European Education Area Strategic Framework

Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training

Input paper on Confronting Hate Speech in and through Education

Content

Executive summary

This input paper on confronting hate speech in and through education aims to set the scene in relation to the topic of the upcoming Working Group Equality and Values in Education and Training online meeting on 20-21 June 2024.[1]

In line with the Working Group's mandate, this input paper addresses Priority area 1 (PA1) of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)[2]: Quality, equity, inclusion and success in education and training. It particularly addresses the following PA1 issues and actions:
- iv) Maintaining education and training institutions as safe environments, free of violence, bullying, harmful speech, disinformation and all forms of discrimination, including through further implementation of Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching.
- v) Stimulating a safe and supportive school environment as a necessary condition for concrete issues, such as tackling discrimination, racism, sexism, segregation, bullying (including cyber-bullying), violence and stereotypes, and for the individual well-being of all learners.

This input paper is divided into the following sections:

(A) Key definitions of hate speech

(B) Recent trends and data

(C) Key documents and initiatives at the European and the international level

(D) Key research findings on hate speech in the context of education

(E) Some key issues for discussion, as identified through a WG survey

(F) Some inspiring practices and EU funded projects linked to confronting hate speech in and through education.

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[1] This paper was prepared by **Barry van Driel**, in cooperation with **Zsuzsa Blasko and Valentina Musso**, as part of the ICF Consulting Services Ltd support to the working group and in conversation with the working group coordinators.
[2] EUR-Lex - 32021G0226(01) - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

1. Key definitions of hate speech

Hate speech, sometimes referred to as "cyberhate" or "cyberaggression" in the digital domain[3], has been defined in various ways. There is no universally agreed upon definition of hate speech in international human rights law[4] or in the views of key scholars focusing on the issue on a more global level. There are divergent views about its scope and about how hate speech can best be confronted.[5]

"Hate-motivated crime and speech are illegal under EU law. The 2008 Framework Decision on combating certain forms of expressions of racism and xenophobia[6] requires the criminalisation of public incitement to violence or hatred based on race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin."[7] Some Member States have extended their national laws to other grounds such as sexual orientation, gender identity and disability.

According to **the Council of Europe (COE)**[8], "*hate speech covers many forms of expressions which advocate, incite, promote, or justify hatred, violence and discrimination against a person or group of persons for a variety of reasons. It poses grave dangers for the cohesion of a democratic society, the protection of human rights and the rule of law. If left unaddressed, it can lead to acts of violence and conflict on a wider scale. In this sense hate speech is an extreme form of intolerance which contributes to hate crime.*"[9]

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe[10] (OSCE) has defined, in similar terms, hate speech as an: "*expression of hatred against a certain group. It is used to insult a person on the account of that person's race, ethnic, religious or other group to which he/she belongs. Such speech generally seeks to condemn or dehumanize the individual or the group or to express anger, hatred, violence or contempt toward them.*"[11]

UNESCO[12], in referencing the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech[13], defines hate speech as: "*any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor. Forms of hate speech can include scapegoating, stereotyping, stigmatization and the use of derogatory language.*"[14]

Cyberbullying has often been used as a synonym for hate speech in the online world, and a link between cyberbullying and hate speech has been acknowledged in various EU Member States[15]. Nevertheless, there are distinctions between the two phenomena. In a systematic scientific review of hate speech among children and adolescents[16] the authors

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[3] See e.g. p. 116 of the European Parliament Document from 2016 entitled: 'Cyberbullying among young people'; see also: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10486144/; and https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2023-online-content-moderation_en.pdf

[4] In legal terms, hate speech has not been enshrined in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR,) and the Court used the term, "hate speech", for the first time in 1999. See e.g. https://www.ivir.nl/publicaties/download/Expert_paper_hate_speech.pdf (p.11)

[5] See e.g. https://www.ivir.nl/publicaties/download/Expert_paper_hate_speech.pdf (p.3)

[6] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32008F0913

[7] European Citizens' Panel on Tackling Hatred in Society. Information Kit (2024) (p 10). https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/document/download/0bd83827-8c0c-46a0-83c8-3de4949d5959_en?filename=COFE10_Tackling%20hatred%20in%20society_EN_New.pdf

[8] https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/hate-speech-and-violence#:~:text=Hate%20speech%20covers%20many%20forms,and%20the%20rule%20of%20law.

[9] See: https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/hate-speech-and-violence#:~:text=Hate%20speech%20covers%20many%20forms,and%20the%20rule%20of%20law.

[10] https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/e/116608.pdf

[11] Ibid, 9.

[12] https://www.unesco.org/en/countering-hate-speech/need-know

[13] https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/hate-speech-strategy.shtml,

[14] https://www.unesco.org/en/countering-hate-speech/need-know

[15] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/571367/IPOL_STU(2016)571367_EN.pdf

[16] Kansok-Dusche, Julia, Cindy Ballaschk, Norman Krause, Anke Zeißig, Lisanne Seemann-Herz, Sebastian Wachs, and Ludwig Bilz. 2023. 'A Systematic Review on Hate Speech among Children and Adolescents: Definitions, Prevalence, and

point out that the "*analyzed literature tended to emphasize the fact that cyberhate was necessarily based on prejudicial and intolerant views about different social groups...Perpetrators of bullying may hold prejudicial views, but that is not always the case. In contrast, prejudice was said to always be present in cyberhate, even when it was directed towards an individual rather than a group…with regards to targets...hate material is aimed at denigrating groups (in the sense of a collective to which individuals belong). Instead cyberbullying is framed as an attack on individuals.*"[17]

