



# COMBATING HATE SPEECH

*Online or offline, hate speech humiliates and marginalises both individuals and targeted groups – but it also undermines human rights and threatens democracy.*

*The Council of Europe recommendation CM/Rec (2022)16 on Combating Hate Speech sets out what should be done to prevent and combat hate speech, promote a culture of inclusiveness and help those targeted by hate speech to assert their rights through a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach.*

Council of Europe policy framework  
on combating hate speech

Anti-discrimination

Information Society

[www.coe.int/combating-hate-speech](http://www.coe.int/combating-hate-speech)

## COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO COMBATING HATE SPEECH



### The Council of Europe's recommendation on combating hate speech

- **Defines hate speech** as *“all types of expression that incite, promote, spread or justify violence, hatred or discrimination against a person or group of persons, or that denigrates them, by reason of their real or attributed personal characteristics or status such as ‘race’, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.”*
- **Provides guidance to governments** on how they can put in place a comprehensive and well-calibrated set of measures – both legal and non-legal – to protect individuals and groups against hate speech within the framework of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.
- **Sets out what others can do**, such as internet intermediaries, public officials, elected bodies, political parties, the media or civil society organisations, to clamp down on hate speech.

*More on the recommendation and the Council of Europe's work on combating hate speech:*

[www.coe.int/combating-hate-speech](http://www.coe.int/combating-hate-speech)

### What should be done

- **Put in place a carefully calibrated set of laws, policies, guidelines and other measures** to effectively prevent and combat hate speech based on its severity, the harm it causes and its impact on members of particular groups in different contexts. Such measures should differentiate between:
  - hate speech that is prohibited under criminal law;
  - hate speech that is subject to civil or administrative law;
  - offensive or harmful types of expression which are not sufficiently severe to be legitimately restricted under the European Convention on Human Rights, but nevertheless call for alternative responses.
- **Ensure clear and foreseeable legal provisions for the swift and effective removal of online hate speech** that is sanctioned under criminal, civil or administrative law, and ensure that offline as well as online hate speech is covered.
- **Raise awareness, provide education, training, and encourage use of counter-speech, alternative speech and intercultural dialogue.** Such measures should address root causes of hate speech, and provide information about the harm it causes to individuals, communities and democratic society as a whole.
- **Enable those targeted by hate speech to report it**, and put in place effective support for them – including legal, medical and psychological assistance – and raise awareness of their rights.
- **Monitor hate speech, analyse trends** and make related information publicly available in compliance with existing European human rights and data-protection standards. Such data should inform design and implementation of policies, legislations and action plans.
- **Regularly engage with all relevant stakeholders** – such as internet intermediaries, the media and civil society organisations – to ensure national and international co-ordination and co-operation.