



In the framework of the No Hate Speech Week, and with the support of the Secretariat to the Campaign for the Safety of Journalists of the Council of Europe, the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) is organising a seminar on Media and Hate Speech. Held in the format of a joint Plenary, together with the participants to the No Hate Speech Week - including civil society organisations active at European and national levels, national authorities, equality bodies and ombuds offices, academia, internet industry, elected officials, governmental representatives, and representatives working in the media, sports sector, and local or regional authorities - the seminar will take place in Room 9 of the Palais de l'Europe, in the premises of the Council of Europe, in Strasbourg.

CONCEPT NOTE

Upholding Media Integrity: Fostering Tolerance and Combating Hate Speech

[Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 May 2022. Outlining a comprehensive approach to address hate speech within a human rights framework, the Recommendation provides guidance for member State 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 European Court of Human Rights and pays special attention to the online environment, where today's hate speech is easily found. The Recommendation acknowledges the width and gravity of the issue and assumes that member States alone cannot address the phenomenon comprehensively. Therefore, it also addresses other key actors, including public officials, elected bodies and political parties, internet intermediaries, media and civil society organisations.

The seminar focuses on the role of media in preventing, combating and addressing hate speech. As the Recommendation notes, the role of journalists, media organizations, and regulatory bodies in shaping public discourse and promoting societal cohesion is paramount. However, this responsibility is not without its challenges, particularly when navigating issues of hate speech, intolerance, and the portrayal of diverse voices in the media.

The seminar aims to delve into the multifaceted aspects of media responsibility outlined in paragraphs 38 to 42 of the document (below in Annex 1). These paragraphs emphasise the crucial

role of the media as a public watchdog, tasked with contributing to public debate while upholding the principles of accuracy, reliability, and freedom of expression. Moreover, they stress the importance of promoting a culture of tolerance and understanding, particularly in the face of rising instances of hatred and intolerance.

To this scope, the seminar will address key issues, on three rounds of discussions with experts and practitioners on the relevant field. A first session will focus on the role of media in democratic societies and how to promote a culture of tolerance; the second on the public service media's mandate and avoidance of stereotypical depictions and prejudice; the last on regulatory frameworks, accountability and transparency.

Overall, the seminar will provide a platform for CDMSI Plenary members as well as other participants to the No Hate Speech Week Programme to engage in constructive dialogue and exchange best practices for upholding media integrity, fostering tolerance, and combating hate speech in today's interconnected world. By collectively addressing these challenges, participants will be encouraged to take further relevant steps to ensure that the media remains a force for positive societal change and inclusive dialogue.

A following seminar, to be scheduled on a date yet to be determined, will address the other aspect of the issue: hate speech against the media, a widespread and pervasive problem undermining journalists and other media actors to perform their work with dignity and safely.

AGENDA

09.30 – 09.40: Opening and welcoming remarks

Opening: **MAJA ZARIC**, Chair of the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)

09.40 – 10.00: Role of media in democratic societies: how to promote a culture of tolerance

Speakers: **TARLACH MCGONAGLE**, Professor of Media Law and Information Society, University of Leiden and Senior researcher, Institute for Information Law (IViR), University of Amsterdam

ANNA ALBOTH, journalist and human rights defender, global media officer at Minority Rights Group International, Winner Global event at Council of Europe Journalism Excellence Awards – Ethical Media Awarding on Roma

Participants will focus on the importance of unbiased reporting and ethically sound use of reporting techniques and mediums. Additionally, the discussion will revolve around strategies for

media outlets to actively promote tolerance and understanding, including practical methods to foster inclusivity and combating hate speech within media content.

10.00 – 10.30: Public service media's mandate: setting high standards VS hate speech

Speakers: **MAJA CAPPELLO**, Head of Department for Legal Information, European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO)

JENNIFER ADAMS, Researcher, community safety in digital public space and gendered disinformation, University of Vienna

SILVIA GARAMBOIS, Journalist, Expert in Information issues, Former President of GiULiA - Glornaliste Unite Libere Autonome

The session will explore the unique role of public service media in enhancing societal cohesion and amplifying diverse voices. Participants will address the ethical considerations surrounding media portrayals of individuals, groups, and communities, examine the impact of derogatory stereotypes and discuss strategies for giving voice to marginalized communities avoiding prejudice.

10.30 – 10.45: Regulatory frameworks, accountability and transparency

Speakers: **ROBERTO BORTONE**, Coordinator at National Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR)

URSKA UMEK, Head of Democratic Institutions and Civil Society division and Secretary to the Council of Europe Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM)

The seminar will highlight the critical role of independent regulatory authorities and co- or self-regulatory bodies in addressing hate speech and upholding media standards. Participants will assess the effectiveness of existing regulatory frameworks and explore opportunities for enhancing accountability and transparency.

10.45 – 11.00: Q&A

Moderator: **GIULIA LUCCHESI**, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division

Annex 1

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT AND SELECTION OF RELEVANT PARAGRAPHS

[Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech (*Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 May 2022 at the 132nd Session of the Committee of Ministers*)

Section on “Media”

38. The media, journalists and other actors should fulfil their public watchdog role in a democratic society and contribute to public debate; they should enjoy the freedom to report on hatred and intolerance and to choose their reporting techniques, styles and mediums, subject to the proviso that they strive to provide the public with accurate and reliable information.

39. The media and journalists should be encouraged to promote a culture of tolerance and understanding, in accordance with Recommendation [Rec\(97\)21](#) on the media and the promotion of a culture of tolerance.

40. Public-service media should make a particularly substantial contribution to this, given their mandate to serve all sections of society and to enhance societal cohesion. They should not use or disseminate hate speech and, as part of their public mission, they should actively promote intergroup dialogue and understanding as well as the airing of content that portrays in a positive and supportive manner the diversity of voices and sources in the community they serve.

41. The media and journalists should, in their efforts to provide accurate and reliable information, avoid derogatory stereotypical depiction of individuals, groups and communities and give voice to diverse groups and communities in society, especially when reporting on matters of particular public interest and during election periods. They should avoid provoking prejudice and making any unnecessary references to personal characteristics or status.

42. Independent national regulatory authorities and media co-regulatory and/or self-regulatory bodies should play a positive role in addressing hate speech. They should be independent from the government, publicly accountable and transparent in their operations.