ‘inoffensive’ as well as those which may ‘offend, shock or disturb the State or any sector of the population’ (§ 28 of CM/Rec(2022)16).

67. The implementation of special measures to address and counteract hate speech by parliaments, other elected bodies, and political parties should be promoted, particularly in the context of election campaigns and representative assembly debates (§ 29 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and § 119 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16). For example, in 2021, Republic of Moldova’s Central Electoral Commission (CEC) updated the Code of Conduct for electoral campaigns to include a new provision defining and banning hate speech and incitement to discrimination. By August 2023, a new regulation developed by the CEC took effect, governing the creation and distribution of political and electoral advertising and public interest messages. This regulation also explicitly prohibits the use of any images or messages that promote hatred and discrimination.

68. Several member States have adopted codes of conduct for parliamentarians or political parties intended to prevent and combat hate speech as per Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) Resolution 2275(2019) on the responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech⁵⁷. The German Bundestag and the state-level parliaments have established guidelines that impose penalties for hate speech incidents. In Baden-Württemberg, two AfD members were removed from a session due in part to a racist comment they made and then further penalised by being banned from the next three sessions for failing to comply with this directive⁵⁸. Similarly, the Code of Principles and Ethics for Members of Parliament (MPs) in Cyprus prohibits hate speech, incitement to violence and sexist/racist behaviour by MPs in performing their duties⁵⁹. Compliance with the Code is monitored by a Special Parliamentary Committee on Ethics. The Code of Ethics for Members of the Greek Parliament provides for the prevention of hate speech against persons on the grounds of their racial or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, sex, age, disability or sexual orientation⁶⁰. The Albanian Parliament has also ratified a set of rules, including a provision that bars Members of Parliament (MPs) from engaging in racist, homophobic, or transphobic language while in session, along with any discriminatory or stereotypical behaviour, whether within parliamentary proceedings or elsewhere⁶¹. Breaching these guidelines may result in disciplinary actions taken against the offending MP.

B. Internet intermediaries

69. The Recommendation recognises the vital role that internet intermediaries now have in spreading ideas and information within and between member States. Internet intermediaries have their own corporate human rights responsibilities, and should be guided by national and international human rights standards (§ 30 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and § 123 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16).

70. The section of the Recommendation addressing Internet Intermediaries largely builds on the Recommendation on the roles and responsibilities

57. See Council of Europe Parliamentary Resolution [PACE Resolution 2275\(2019\)](#) on the responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech, 10 April 2019.

58. See [ECRI Report on Germany](#), 6th Monitoring Cycle, 17 mars 2020, p. 20.

59. See [ECRI Report on Cyprus](#), 6th Monitoring Cycle, 7 mars 2023, p. 17.

60. See response from Greece, Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) and Steering Committee on media and information society (CDMSI) Survey on preventing and combating hate speech, 16 November 2022.

61. See [ECRI Report on Albania](#), 6th Monitoring Cycle, 2 June 2020, p. 16.

of internet intermediaries (CM/Rec(2018)2), providing guideline for shaping a rule of law-based policy for the relationship between state authorities and intermediaries and their respective human rights obligations and responsibilities, online and offline⁶². According to paragraph 1.3.8. of CM/Rec(2018)2:

“In order to ensure that illegal content – as determined either by law or by a judicial authority or other independent administrative authority whose decisions are subject to judicial review – is effectively prevented from being accessed, States should co-operate closely with intermediaries to secure the restriction of such content in line with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality. They should also take into account the fact that automated means, which may be used to identify illegal content, currently have a limited ability to assess context. Such restrictions should not prevent the legitimate use of identical or similar content in other contexts”

71. Human rights should inform all internet intermediaries’ corporate practices, including their terms of service, moderation and content removal, employment and training (§ 31 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and §§ 138-142 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16). Concerning hate speech, this also means that internet intermediaries should act to identify and appropriately respond to hate speech according to its severity.

72. To effectively address the issue of hate speech, it is crucial that automated moderation processes are complemented by human moderators who are well-trained and adequately supported (§ 34 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and §§ 135-137 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16). These moderators should possess cultural, legal, and social awareness to accurately identify and appropriately handle hate speech, considering each case’s severity (§ 33 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and §§ 135-137 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16). In less severe cases, alternative actions beyond removal should be taken. Trusted flaggers and fact-checkers must also be trained in human rights standards for hate speech.

73. Online platforms (including social media) should also scrutinise their algorithms and data-gathering methods to prevent indirect encouragement of hate speech via advertising, microtargeting, content amplification or recommendation (§ 36 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and §§ 147-149 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16).