1.1. Freedom of Expression versus Hate Speech

Article 11 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights stipulates that: "(1) *Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. (2) The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected.*"[18]

There has often been discussion regarding the boundaries of free speech and expression and hate speech. **The European Court of Human Rights** notes that although "*Freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of [a democratic] society'… as a matter of principle it may be considered necessary in certain democratic societies to sanction or even prevent all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify hatred based on intolerance …, provided that any 'formalities', 'conditions', 'restrictions' or 'penalties' imposed are proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued."* [19]

Connected to this, in a key court ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in 1976[20] (in a case involving restrictions on the right to freedom of expression in order to protect morals), it was affirmed that freedom of expression "*…is applicable not only to 'information' or 'ideas' that are favorably received or regarded as inoffensive or as a matter of indifference, but also to those that offend, shock or disturb the State or any sector of the population. Such are the demands of that pluralism, tolerance, and broadmindedness without which there would be no democratic society*".[21]

The United Nations (UN) refers to its conviction that "*freedom of opinion and expression are… the cornerstones of human rights and pillars of free and democratic societies*" and that it "*supports more positive speech and upholds respect for freedom of expression as the norm*" and that "*therefore, any restrictions must be an exception and seek to prevent harm and ensure equality or the public participation of all*". It goes further to mention the importance of identifying the "*difference between freedom of expression and 'incitement' (to discrimination, hostility, and violence), which is prohibited under criminal law*". The UN also refers to education as a remedy to hate speech.[22]

More specifically in the context of education, in its policy guidelines on Addressing Hate Speech Through Education[23], the UN speaks about the challenges of addressing hate speech while also fostering freedom of expression in the classroom. Freedom of expression is in fact vital to the learning process and to the improvement of critical thinking and critical debate – although it should never come at the cost of spreading prejudice and disinformation. For those targeted by hate speech, being victimized is also limiting their own freedom to expression, as fear can prevent them from practicing their rights. Given the complexity of reconciling the two – ensuring

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Overlap with Related Phenomena'. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 24 (4): 2598–2615. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380221108070

[17] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10486144/

[18] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT

[19] https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/fs_hate_speech_eng

[20] https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-57499%22]}

[21] https://www.ivir.nl/publicaties/download/Expert_paper_hate_speech.pdf (p.10)

[22] https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/hate-speech-versus-freedom-of-speech

[23] 384872eng.pdf (unesco.org)

both protection from hate speech and freedom of expression – teachers need support and adequate training to make sure education can fulfill this important dual role.

2. Recent trends and data

While hate speech (though non digital) has been part of the European (and other) landscapes for centuries, the rise of the Internet and digital devices has produced profound changes in the nature and manifestations of hate speech. According to the **Digital 2020 July Global Statshot** report [24] in 2020 more than half of the world's total population was using social media. More recently, Eurostat information shows that some 96% of young people in the EU aged 16-29 years reported using the internet every day (compared with 84% of the adult population) in 2022.[25] One consequence of the proliferation of social media use among young people is a higher-than-average incidence of hate speech among young people. [26]

The Fundamental Rights Agency **report on Online Content Moderation - Current challenges in detecting hate speech**[27] looked at the challenges of detecting and removing hate speech from social media directed against women, people of African descent, Jews and Roma as these groups are often the targets of online hate. The analysis[28] of posts and comments published on social media platforms between January–June 2022 revealed that out of 1,500 posts assessed by content moderation tools, more than half (53%) were considered hateful by human coders.

The **European Observatory on Online Hate** project[29] examined online messages between January 2023 and September 2023. The data produced from this period showed that out of eight million online messages analysed in the EU, the level of hateful toxicity in the given period had increased by 30%.[30] The report concluded that: "Europe today is experiencing an alarming increase in hate speech and hate crime".

Data on hate speech among children, especially in an education setting is scarce. In a survey[31] of children aged 10–18 from 11 countries in Europe, conducted in 2020, the **Joint Research Center (JRC)** of the European Commission asked children if they had seen hate messages that attacked certain groups or individuals during the COVID-19 period while in lockdown. The JRC also gave examples of various kinds of hate messages to guide the respondents: offensive messages, related to people, e.g., of a different skin-colour, religion, nationality, or sexuality. The results showed that: "*In all countries, the percentage of children who have ever been exposed to cyberhate ranges between one-half, with 52% in Austria, to over two-thirds in Romania (71%)."* A study[32] from 2023 of more than three thousand 7th - to 9th graders in Germany and Switzerland found out that 67% of the students had witnessed hate speech in their school and 65% had witnessed online hate speech at least once in the previous 12 months.

