

Workshop

“Defending Dignity and Safeguarding Participation and Freedom of Expression: Local Responses to Hate Speech”

No Hate Speech Week & Democracy Hackathon

17 June 2026, Council of Europe, Strasbourg

11:30-12:30 am, Room 2 - Palais de l'Europe

Local and regional authorities have a crucial role in upholding democratic values, protecting human rights and fostering inclusive communities. As the level of government closest to citizens, their representatives are often the first to experience the effects of hate speech, disinformation, intimidation and polarisation on democratic life, public trust and social cohesion.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has repeatedly underlined that hate speech and hostile public discourse undermine local and regional democracy. They affect the working conditions of elected representatives, discourage participation in public life and limit the freedom of expression of specific minority groups. As recently observed in different European countries, this may disproportionately target women, young people and persons belonging to groups regularly exposed to discrimination, such as the LGBTI community.

Drawing on recent Congress' work relating to [*Hate speech and fake news: the impact on working conditions of local and regional elected representatives*](#), [*Tackling violence against elected officials*](#) and [*the Human rights handbook for local and regional elected representatives, Volume IV: Freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association*](#), as well as *Free to speak, free to meet: guaranteeing the rights of LGBTI persons in local communities* (debate upcoming in October 2026), the workshop will focus on practical local responses to hate speech, intimidation and exclusion. It will discuss ways to safeguard respectful public discourse, protect democratic participation, strengthen trust and foster inclusive communities.

With this event, the Congress will contribute to the New Democratic Pact for Europe by bringing a local and regional democracy perspective, grounded in its work on combating hate speech, and fostering human rights, social inclusion, and democratic participation as well as the protection of elected representatives and the rights of minority groups.

Agenda

Moderator

Ms Claudia Luciani, Director of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Panellists

- **Mr Kristoffer Tamsons**, Member of the Stockholm Regional Council, Chair of the Monitoring Committee of the Congress and co-rapporteur of the report *Hate speech and fake news: the impact on working conditions of local and regional elected representatives* (2022)
- **Ms Helen Belcher**, Councillor of Wiltshire (UK), Congress member, advocate for equality, inclusion and democratic participation and Congress rapporteur for the upcoming report on LGBTI freedom of expression and assembly
- **Mr Mohammed Amine El Guermat**, Congress Youth Delegate from Morocco

This initiative is a contribution towards the

New Democratic Pact for Europe