74. The Recommendation envisions a multi-stakeholder approach, so internet intermediaries should partner with civil society organisations engaged with hate speech on data collection and analysis, policy proposals and campaigns (§ 35 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and §§ 143-146 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16). For example, most of the major internet intermediaries, e.g., Meta Platforms,

62. See Council of Europe, [Internet Intermediaries - Freedom of Expression \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/e/intermediaries/).

Inc. (parent company of Facebook), Microsoft, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, etc., have joined the European Commission's (EU) Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online, which is a voluntary initiative that involves cooperation between public authorities and internet platforms. By signing the Code of Conduct, internet intermediaries have committed to review and remove illegal hate speech within 24 hours of notification, provide feedback to users who report such content, educate and empower its users on how to counter hate speech and collaborate with civil society organisations on awareness-raising activities.

75. At the level of the EU, the European Commission's Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online sets out several commitments for internet intermediaries to prevent the spread of illegal hate speech online and ensure respect for fundamental rights⁶³. The Commission also monitors the implementation of the Code of Conduct through regular evaluations based on feedback from civil society organisations and public authorities.

76. Innovative efforts to partner with internet intermediaries are also being made at the national level. For example, OBERAXE is building on the EU Code of Conduct in its efforts to prevent and combat online hate speech in Spain by collaborating directly with major internet platforms like YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. This initiative focuses on systematic daily monitoring of xenophobic, racist, and anti-immigration content across these platforms, a project initially spurred by the increase in hate speech during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a methodology adapted from EU practices but tailored for Spain, OBERAXE manually searches for and classifies hate speech, communicating with platforms for timely removal. Unaddressed cases are escalated, and potentially criminal content is reported to legal authorities. The results of this monitoring are shared bimonthly in a bulletin designed to improve the monitoring process and inform strategies against hate speech. Additionally, the ALRECO project (see also paragraph 62) seeks to expand this monitoring framework by incorporating more organisations, enhancing the collective response to hate speech⁶⁴.

63. At the time of writing (June 2024), the European Commission was planning an enhanced code to better reflect the provisions of the Digital Services Act. 'The Code of Conduct+' will not only focus on content removal but also on enhanced prevention and the anticipation of threats.

64. See the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE), Monitoring of online hate speech by OBERAXE.

C. Media

77. The media and journalists play an important “public watchdogs” role in society. The Recommendation acknowledges the pivotal role they can play also in reporting on hate speech (§ 38 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and §§ 156-157 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16), while also promoting a culture of tolerance and enhancing social cohesion. Notable examples include, in Poland, the independent online media outlet [OKO.press](#) regularly monitors and reports hate speech issues, and also promotes counter speech and alternative speech; and, [Valigia Blu](#), another independent online media outlet, which performs a similar role in Italy.

78. Media and journalists should be able to freely fulfil such roles by providing accurate and reliable information without becoming targets of undue editorial interference, inappropriate sanction by hate speech laws and regulations, or, indeed, hate speech itself (§ 38 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and §§ 156-157 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16). For example, the [Ethical Journalism Network \(EJN\)](#), a coalition of journalists, press owners and media support groups from across Europe and the globe, works to promote just this sort of ethical journalism. The EJN has developed an [infographic Five Point Test for Journalists](#) to detect hate speech modelled on criteria similar to that used in the Recommendation and the Rabat Action Plan on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred. This infographic is currently available in over twenty languages including [English](#), [French](#), [German](#), [Italian](#), [Spanish](#), and [Russian](#). The EJN also offers training in ethical journalism and has developed a [toolkit on migration reporting](#) in cooperation with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the European Broadcasting Union and the European Federation of Journalists⁶⁵. Through various projects and initiatives such as these, the EJM strives to support journalists, policymakers and human rights organisations in their dual mandate to prevent hate speech and promote tolerance and understanding.

79. Another interesting example in this context is the [SafeJournalist Network](#). The SafeJournalists Network is a regional platform of journalist associations and media trade unions in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo^{*66}, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) that advocates for media freedom and journalists’ safety, including from hate speech directed at them. The network was established in 2016 with

65. See EJN, [Migration reporting toolkit for journalists launches on World Refugee Day](#), 2019.

66. All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nation’s Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

the support of the European Union. The network monitors and reports on the levels of media freedom and safety of journalists in the region, using an [online database](#) of attacks and threats against media professionals including instances of hate speech and hate crimes, as well as annual national and biannual regional reports. The network also engages in policy development and advocacy, proposing solutions and recommendations to improve the legal and institutional frameworks for media freedom and journalists' safety. The network collaborates with other civil society organisations, international institutions, and relevant stakeholders to raise awareness of these issues.