[24] https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-july-global-statshot
[25] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230714-1. The report also notes that use of the internet for civic participation remains low among young people.
[26] https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-july-global-statshot see also e.g., https://academic.oup.com/jcmc/article/27/4/zmac012/6648458; and https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10486144/.
[27] https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2023/online-content-moderation
[28] https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2023/online-hate-we-need-improve-content-moderation-effectively-tackle-hate-speech#:~:text=FRA's%20analysis%20of%20posts%20and,considered%20hateful%20by%20human%20coders
[29] https://eooh.eu/ The EOOH project (2021-2023) was supported by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme and implemented by a consortium of four partners: Textgain in cooperation with Dare To Be Grey, Hogeschool Utrecht and PCDS. The consortium conducted a two-year investigation into and reporting on the fundamental nature of the dynamics of online hate, how hate manifests itself, the connections between the perpetrators and their influence as well as disinformation strategies.
[30] https://eooh.eu/articles/2023
[31] https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC124034
[32] https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2023.1076249/full

3. Key documents and initiatives at the European and international level

3.1. EU level documents and initiatives

The European Commission views hate speech and hate crime as particularly serious crimes, due to the harmful impact on fundamental rights, on individuals and on society at large, ultimately undermining the foundations and values of the EU.

Similar to other actors, the European Commission identifies the education sector as a particularly important domain, where the promotion of common values and human rights can address the incidence of hate speech in the future, and also a domain in which the most vulnerable individuals – children - need to be protected from the harmful consequences of hate speech.

"*The Commission seeks to ensure that the **[2008] Framework Decision [on combating certain forms of expressions of racism and xenophobia]** is fully and correctly transposed, in particular through the launch of infringement proceedings, which in turn have led to action in eleven Member States. Yet, the Commission cannot intervene in individual instances of hate speech or hate crime. These remain a competence of national law enforcement authorities, who must investigate, prosecute, and try cases of alleged hate-motivated crime or speech.*"[33].

On 9 December 2021, the European Commission adopted a **Communication on "A more inclusive and protective Europe: extending the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime"**[34] which prompts a Council decision to extend the current list of 'EU crimes' in Article 83(1) TFEU to hate crimes and hate speech. In January 2024 the **European Parliament adopted a resolution**[35] **calling for the extension of the EU crime list to include hate speech and hate crimes**.

In 2016, the European Commission established a High Level Group on combating hate speech and hate crime[36] to facilitate expert discussions and the exchange of good practices, with a view of developing practical guidance, standards and tools to build capacity, and improve responses.

The European Commission has adopted several EU strategies such as the **EU strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life**[37], **EU Roma strategic framework on equality, inclusion and participation**[38] as well as the **EU action plan against racism**[39].

In December 2023, the European Commission and the High Representative adopted a **Communication on "No place for hate: a Europe united against hatred"**[40] noting a rise in hatred which poses a risk for society and democracy. The Communication "*is a call for action, for all Europeans, to ensure that Europe is a place where our founding values are enjoyed by everyone, on an equal basis…. education must contribute to raising pupils', students' and teachers' awareness and their readiness to react against prejudices, extremist narratives, conspiracy theories, negative stereotypes and ideologies that drive*

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[33] European Citizens' Panel on Tackling Hatred in Society. Information Kit (2024) (p. 10) https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/document/download/0bd83827-8c0c-46a0-83c8-3de4949d5959_en?filename=COFE10_Tackling%20hatred%20in%20society_EN_New.pdf
[34] Extending EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime - European Commission (europa.eu)
[35] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2024-0044_EN.html
[36] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-hate-speech-and-hate-crime_en
[37] https://commission.europa.eu/document/6160ed15-80da-458e-b76b-04eacae46d6c_en
[38] https://commission.europa.eu/document/99cc0720-68c2-4300-854f-592bf21dceaf_en
[39] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en
[40] https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/c60c451c-ccd2-406a-be3a-ef65123f2bb6_en?filename=JOIN_2023_51_1_EN_ACT_part1_v8.pdf

discrimination and hatred." The Communication mentions that it will "*take forward the new Council conclusions on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and Council conclusions on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship, giving a specific focus in early 2024 to the theme 'No Place for Hate'. Support for mutual learning and good practice exchange should have a particular focus on anti-hatred educational resources and pedagogical approaches, targeted to cover different levels and types of education.*" (p. 10-11).

As part of the implementation of the Communication, in April and May 2024, the Commission convened a **European Citizens Panel on "Tackling Hatred in Society"** where 150 randomly selected citizens from all EU Member States discussed about ways to increase the response against hate speech and hate crime. The panel of citizens agreed on 21 recommendations, many of which have a strong link with education policies and initiatives at both European and national levels[41].

The European Commission has also taken other initiatives that provide paths to confront online hate speech, including, for example, the 2022 European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+)[42] ensures that children are protected, respected and empowered online. Under BIK+, the Better Internet for Kids portal continues to provide different resources and best practices. Various resources make reference to hate speech.[43] The portal is a place of exchange with the EU co-funded network of Safer Internet Centres present in most of the Member States, who reach out to children, parents, and teachers.

The European Commission's Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport[44], as well as European Solidarity Corps programme[45] and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)[46] support numerous projects that promote inclusion, diversity, intercultural dialogue, as well as projects that combat intolerance and discrimination.

The 2022 Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training[47] provide guidance for teachers and educators, focusing on digital literacy and education and training as tools, among other things, to promote awareness of, and combat, hate speech. They aim to promote responsible and safe use of digital technologies, foster a better awareness and knowledge regarding disinformation and to contribute to the development of critical thinking skills.

