

COMBATING HATE SPEECH



HELP
Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals
Council of Europe



Duration : 3.5 hours

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Statement of Accomplishment

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COMBATING HATE SPEECH HELP ONLINE COURSE

Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) Programme

Council of Europe

2024

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CoE HELP Catalogue of
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Background

Hate speech is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that can have far-reaching and dangerous consequences in democratic societies. Hate speech not only affects the dignity and human rights of the individual directly targeted, but also of persons belonging to the same minority or group as the persons targeted. Whether online or offline, it represents a threat to democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Preventing and combating hate speech poses specific challenges in all Council of Europe member States. Its persistence and impact have been documented by the monitoring bodies of the Council of Europe and other international agencies. For the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), hate speech is seen as one of the cases in which freedom of expression is to be limited. The States' obligations to consider effective responses to hate speech is mainly based on the principle of human dignity on one hand and equality and non-discrimination on another hand. Understanding the concepts as well as the differences between hate speech and freedom of expression is therefore crucial for legal (and other) professionals.

To address hate speech effectively and comprehensively within a human rights framework, including in the context of an online environment, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the [Recommendation CM/Rec \(2022\)16 on Combating Hate Speech](#) in May 2022. This Recommendation provides guidance for member States to implement a comprehensive and calibrated set of legal and non-legal measures. It builds on international human rights standards and relevant case-law of the ECtHR and pays special attention to the online environment in which most of today's hate speech can be found. The Recommendation also addresses other key actors, including public officials, elected bodies and political parties, internet intermediaries, media and civil society organisations.

About the HELP course

This HELP course was initially developed in 2015 and updated in 2020 under the Council of Europe Project "[Fighting Discrimination, Hate Crime and Hate Speech](#)" in Georgia. The Council of Europe Media and Internet Governance Division, the Hate Speech, Hate Crime and Artificial Intelligence and the Anti-Discrimination Cooperation Units contributed to the course development and the **course update in 2024**, that also benefited from contributions from a lawyer of the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

Course outline

The course has an Introductory module and 3 substantive modules:

1	Concepts of Hate Speech
2	Addressing Hate Speech
3	Legal Framework for Combating Hate Speech



Target audience

The course is primarily addressed to legal and justice professionals (judges, prosecutors, lawyers) wishing to enhance their knowledge on preventing and combating hate speech. The course can also be used by civil servants, representatives of civil society organisations, media professionals, students and anyone interested in the topic.

How to access the course

The course is freely available in self-learning format on the [CoE HELP e-learning platform](#). Those who complete it in self-learning format can obtain an electronic 'Statement of accomplishment'.

To access the course, you need to have a HELP account. If you haven't created one yet, you can sign up [here](#) - it only takes a few minutes.