80. Special consideration should be directed at the rights of women and minority journalists and minority media who are particularly likely to encounter discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes (§ 38 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and § 157– EM of CM/Rec(2022)16). For example, women journalists frequently face insults and threats online and offline, many of which are sexist and rooted in gender stereotypes⁶⁷. Such hate speech negatively impacts their personal and professional reputation, and consequently, these attacks often remain unreported⁶⁸. An interesting example in this context is the campaign [Women Journalists in the Front Line](#) (an initiative of the SafeJournalists Network) which highlights the challenges and achievements of female journalists in the Western Balkans. The campaign aims to raise awareness about the specific risks and obstacles women journalists face in their work, such as hate speech, gender-based violence⁶⁹, harassment, discrimination, and stereotypes. The campaign features a series of portraits and interviews with various women journalists from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo^{*70}, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The interviews reveal their personal stories, motivations, and aspirations as journalists, as well as their views on the current state of media freedom and journalists' safety in the region. [Dalija Hasanbegović-Konaković](#), a prominent TV journalist from Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the female journalists profiled

67. See UNESCO, 'Safety of Women Journalists'.

68. See UNESCO, [The Chilling: Global Trends in Online Violence Against Women Journalists](#), 2019.

69. See GREVIO, [General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women](#), 20 October 2021.

70. All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

in this initiative⁷¹. The Hasanbegović-Konaković case and others included in the project highlight the severe consequences of targeted online hate speech against female journalists. At the same time, the campaign also celebrates the courage, professionalism, and resilience of women journalists who report on various topics, including human rights, politics, culture, and sports. The online exhibition showcases the work of these women journalists, as well as some of their awards and recognitions.

81. Media regulators, media co-regulatory or self-regulatory bodies, should participate in the multi-stakeholder strategy envisioned by the Recommendation and develop their own codes of conduct regarding hate speech (§ 42 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and §§ 166-167 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16). For example, the Observatory for Security against Acts of Discrimination (OSCAD) in Italy is a joint initiative of the National Office Against Racial Discrimination (UNAR) and the State Police that facilitates cooperation between civil society organisations, law enforcement agencies, and internet intermediaries to prevent and combat hate speech and hate crime. OSCAD has cooperated with the Facing Facts Network to investigate and report⁷² on the strengths and weaknesses of Italy's hate speech and hate crime recording system. As part of this collaboration, OSCAD also developed a comprehensive online training course to improve law enforcement responses to hate speech and hate crime. Similarly, in Bulgaria the Association of European Journalists Bulgaria with the financial support of the "Rights, Equality and Citizenship" program (2014-2020) of the European Union and the "America for Bulgaria" Foundation developed Guidelines for journalists - "Hate speech, not just words".

82. Journalists are crucial in ensuring access to pluralist and reliable information and diverse opinions and ideas, therefore safeguarding democratic societies. For this reason, journalists are acknowledged as "public watchdogs" by the ECtHR, which has linked the press's duty to disseminate information and ideas on all topics of public interest to the right of the public to access this information⁷³. Unfortunately, journalists face increasing threats that hinder their work, including physical and psychological violence,

71. Dalija Hasanbegović-Konaković has endured years of targeted online hate speech due to her husband Konaković's political role. Opponents use fake profiles to relentlessly spread national and religious hatred, sexist insults, and conspiracy theories aimed at undermining her husband's credibility. The hate speech extended to absurd accusations linking her to terrorism and religious conversion plots, exacerbating the stress and damage to her personal and professional life.

72. Report available in Italian.

73. See European Court of Human Rights, 'Chapter V The Role of Public Watchdog', Guide on Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, 2022.

online threats, harassment, and intimidation. In response, in October 2023 the Council of Europe launched a Europe-wide [Campaign for the Safety of Journalists](#), stemming from the Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and Information Society, held in June 2021. This Campaign aims to enhance journalists' safety by encouraging member States to effectively implement relevant legal and policy frameworks nationally, to be tailored to each country's specific needs and in line with existing relevant standards. The Council of Europe supports these efforts, including by facilitating the setup of national chapters. The Campaign, a 5-year initiative covering all member States, calls for widespread support and action to protect journalists, promoting their right to report freely and safely, and to raise awareness of their pivotal role. In this context, journalistic safety encompasses protection from hate speech as defined in CM/Rec(2022)16.

D. Civil society organisations

83. Civil society organisations are equally key actors that should be involved in the multi-stakeholder strategy the Recommendation puts forward. Civil society organisations are particularly important to efforts aimed at advocating for and otherwise supporting the victims of hate speech and those targeted by hate speech, collecting and analysing data on hate speech, and education, training and awareness to identify and combat hate speech (§ 43 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and § 168–EM of CM/Rec(2022)16). It should be acknowledged that there is a wide range of civil society organisations engaged in promising efforts to prevent and combat hate speech within member States and transnationally across member States, consistent with CM/Rec(2022)16. This compilation is only able to highlight a selection of these many promising activities and initiatives.