Several initiatives have taken place addressing hate speech and related issues in the digital domain. The **EU Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online**[48] represents an agreement first (in 2016) between the European Commission and Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter, and YouTube.[49] Noting the responsibilities of IT companies, a key aim has been to prevent and counter the spread of illegal hate speech online. The implementation of the Code of Conduct is evaluated through a regular monitoring exercise that has been set up in collaboration with a network of organisations located in the different

[41] https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/tackling-hatred-society_en
[42] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/strategy-better-internet-kids
[43] https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/practice/articles/article?id=7230406
[44] https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/
[45] https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/european-solidarity-corps_en
[46] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/cerv
[47] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a224c235-4843-11ed-92ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
[48] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-code-conduct-countering-illegal-hate-speech-online_en
[49] The agreement was later extended to Instagram, Snapchat and Dailymotion (2018) Jeuxvideo.com (2019), TikTok (2020) LinkedIn (2021) and Rakuten Viber and Twitch (2022) The EU Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online - European Commission (europa.eu).

EU countries. In this Code of Conduct, the IT companies and the European Commission express the willingness to collaborate in "*identifying and promoting independent counter-narratives, new ideas and initiatives and supporting educational programs that encourage critical thinking*".

Also, regarding digital risks, the 2022 **Digital Services Act** (Regulation – 2022/2065)[50] "…*regulates online intermediaries and platforms such as marketplaces, social networks, content-sharing platforms, app stores, and online travel and accommodation platforms. Its main goal is to prevent illegal and harmful activities online and the spread of disinformation. It ensures user safety, protects fundamental rights, and creates a fair and open online platform environment.*" [51] The Digital Services Act, among other things, seeks to offer stronger protection for children online and allow less exposure to illegal content online.

The **Council Conclusions on supporting well-being in digital education[52]**, published in 2022, refer to the circumstance that learners and educators can be exposed to digital risks and that this has consequences for well-being. The conclusions include the following: "*Education and training systems and schools should explore ways of strengthening well-being in digital education, promote digital risk awareness and prevention as well as whole-school policies, including school procedures of an organisational nature, supporting safe digital education environments and addressing challenges connected with digital risks.*".

3.2. Examples of the other European and international initiatives and projects

Initiatives at both the broader European and international level reflect on (online) hate speech, with the purpose of awareness raising, preventing, monitoring, or responding to hate speech.

3.3. Monitoring and analysing hate speech

The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) has compiled a Compendium of Practices on hate crime[53]. The Compendium aims to help "*policymakers and practitioners such as law enforcement officers understand what is being done elsewhere in the EU to combat hate crime, and which elements could be adapted for use in their own national contexts.*" It contains multiple entries focusing specifically on hate speech. There is also a database[54] on anti-Muslim hatred incidents, which tracks incidents relating to, for instance, incitement to violence or hatred, and hate speech. The database further provides research findings, reports, studies, and statistics as well as information on victim's support organisations. Additionally, FRA publishes reports on Antisemitic incidents in the EU. The 2022 report,[55] for instance, contains a section on Antisemitism online with many examples (across Europe) of hate speech incidents. FRA is presently carrying out the third round of its survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews. The survey results are scheduled to be published in July 2024.

FRA has conducted multiple surveys on LGBTIQ related issues that also refer to hate speech. In its survey[56] released in May 2024, it notes that despite progress people still experience hate-motivated violence and discrimination. The report states that with respect to LGBTIQ youth, there has been: "*a steep increase in everyday harassment .... and it is not happening behind closed doors: much of this happens in public spaces where people*

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[50] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj
[51] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act_en
[52] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A52022XG1209%2801%29
[53] https://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/hate-crime/compendium-practices
[54] https://fra.europa.eu/en/databases/anti-muslim-hatred/
[55] https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2023/antisemitism-overview-2012-2022
[56] https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2024-lgbtiq-equality_en.pdf

are supposed to feel safe." The results of the survey also show that trans and intersex people face even greater levels of victimisation. This worrying landscape emerges in a context of online hate speech and anti-LGBTI campaigns. The LGBTIQ survey respondents very frequently encounter online references to 'LGBTIQ propaganda' or 'gender ideology' and to LGBTIQ people posing a threat to 'traditional values' or being 'unnatural' or mentally ill and posing a sexual threat, while in many cases they face calls for violence against LGBTIQ people.

3.4. Preventing and awareness raising

In 2015, **COE's** independent human rights monitoring body, **the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI),** adopted a **General Policy Recommendation[57] on combating hate speech**. The recommendation stresses "*the importance of education in undermining the misconceptions and misinformation that form the basis of hate speech and of the need for such education to be directed in particular to the young*" (p.4). The report highlights online hate speech as a main trend and emphasises that hate speech through social media has been rapidly increasing and has the potential to reach a much larger audience than extremist print media were able to reach in the past. The most recent report,[58] from 2022, makes specific reference to combating and preventing hate speech, warning that hate speech and hate related violence can have serious consequences. In the most recent report special attention is devoted to hate speech directed towards LGBTI persons and the Roma.

COE has also had a focus on hate speech in the last decade mostly in the political and legislative domains[59]. Already in 2013, COE rolled out the **No Hate Speech Youth Campaign,**[60] which ran until 2017, though some national chapters have continued their work. This has been a youth campaign that aims to mobilise young people to counter hate speech and promote human rights online. The core of the initiative has been national campaigns across Europe, with multiple action days. Most campaigns have focused on raising awareness of the risks that hate speech poses to human rights and democracy, and on educational activities. The campaigns have tended to involve a broad variety of actors and stakeholders. For instance, in Poland the Campaign Coalition[61] consists of e.g., youth, teachers, and educators. The campaign has an online compendium with over 270 resources.

More recent activities of COE in the area include a joint project with the EU (running from 2023 to 2026) aiming "*to prevent and combat intolerant discourse and hate speech, as well as other forms of violence and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) across Europe*"[62]. In their recent study on **Preventing and combating hate speech in times of crisis**[63], COE is discussing some of the latest challenges provoking various forms of hate speech, including the period of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian Federation' war of aggression against Ukraine. The study pays special attention to antisemitic hate speech as well hate speech against the Roma and LGBTI people in times of crises and underlines the role of education and training in preventing and combatting hate speech at the times of crisis and beyond.

Though hate speech is not mentioned specifically, it is worth mentioning two relevant COE initiatives that relate to prevention mechanisms and connect to hate speech:

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[57] https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-15-on-combating-hate-speech/16808b5b01
[58] https://rm.coe.int/ar2022-ecri23-16-eng/1680ab5b52
[59] .https://www.coe.int/en/web/combating-hate-speech/council-of-europe-on-hate-speech#{%22216925596%22:[0]}
[60] https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/home
[61] https://eeagrants.org/archive/2009-2014/projects/PL05-0164
[62] https://www.coe.int/en/web/sogi/combating-anti-lgbtiq-violence
[63] 1680ad393b (coe.int)

COE's Education Strategy 2024-2030.[64] This Education Strategy is based on 3 priority pillars: "*renewing the democratic and civic mission of education, enhancing the social responsibility and responsiveness of education and advancing education through a human rights-based digital transformation.*" Becoming a digital learner and anti-discrimination feature in this strategy. During its launch, hate speech was mentioned in terms of prioritizing the well-being of learners.[65]

The 2019 Digital Citizenship Education Handbook: **Being Online, well-being online, rights online**[66]. Based on the COE's competences for democratic culture[67] (CDCs), the importance of media and information literacy is highlighted as a component of digital citizenship, with reference to 'the ability to interpret, understand and express creativity through digital media, as critical thinkers.'. The Handbook also has a focus on well-being online, which can directly be connected to the issue of hate speech.

At the global level, **UNESCO** has focused on the issue of countering hate speech, including the educational realm on various occasions. Its position is that "*education offers multiple opportunities to address the root causes of hate speech and sensitize learners of all ages to its forms and consequences online and offline.*"[68] This international organisation has mapped and analysed existing initiatives to combat online hate speech in its comprehensive **2015 report Countering online hate speech**.[69] A special section devotes attention to educational opportunities. The focus here is primarily on media and information literacy as a tool to counter hate speech, with special attention devoted to citizenship education and digital citizenship. UNESCO emphasises the importance of media literacy to address online hate speech. According to UNESCO, learners need to develop digital citizenship skills in order to navigate the internet safely and responsibly: "*Media literacy can strengthen the resilience of learners to hate speech and build their capacity to recognize and counter mis- and disinformation, violent extremist narratives and conspiracy theories.*"[70]

UNESCO, together with the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG) have jointly developed the first Guide for Policy Makers (and educators) to explore educational responses to this phenomenon and give practical recommendations for strengthening education systems. This 2023 publication, entitled **Addressing Hate Speech through Education: A Guide for Policy Makers**[71] notes that: "*education has a central role to play in helping to effectively address the root causes of hate speech and build the capacity of learners to oppose it by equipping them with the knowledge and skills to counter the hateful narratives that they are confronted with, whether online or offline.*" (p.5). The guide offers: "*concrete recommendations for policy makers to address hate speech and mitigate the impacts on those targeted through strategies focusing on, inter alia, the curricula and textbooks, the pedagogy, teacher education, the management of educational institutions and partnerships*" (p. 9). Furthermore, the Guide for Policy Makers mentions educational responses to hate speech and all forms of hateful communication. These include: "(1) *training teachers and learners on the values and practices related to being respectful global and digital citizens; (2) adopting pedagogical and whole-school approaches to strengthen social and emotional learning; and (3) revising and reviewing curricula and educational materials to make them culturally responsive and*

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[64] https://rm.coe.int/education-strategy-of-the-council-of-europe-2024-2030/1680aee0c4
[65] https://search.coe.int/directorate_of_communications/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680acbd49
[66] https://rm.coe.int/digital-citizenship-education-handbook/168093586f
[67] https://www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture
[68] https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-dedicates-international-day-education-2024-countering-hate-speech
[69] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233231
[70] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/international-day-education-why-we-must-counter-hate-speech-unesco-69moe/
[71] https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/publications-and-resources/Addressing_hate_speech_through_education_A_guide_for_policy_makers.pdf

*to include content that identifies hate speech and promotes the right to freedom of expression.***"**[72]

In July 2021, the UN General Assembly highlighted global concerns over "*the exponential spread and proliferation of hate speech" around the world and adopted a resolution*[73] on "*promoting inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech*". This led to the UN initiative proclaiming **June 18 the International Day for Countering Hate Speech**.[74] The year 2024 will mark the 3rd annual global event of this kind. Special attention is devoted to the role of education in this initiative[75] by arguing for a comprehensive approach through education: "*To effectively counter hate speech online and offline and foster a safe and inclusive environment free from all forms of hatred and discrimination, efforts made by educators in the classroom must be reflected in all aspects of school life, including policies, extracurricular activities, sports, and social and cultural events. Active engagement of teachers, administration, and parents is a critical success determinant.*"