84. In Sweden, the [Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Rights \(RFSL\)](#) trains its staff and volunteers on how to apply a human rights-based approach to their work on combating hate speech and discrimination against LGBTI persons. A similar approach is taken by the [Malta Gay Rights Organisation \(MGRM\)](#), who also offer resources, information, support and training to the LGBTQI community, including young people and their parents. In 2023, MGRM launched an online [Guide on Hate Speech and Hate Crime](#), which includes advice on reporting and victim support information. Meanwhile, in Poland, the ['NEVER AGAIN' Association](#) campaigns against racism, antisemitism and xenophobia, conducts research and publishes reports on hate speech and hate crime, and provides education and training to teachers, journalists and activists on how to counter hate speech. It has also developed an open code for hate free communication in

partnership with other nationally based civil society organisations working to prevent hate speech. Civil society organisations should cooperate with one another as well as other key stakeholders to support an effective, comprehensive response to hate speech (§ 42 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and § 169 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16).

85. For example, in France, the International League Against Racism and Antisemitism (LICRA) is an NGO that provides legal assistance to victims of hate speech and discrimination, monitors online hate speech, and organises campaigns and events to promote tolerance and diversity. LICRA has developed a number of partnerships to strengthen its activities in its overall fight against racism and antisemitism and related discrimination⁷⁴. In 2021, the President of the LICRA signed a partnership agreement with the Rector of the Grande Mosquée de Paris (The Great Mosque of Paris), Chems Eddine Hafiz. This agreement testifies to the convergence of LICRA and La Grande Mosquée de Paris in their joint adherence to the principles of secularism. LICRA has strengthened its partnerships in the field of training with the French Ministry of National Education and Sport, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice and the Human Rights Defender. Licra has also developed Sapio, its digital campus⁷⁵. It also cooperates with other civil society organisations or NGOs working on similar issues through platforms such as the European Network Against Racism (ENAR).

86. Similarly in Spain, the Movement Against Intolerance (MAI) is an NGO that offers psychological and social support to victims of hate speech and hate crime, coordinates a network of civil society organisations or NGOs working on these issues, and develops educational materials and tools to raise awareness and prevent hate speech. It also collaborates with other stakeholders such as media outlets, schools, local authorities, and religious communities.

87. International cooperation amongst civil society actors is another important strategy to combat and prevent hate speech. The “No Hate Speech Movement” is an interesting example of what can be done through such international civil society collaborations and projects. Originating

74. See response from LICRA, Compilation of contributions related to the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 submitted by CDADI members, participants and observers, 25 January 2024.

75. The architecture of this digital campus offers content designed to provide keys to understanding a current event, a controversial 4 issue or any other subject that has arisen in public opinion, with several approaches (understanding, enlightening and deepening) and ten themes: antiracism, antisemitism, racism, discrimination, negationism, complotism, memory, radicalisation, the city and sport.

from the Council of Europe's Youth Department in response to the terrorist attack in Utoya on 22 July 2011, the "No Hate Speech Movement" seeks to combat hate speech and promote positive discourse. It became a global initiative for young people, that champions education on human rights, media literacy, involvement of youth, and the development of counter and alternative narratives, with associated organisations coordinating the campaign in different national contexts. While the Youth Department of the Council of Europe completed the coordination of the global campaign in 2018, national committees and collaborations continue. For example, in Italy the "No Hate Speech Movement" is carried out by the National Coordination Group of young activists and youth organisations under the auspices of the Agency for Integrated Promotion of Citizens in Europe (APICE Association). The Italian "No Hate Speech Movement" is also part of the 'Rete nazionale per il contrasto ai discorsi e ai fenomeni d'odio' (National Network for the fight against hate speech and hate phenomena) that brings together various organisations and entities in Italy that have been actively engaged in researching, documenting, and fighting against hate incidents and hate speech for an extended period.

88. More examples of civil society contributions to the prevention and combat of hate speech can be found in ECRI's country monitoring reports.

89. Member States should encourage all public actors involved in preventing and combating hate speech to work in partnership with relevant civil society actors such as those outlined above (§ 43 of CM/Rec(2022)16 and § 171 – EM of CM/Rec(2022)16). The EU High Level Group on Combating hate speech and hate crime has Key Guiding Principles on Cooperation Between Law Enforcement Authorities and Civil Society Organizations (also the subject of § 18 of ECRI's GPR no. 11). It gives practical advice and examples of good practices for building trust, addressing challenges, and designing effective cooperation mechanisms. It also provides case studies and useful resources for further information.