It is also worth noting the joint statement that the heads of several European human rights institutions (from OSCE, ODIHR, FRA and ECRI) issued in March 2017, on the occasion of the annual International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in which they stated that: "…*promoting inclusion and mutual respect through education and strong positive narratives is essential to preventing incitement to hatred and countering hate speech in the digital age…*" they stressed that "*it is the responsibility of all, and political leaders in particular, to counter intolerant discourse and hate speech and to ensure their root causes are addressed through education.*"[76]

Many **civil society organisations** focus on combating hate speech that targets specific groups. For example, the **European Disability Forum (EDF),** the umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities, published its **Recommendations on EU initiatives on hate speech and hate**[77] in 2021. The recommendations focus primarily on awareness raising. EDF points to the fact that persons with disabilities are at higher risk of being victims of hate speech and hate crime. According to EDF: "*In general, persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, and persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, are at higher risk of harassment, violence and crime, including within the digital world.*" EDF provides evidence in the Recommendations showing that online hate speech towards persons with disabilities is growing and presents various examples of hate speech from Organisation for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) data. The Recommendations also point out that persons with disabilities encounter multiple barriers to reporting hate speech and hate crimes.

Another example is an international human rights organization the **Minority Rights Group (MRG)**[78] working with minority and indigenous communities to achieve their rights. The MRG has looked into 'cyberhate' against the Roma in Bulgaria and Slovakia through its programme [Countering Online Antigypsyism and Cyberhate (COACH)](url)[79], which will run from December 2022 - November 2024. According to MRG: "*Online hate speech against Roma limits their online participation, an increasingly essential aspect of accessing basic services and participating in society. Furthermore, cyberhate plays a significant role in normalizing antigypsyism and discriminatory stereotypes.*" One way in which MRG counters hate speech is by "…*raising awareness about Roma rights and realities by disseminating*

[72] https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/addressing-hate-speech-through-education-guide-policy-makers
[73] https://www.undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/309
[74] https://www.un.org/en/observances/countering-hate-speech
[75] https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/countering-through-education.shtml
[76] https://www.osce.org/office-for-democratic-institutions-and-human-rights/306326
[77] https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2021/04/EDF-position-and-recommendation-on-hate-speech-and-hate-crime.pdf
[78] https://minorityrights.org/programmes/countering-online-antigypsyism-and-cyberhate-coach/.
[79] https://minorityrights.org/programmes/countering-online-antigypsyism-and-cyberhate-coach/

accurate and positive narratives among internet users in the form of short films, infographics, photo stories, online articles and social media campaigns".

4. Key research findings on hate speech in the context of education

Empirical research on hate speech among children and adolescents is relatively scarce: a recent systematic review[80] could identify no more than 10 distinct studies (published in 18 papers) looking into the prevalence and main characteristics of the phenomena. Most of the studies reviewed consider the online context and find that between 31% (India) and 69% (Spain) of 12 to 21 olds have been exposed to hate speech, with studies from other countries reporting values between these two extremes. Victimization rates varied between 7% in a US sample and 23% in a Finnish one, with experience of offline victimisation being less frequent compared to online victimisation. Finally, perpetration rates in the different studies range from 4% (South-Korea) to 32% (Thailand).[81]

Males are more likely than females to report being a perpetrator of hate speech both online and offline (Kansok-Dusche et al. 2023; Castellanos et al. 2023). Girls however are more likely to being victimised in online settings according to some studies, but not all. Concerning age-differences, exposure to online hate speech seems to be increasing from age 12 to 20, while frequency of victimisation appears to be constant. In addition, students from a migration background are more likely to be exposed to- or being a victim of hate speech according to several studies.[82] Finally, one study in the review suggested that children with a more affluent family background are less likely to be victimised.[83]

While they are highly indicative of the size of the problem at stake, it is very important to note that these figures are not directly comparable among each other. This is because they all come from different time points, and are based on different study designs, including the population studied (different age groups within the 12 to 21 group), different sampling methods and different modes of measurements. In fact, a key conclusion from the review is that a consensus-based definition of hate speech is still missing (also) from academic research and – relatedly – there is also no standard tool available to measure its occurrence in a comparable manner. The authors further call for studies on children younger than age 12 – an age group surely affected but complete understudied so far.[84]

A handful of recent studies looks specifically at offline hate-speech in the school context. In schools, the most frequent forms of offline hate-speech among 14- to 17-year-olds include offensive jokes, spreading prejudices, rumours or lies and watching discriminatory media.[85]The perpetrator is most often a classmate, but sometimes it is the teacher or other school staff, and the hate-speech can also come from an unknown source, e.g.in the form of a graffiti.[86]

Countering hate speech on the spot, i.e. providing a direct response either by openly supporting the victim, encouraging the audience to speak up or by offering factual opposition the content of hate speech can be a powerful tool to reduce the negative impacts

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[80] Kansok-Dusche, Julia, Cindy Ballaschk, Norman Krause, Anke Zeißig, Lisanne Seemann-Herz, Sebastian Wachs, and Ludwig Bilz. 2023. 'A Systematic Review on Hate Speech among Children and Adolescents: Definitions, Prevalence, and Overlap with Related Phenomena'. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 24 (4): 2598–2615. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380221108070.

[81] Ibid, 73.

[82] Wachs, Sebastian, Norman Krause, Michelle F. Wright, and Manuel Gámez-Guadix. 2023. 'Effects of the Prevention Program "HateLess. Together against Hatred" on Adolescents' Empathy, Self-Efficacy, and Countering Hate Speech'. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 52 (6): 1115–28. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-023-01753-2.

[83] Kansok-Dusche, J, et al., 2023.

[84] Ibid, 76.

[85] Wachs, S, et al., 2023.

[86] Ibid, 78.

of hatred.[87] A positive classroom climate, with a supportive relationship among the classmates has shown to be conducive to counter-speech among students in adolescence (Wachs, Castellanos, et al. 2023; Wachs, Valido, et al. 2023). Further, counter-speech is positively associated with a range of personal skills, including perspective-taking, prosocial-behaviour, assertiveness[88] as well as self-efficacy and empathy[89] – which are all possible to improve and promote in the classroom. In fact, a newly developed prevention program, *HateLess. Together against Hatred* in Germany shows very promising short-term effects in improving adolescents' empathy and self-efficacy and thus encouraging them to engage in counter-speech.[90] HateLess is a one-week interactive program designed to prevent hate speech perpetration and to equip Grade 7th to 9th students with the necessary knowledge and socio-emotional skills to stand up against hatred.[91]

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[87] Garland, Joshua, Keyan Ghazi-Zahedi, Jean-Gabriel Young, Laurent Hébert-Dufresne, and Mirta Galesic. 2022. 'Impact and Dynamics of Hate and Counter Speech Online'. *EPJ Data Science* 11 (1): 3. https://doi.org/10.1140/epjds/s13688-021-00314-6.
[88] Wachs, S, et al., 2023.
[89] Ibid, 81.
[90] Ibid, 81.
[91] Ibid., 81.

5. Some key issues and challenges for discussion, as identified through a survey of WG members

The following issues and challenges were identified in a survey sent to the WG members at the end of April 2024 and closed in mid-May 2024[92].

Awareness raising

- How can policy makers and educators gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of (online) hate speech?
- Who are the main targets of hate speech? What are the trends?
- What are the lessons from empirical research, as well as existing practices with respect to hate speech?
- How can we gain better understanding of how EU Members States are protecting students from hate speech? What is the present situation?
- How can policy makers and educators gain a better understanding of intersectional issues relating to hate speech?
- What role does Artificial Intelligence (AI) play relating to hate speech?

Content, approach and training

- How can the balance between confronting hate speech and protecting freedom of speech be dealt with in schools, especially in a climate when there might be pushback against curtailing hate speech?
- What kinds of approaches address the root causes of hate speech, not just manifestations?
- How can we best promote and implement policies relating to inclusive education and respect for diversity?

Teachers and students

- How can learners best be empowered to confront hate speech and not remain bystanders? What are examples of effective learner-centred initiatives?
- How to address end engage learners who reject objective information and cling to biased beliefs? How to maintain a professional and respectful attitude in the face of such opposition to addressing hate speech?
- How can teachers be empowered to teach about hate speech, especially in a political climate that might be opposed to restricting hate speech?

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[92] They have been slightly reformulated where necessary.

Educational authorities and policy makers

- How can educational authorities and schools implement holistic, whole school approaches to promote learning about hate speech? How feasible is such a whole school approach around this particular issue?

- What policies are needed to address existing competence gaps for future and present teachers in terms of their ability to address issues relating to hate speech?

- How can educational authorities collaborate with NGOs and schools in the most effective and sustainable way?

- What are examples of successful policies relating to confronting hate speech in the educational realm and what makes such policies effective? How can these insights be disseminated throughout the education system?

- How can educational authorities and schools best address the challenges posed by intolerant political beliefs and ideologies – at all levels?

6. Inspiring practices and EU funded projects linked to confronting hate speech in and through education

The following inspiring practices were identified by the European Commission and through a survey sent to WG members at the end of April 2024:

Selma Hacking Hate[93] was co-funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) and targeted young people ages 11-16, primarily in schools, but also in the out-of-school communities that impact on their well-being. The project built on a social and emotional learning approach and aimed to empower young people to become agents of change. It helped them to better understand the phenomenon of online hate; and it provided them with tools and strategies to act and make a difference. Activities included empirical research, training and counselling, Education Task Force meetings for EU policy makers, Ministries of Education and IT companies, and a Toolkit. The project's Toolkit is very action oriented and contains nine themes, including: *"(1) what's my role and what can I do; (2) how can I effect change in my community; and (3) changing the world*".

The project Educational Inclusion into diversity, facing early school leaving: Innovative methodologies to support ethnic minority students and stop hate speech in Europe[94] is built from the knowledge and needs of the reality that secondary school students live when they are victims of harassment and hate speech. This Erasmus+ co-funded project ran from 2020 through 2022. The partners were from France, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain. The aim of the project, with a strong focus on Roma, was to provide teachers with the necessary tools to detect hate speech and harassment in their classroom, work effectively with their students, and generate inclusion processes.[95]

HateLess. **Together against Hatred**[96] is a German program that focuses on the strength of cohesion in a class or school with a special focus on young teenagers (7th-8th grade). In five connected modules, students learn what makes hate speech dangerous, its origins, the harm it causes, and how students can use the most appropriate strategy to free their school from hatred and hate speech. Students also learn to distinguish between hate speech, verbal abuse, and bullying. A variety of examples help them understand how systematic attacks in words, pictures, and videos encourage people to violate someone's dignity often because they belong to a marginalized group, such as refugees or people with disabilities. The concept of moral courage to confront hate speech is also a key element of the programme.

Love Storm[97] is an EU co-funded platform, initiated in Germany by INACH (International Network Against Cyberhate), "*designed to help citizens build skills and resilience in fighting online hate speech through roleplays that teach soft skills, mediation, and non-violent communication in a safe and controlled environment.*" It seeks to address hate speech through education, awareness, and the use of practical tools. The roleplay-based approach allows people to experience realistic scenarios and practice their skills in a safe and controlled environment. Participants play the roles of haters, targets or (intervening) audience and try out different strategies to counter hate speech. The goal is to help people develop the skills needed to handle difficult conversations and promote empathy and understanding.

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[93] https://hackinghate.eu/about/
[94] https://www.educationstopshate.eu/;
[95] https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2020-1-ES01-KA201-082235
[96] https://www.uni-potsdam.de/en/headlines-and-featured-stories/detail/2022-06-16-preempting-hate-speech-how-the-hateless-program-helps-young-people
[97] https://love-storm.eu/about-love-storm/

Be Kind[98] is an initiative of ALL DIGITAL[99] and is part of the Erasmus+ co-funded project Amelie (I and II), focused on media literacy and counteracting online hate speech. AMeLie stands for Advanced Media Literacy to Counter Online Hate Speech. The project addresses online hate speech with a focus on training teachers and representatives of school communities on the specific methodology of addressing online hate speech in the classroom. The *Be Kind* consortium is led by EGinA and brings together six partners from five countries: Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, and Romania.

Be smart online[100] in Malta "*is co-funded by the European Union through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and forms part of INSAFE and INHOPE – the European network of Safer Internet Centres and hotlines respectively, which aims at empowering and protecting children and teens online from risks associated with online activity, through numerous awareness raising initiatives and by fighting illegal and harmful content … and behaviour online*." A key focus is to promote internet safety and empower children and young adults with the knowledge and skills to navigate the digital world responsibly.

The 5-week course **Radicalisation: entering, exiting and preventing extremism**[101] at the University of Tartu, Estonia, looks at why people radicalise, join extremist organisations, and disengage and/or deradicalize. Part of the focus is on support narratives that often motivate their members to join them. Participants are provided an overview of tools used in school environments to support the prevention of extremism and the role of the school in tackling such issues where needed.

The REACT[102] project **- Respect and Equality: Acting and Communicating Together**
represented a joint partnership project funded by the European Union, with partners in the UK, France, Spain, Germany and Italy. The project, which ended in 2019, aimed to counter hate speech, hate crimes and other forms of intolerance through the improvement of media literacy among educators and young people, and the development of a counter narrative campaign. The project also involved the development of a system of best practices for the implementation of training activities aimed at spreading media literacy among young people. An educational toolkit aimed at younger people and dedicated to educational activities was published in 2019.[103]

The Digital Academy for Parents (ADP)[104] in Portugal, which started in 2020, is an initiative of E-REDES in partnership with the Directorate-General for Education (DGE). The program provides parents and guardians of children in elementary and secondary education with the opportunity to participate in training sessions promoting digital skills. The programme promotes, among other things, the safe use of the Internet, the digital empowerment of people and the development of critical, thoughtful, and responsible attitudes when using digital technologies. Children and young volunteers are involved in the organization of these sessions, covering topics such as digital security and citizenship, as well as addressing online hate speech.

The Adult Education Centre VHS (Deutsche Volkhochshuler Verband) in Germany helped develop a toolkit with various modules entitled *Responding to Hate Speech and Fake News.*[105]The toolkit is designed specifically for the adult education center context and includes a curriculum and concrete teaching ideas. New materials deal with "war and media", dealing with disinformation and war propaganda.

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[98] https://all-digital.org/be-kind-the-new-amelie-project-to-counter-online-hate-speech/
[99] https://all-digital.org/about-us/
[100] https://www.besmartonline.org.mt/about

[102] http://www.reactnohate.eu/the-project/
[103] http://www.reactnohate.eu/resources/final-publication-educational-toolkit/
[104] https://www.e-redes.pt/en/sustainability-us-communities/social-investment/digital-academy-parents
[105]https://www.volkshochschule.de/verbandswelt/projekte/medienkulturcampus/index.php#cookieUsageNotification

The Bavarian association of teachers BLLV, in Germany, has issued a manifesto[106] entitled *Attitude Counts*, expressing great concern about how the mood and communication on social networks, as well as everyday interactions have been changing in society. They point to a "brutalization" of the language and point to "the aggressiveness, a language of hatred, contempt and discrimination, personal insults, deliberate insults and exclusion in words and actions." They also refer to the duty of teachers and educators to counteract such trends.

The Strategic Council for the Prevention of Hate Speech[107] in Slovenia was established in 2023, with the primary aim to: "*address the issue of hate speech, prevent it and, where appropriate, propose the imposition of sanctions… the main tasks of the Strategic Council are to monitor hate speech in Slovenia and at the EU level and to prepare proposals for measures to prevent it; to advise on the formulation of policies, changes in legislation and other measures that will contribute to more effective prevention of hate speech; and to participate in the drafting of proposals for systemic changes and a model for a network of campaigns and training at both regional and national levels.*"

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[106] https://www.bllv.de/themen/weitere-themen/haltung-zaehlt/das-manifest/
[107] https://www.gov.si/en/news/2023-05-11-strategic-council-for-the-prevention-of-hate-speech-related-to-prevention/